The Inadvertent Opposition:
The São Paulo Political Class and the Demise of Brazil’s Military Regime, 1968-1985

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History in the Graduate School of Duke University

2013
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that the civilian “political class” played an understudied yet decisive role in toppling Brazil’s 1964-1985 military dictatorship. In contrast with existing explanations for the regime’s fall, which emphasize either the isolated initiative of the generals or the independent resistance of civil society, this dissertation highlights the inadvertent opposition of civilian politicians, connected by familial and social ties to both the military and social movements. Between 1968 and 1985, the relationship between all three shifted significantly, as politicians first resisted the military’s challenge to their presumed right to rule on behalf of the masses and later came to defend a role for those masses in ruling the nation. It offers a deeper understanding of the dispositions, worldview, and behavioral codes that united politicians regardless of ideology or party and turned them against the regime that many of them had helped bring to power.

In contrast to the Southern Cone, where the military sought to abolish political activity, Brazilian officers cast themselves as democracy’s saviors. Yet even as they maintained elections, they also imposed authoritarian reforms on politicians. The first four chapters offer the most detailed study to date of this project and politicians’ indignant reaction. In 1968, as the regime repressed leftist student activists, politicians, tied to students by blood and social class, took to the streets to defend their children in a nearly forgotten act of defiance. Then, when the military demanded the prosecution of a congressman for insulting them, Congress refused to lift his immunity. In response, the military placed Congress in recess, arrested several politicians, removed many others from office, and decided to turn their reforms into tutelage. Amidst the repression, a few
politicians opted for courageous denunciation, but most chose to wait out the storm until the generals believed them sufficiently cowed. Still others adopted the strategy proved most successful – working within the rules to build their careers despite constraints.

The final three chapters show how the military’s project collapsed amidst bolder challenges from politicians, especially in the vitally important state of São Paulo. In 1974, after five years of breathtaking economic growth, the powerless opposition party decisively won legislative elections. This study offers fresh insights into the opposition’s success by examining its novel appeal to working class voters. By 1978, restiveness in São Paulo spread to the military’s own allied party, as in São Paulo they nominated a dissident gubernatorial candidate against the generals’ wishes. As the regime turned toward political opening, in 1979-1980, opposition politicians took to the streets to protect striking workers from repression, demonstrating a greater acceptance of popular mobilization. Politicians changed under military rule, but rather than collaborating with a demobilizing regime, many allied with an emerging civil society to oppose it.

This study draws on transcripts and audio recordings of legislative speeches, electoral court records, public opinion surveys, police records, classified Brazilian intelligence reports, newspapers, and correspondence from the foreign embassies. It cites the personal archives of key politicians, as well as oral histories, biographies, and memoirs. The sources enable a dynamic and culturally informed analysis of the “political class” to explain how, through resistance to tutelage and the acceptance of popular participation, civilian politicians helped topple the military regime and lay the groundwork for an unprecedented expansion of citizenship in the following decades.
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List of Abbreviations

Political Parties

ARENA – Aliança Renovadora Nacional (1966-1979)
MDB – Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (1966-1979)
PCB – Partido Comunista Brasileiro
PCdoB – Partido Comunista do Brasil
PDC – Partido Democrata Cristão
PDS – Partido Democrático Social
PDT – Partido Democrático Trabalhista
PL – Partido Libertador
PMDB – Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro
PP – Partido Popular
PSD – Partido Social Democrático
PSP – Partido Social Progressista
PST – Partido Social Trabalhista
PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores
PTB – Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (1945-1965)
PTB – Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (1980 – )
UDN – União Democrática Nacional

Other Abbreviations

ABC – Santo André, São Bernardo, and São Caetano
AI – Ato Institucional
CEBRAP – Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento

CLT – Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho

CSN – Conselho de Segurança Nacional

DOPS – Departamento de Ordem e Política Social

FIESP – Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo

FL – Frente Liberal

IBOBE – Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião e Estatística

IMF – International Monetary Fund

MNU – Movimento Negro Unificado

SNI – Serviço Nacional de Informações

STF – Supremo Tribunal Federal

STM – Supremo Tribunal Military

TRE – Tribunal Regional Eleitoral

TRT – Tribunal Regional do Trabalho

TSE – Tribunal Superior Eleitoral

TST – Tribunal Superior do Trabalho

UnB – Universidade de Brasília

USP – Universidade de São Paulo

State Abbreviations

AC – Acre

AL – Alagoas

AM - Amazonas
BA – Bahia
CE – Ceará
ES – Espírito Santo
GO – Goiás
GB – Guanabara
MA – Maranhão
MG – Minas Gerais
MT – Mato Grosso
PA – Pará
PB – Paraíba
PE – Pernambuco
PI – Piauí
PR – Paraná
RJ – Rio de Janeiro
RN – Rio Grande do Norte
RS – Rio Grande do Sul
SC – Santa Catarina
SE – Sergipe
SP – São Paulo
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In May 1999 I traveled to Brazil for the first time, part of a short-term summer missions team from Oral Roberts University, eager to practice the Portuguese I had begun teaching myself a year before. For two months I worked on construction projects with an evangelical church in the Amazon, painting walls, turning rough-hewn logs into windows and doors for a church camp, and experiencing the perpetual “country of the future” whose future, as it turned out, was finally about to arrive. Though I had lived in Bolivia for three years as the child of missionaries, I discovered that Brazil was very different from the Latin America I knew. The people I met seemed unselfconsciously confident that Brazil was the center of the universe, and they combined contagious pride in its grandeur and optimism about its future with pronounced cynicism about its politics and institutions. Brazil was larger than life, “gigantic by its very nature,” as its anthem says. Though I did not yet know it, this when I became a Brazilianist.

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As I finished my undergraduate degree, I began to realize that rather than converting Latin America, I wanted to study it. I took Latin American history, anthropology, and political science courses at the University of Oklahoma, where through a Mexican history course with Terry Rugeley, I discovered how enchanting Latin American history could be. In 2004, I was fortunate enough to enroll in the outstanding M.A. program in Latin American Studies at Vanderbilt University, where Paula Covington, Marshall Eakin, Ted Fischer, John Janusek, Jane Landers, Emanuelle Oliveira, Frank Robinson, and Eddie Wright-Rios were models of scholarship, engagement, and mentorship as they shaped me from a student interested in Latin America into a Latin Americanist with a strong interdisciplinary background. Norma Antillón, then the executive director of the Center for Latin American Studies, provided assistance locating funding, advice, and, most importantly, friendship.

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As a foreigner studying a country with a vibrant and innovative historiographic tradition, I at first felt like an outsider looking in, worried how my interventions from without would be received in Brazil. Thanks to the warm welcome and collegial feedback I have received from Brazilian historians like Alexandre Fortes, Paulo Fontes, Rachel Meneguello, David Fleischer, Celso Castro, Maria Celina d’Araújo, and Marco Antônio Villa, those feelings have dissipated, and I look forward to years of fruitful dialogue with
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Introduction: How “a Dictatorship Became a Thriving Democracy”: Stories about the Demise of Brazil’s Military Regime

“That is the example of Brazil. Brazil – a country that shows that a dictatorship can become a thriving democracy. […] Brazil – a country that shows how a call for change that starts in the streets can transform a city, transform a country, transform a world.”

– Barack Obama, Rio de Janeiro, March 20, 2011

When U.S. president Barack Obama praised Brazilians in 2011 for their transition to democracy a quarter-century ago, it constituted an attempt to showcase Brazil as an example to a democratizing Middle East. Yet Obama’s speech, designed to resonate with Brazilians proud of their successful democratization, also indicated his speechwriters’ assimilation of a widespread Brazilian belief: that the country’s 1964-1985 military dictatorship fell due to the mobilization of civil society. Ordinary Brazilians and scholars have lionized the principled opposition of figures like sociologist and senator Fernando Henrique Cardoso or union leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, both future presidents. Others have credited the cabal of generals who directed the regime, supposedly determined to restore democracy even as they were exhausted by economic crisis. Yet nearly forgotten amidst images of a heroic opposition and a military-bestowed transition has been the stubborn resistance of civilian politicians to military tutelage – which contributed just as decisively, if inadvertently, to the regime’s collapse. Indeed, it was a regime ally, former São Paulo governor Paulo Maluf, whose presidential candidacy splintered the military-allied party in 1984 and led to the indirect election of the opposition’s candidate. After two decades, it was fractious politicians that struck the
decisive blow to the regime. As the last military president João Batista Figueiredo fumed bitterly, allied politicians “only wanted peace if all the others were dead.”

Figueiredo’s exasperation with politicians stemmed from over two decades of friction between the military regime and the Brazilian “political class.” When the military, supported by most civilian politicians, seized power in its “Revolution” of 1964, it had three explicit objectives – to eliminate leftist “subversion,” to stabilize the economy and promote development, and to impose reforms on corrupt, bickering, untrustworthy civilian politicians. Yet significantly, unlike their contemporaries who ruled Argentina and Chile, the Brazilian generals sought to reform politics, not abolish them. Thus, despite repeated clashes with politicians, they refused to close Congress permanently, maintained direct elections for most legislative and municipal offices, and passed sweeping political reforms. A 1965 measure replaced the existing parties with a large pro-government party (Alliance of National Renovation – ARENA) and a token opposition (Brazilian Democratic Movement – MDB), and a series of electoral maneuvers sought to ensure ARENA victory at the polls.

But in 1968, only a year and a half after the imposition of a new constitution that was supposed to return the country to a semblance of institutional normality, the political class rebelled against the military when it sided with a “subversive” student movement and refused to permit the prosecution of a federal deputy who had “insulted the honor” of the Armed Forces. In response, the military decided to punish the political class, imposing its tutelage by naked force as it purged hundreds of federal, state, and local

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politicians and transformed Congress into a rubber stamp for its decrees. But just as the generals thought that their reforms of politics had been successful and opted for a highly controlled liberalization, voters handed them a stunning defeat in legislative elections. The regime’s vulnerability was especially evident in the economic and political powerhouse of São Paulo, where the opposition Senate candidate won by a 3:1 margin. Yet at this moment, when the generals needed the support of their civilian allies more than ever, in order to neutralize an increasingly vocal opposition and discontented electorate, ARENA’s 1978 São Paulo convention refused to endorse the generals’ anointed candidate for governor, instead nominating the dissident ARENA candidate Paulo Maluf. Worse yet, when massive strikes shook suburban São Paulo in 1979 and 1980, many opposition politicians began to adopt more democratic rhetoric, criticize the regime more vocally, and even take to the streets to support striking workers.

Departing from the prevailing understandings about the Brazilian transition to democracy, which emphasize the contributions of “civil society” or the initiative of the generals, this dissertation explores how the inadvertent opposition of the Brazilian political class helped precipitate the demise of the military regime. I answer key questions that have remained unresolved in studies of Brazil’s transition to democracy, as well as questions about authoritarian regimes and the role of elites in political and social transformation that reverberate beyond Brazil. How did the internal dynamics and shared dispositions of the political class both change and remain the same under the military regime? What impact did increasing popular mobilization have on the political class, and how did a deepening acceptance of democracy among important segments of the elite
pave the way for the success of post-1985 democracy? I argue that shifts in São Paulo’s political class and its relationship to the rest of society contributed decisively to the demise of military rule and the consolidation of democracy, as politicians, in rejecting military tutelage, gradually reconciled themselves to heightened popular participation.

Looking beyond Brazil, my dissertation invites scholars to rethink how Latin American authoritarian regimes coped with conflict and competition from civilian elites, depending on the formal and informal rules governing the political system. Among South America’s bureaucratic authoritarian military regimes, the Brazilian one stands out, particularly compared with the Argentine Proceso and Augusto Pinochet’s Chile, for the decision to maintain electoral politics and a near-obsession with maintaining the appearance of liberal constitutional legality to justify its rule. For the Brazilian military in 1964, the left-leaning president João Goulart had threatened to overthrow democracy with his talk of leftist reforms; the so-called “Revolution” that overthrew him was not democracy’s collapse but its salvation. Thus, although at its most repressive moments, the Brazilian “Revolution” did place drastic limits on liberal institutions and impose tutelage on politicians, all factions of the military continued to believe that the controlled collaboration of the political class was vital to the legitimation of its reformist project.

The military thus maintained legislatures and elections and sought to reform politicians through a “pedagogical-corrective process” designed to root out self-interest.² As a result, although the Brazilian military shared with its Southern Cone counterparts a disdain for politicians and “excessive” commitment to constitutional principles, and although all Latin American bureaucratic authoritarian regimes placed restrictions on

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political activity, politicians and parties had a more prominent role in Brazil. Unlike in Chile and Argentina, where military dictatorships dissolved Congress, in Brazil, Congress was closed three times – for one month, ten months, and two weeks. While in the Southern Cone elections were suspended until the twilight of military rule, in Brazil elections continued uninterrupted for federal deputy, senator, state deputy, city councilors, and nearly all mayors, and there were gubernatorial elections in 1965 and 1982. Although the old parties were abolished in 1965, two new parties replaced them; in Chile and Argentina, party activity went underground, and in Uruguay, parties only again became key players during the transition. Civilian politicians remained significant in Brazil, and their potential reactions always figured in the generals’ decision making.

Virtually all Brazilian elites since the nineteenth century had held that the unlettered popular classes, easily swayed by religious or populist demagogues, were not qualified to participate directly in politics. Instead, to protect them from themselves, they required the tutelage of an enlightened elite. The generals who directed the regime and the civilian political class shared this basic mistrust of the popular classes. The conflict that appeared between the military and political class in 1964 and heightened in 1968 arose because practically all factions of the military agreed that civilian politicians had also proven themselves unqualified to lead the nation. For the military in 1964, what was needed was a fundamental transformation in political behavior; after 1968, this was intensified to include the overt tutelage of politicians and institutions. No longer would the corruption, personal rivalries, and narrow regionalism of the political class be allowed to retard Brazil’s orderly development, but instead the entire nation would march toward
modernity, guided by a patriotic dedication to fixing the country’s pressing social, economic, and security problems. Civilian politicians would be welcome to participate if they accepted that their days of unfettered demagoguery, selfishness, and petty conflicts had come to a definitive end. Yet politicians believed that although they had to right, indeed the duty, to impose tutelage on the rest of Brazil, the military’s imposition of tutelage on them was a fundamental violation of how the world was supposed to work.

Finally, I also ask how states attempt to shape political culture and investigate what facilitates or impedes their success. Do states and elites direct political and social change from above, or do “subalterns” force it from below? What happens when civilian elites, the so-called “political class,” whose interests are usually understood as coterminal with those of the state, find themselves relegated to the political margins? I attempt to answer these questions through a historical-cultural approach to politics and the state, arguing that structural and rational choice approaches, along with commonly used dichotomies like state/civil society, military/civilian, government/opposition, and even change from above/below are not adequate to disentangle the intricacies of the political behavior and discourse of politicians under military rule.

“A Class That Rules”: The Political Class in Elite Theory and Brazilian Discourse

It is universally acknowledged in Brazilian academic and political discourse that the country has always been ruled by a “political oligarchy” whose “numbers are relatively small, its ranks relatively closed, and its power concentrated in a few hands.”

This group has shared since the colonial period a “common identity as legitimate leaders

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of their society” by virtue of pedigree, wealth, education, or occupation. It is known to its members, as well as to the intellectuals, businesspeople, professionals, clergy, and military officers who know them and may join their ranks, as the “political class.” Its control of political institutions in pursuit of patronage and personal gain has been enjoyed by few, lamented by many, and, until recently, effectively challenged by no one, despite fruitless attempts over the twentieth century – including the military regime – that altered political practice and replaced some members but left the political class as a group intact.

The terms “political class” and the related (though less used in Brazil) “political elite,” “ruling class,” “ruling elite,” and “power elite” all have their origin in a century of elite theory by political scientists and sociologists who have sought to explain why all societies appear to be dominated by a small group of elites, define what these ruling groups do and which elites belong to them, and reconcile elite rule with the tenets of liberal democracy. Elite theory originated in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth in the writings of the Italians Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto and the German Robert Michels. Each challenged, explicitly or implicitly, the

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4 Andrew J. Kirkendall, Class Mates: Male Student Culture and and the Making of a Political Class in Nineteenth-Century Brazil (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 1. Kirkendall writes specifically of law students at the two nineteenth-century law schools, but his description can extend to most Brazilian state and national political elites until the late twentieth century, and perhaps beyond.

5 There were at least four large-scale efforts to loosen the stranglehold of Brazil’s civilian political class on state power during the twentieth century. The first was in the late 1920s and early 1930s, with movements like tenentismo, the battle for the secret ballot, and the “revolution” of 1930. The second was the Estado Novo of Getúlio Vargas, with its explicit attack on state political machines. The third was the military coup of 1964, when the military sought to reign in the political class by imposing sweeping organizational, electoral, and ethical reforms. The fourth was the constitutional convention of 1987-1988, which despite its unprecedented extension of citizenship for the masses preserved intact the prerogatives of state and local political classes, primarily through emphasizing administrative autonomy for state and local governments.

Marxist vision of an egalitarian, classless society and, to a lesser extent, the liberal dream of representative democracy on the grounds that both were unsustainable. Rather, the domination of the many by the few was an immutable law, whatever the form of government, rendering Marx’s classless society impossible. The few, which Mosca called the “political class,” are distinguished not only by the control of the means of production, but also by political power and socialization, and they work to protect their collective interests, despite internal disputes. For classical elite theorists, “the most that can be hoped for is a relatively liberal but still quite unequal political order governed by capable, cooperative, and enlightened elites.” Ultimately the “incompetence of the mass,” which needs leaders to make decisions for it, keeps “oligarchies” in power. “The masses are content to employ all their strength to change masters.”

In the wake of World War II, the classical elite theorists fell into disrepute due to their appropriation by the Nazi and fascist regimes. Yet post-war scholars chose not to challenge the thesis that it was inevitable and even desirable that a political class should dominate human societies; after all, Hitler and Mussolini had achieved power through democratic mechanisms, proving once again that the masses were not to be trusted. Thus, the role of elites could be to serve as guardians of democracy against the predations of the

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8 Ibid., 10.
9 John Higley and Michael G. Burton, *Elite Foundations of Liberal Democracy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 4. Due to their unease with both Marxism and liberal democracy, the early elite theorists were explicitly used to justify Nazism in Germany and fascism in Italy. Mosca and Pareto, who by the 1930s were themselves established members of the elite (Mosca, despite his unease with aspects of liberal democracy, had served in the Italian Parliament for nearly two decades), were never comfortable with this appropriation of their ideas, while Michels immigrated to Italy, joined the Fascist party, and was given a professorship by Mussolini. See Michael Hartmann, *The Sociology of Elites* (London: Routledge, 2012), 20, 112.
10 Michels.
11 Hartmann, 22.
masses. Other scholars lamented the rule of the elite but accepted it as unalterable, even in “advanced democracies” like the United States and Western Europe. Rather than a class in the Marxist sense, they saw elites as the people who occupied the most influential decision-making positions in society (however defined), many times because of their own merit, and not due to wealth, privilege, or cunning.\textsuperscript{12} Though they were able to reach no agreement on the structure of this elite group, who belonged to it, or even what it should be called, they developed convenient means of conceptualizing the elite and its various subgroups. And the generation of political scientists and sociologists they influenced left rich empirical studies of the composition of elite groups.\textsuperscript{13}

The work of Pierre Bourdieu helps resolve the confusion, primarily through his concept of \textit{habitus}. Bourdieu argues that the “dominant class,” as he calls it (roughly analogous to what Brazilians call the “political class”) is united not so much by what earlier theorists called conspiracy or cohesion, but rather by habitus, which he defines as a set of “structured [and] structuring structures” that are “collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor” and do not require a


conscious “obedience to rules.” A habitus is, above all, unconscious. Predicated on a person’s membership in the “dominant class,” in the words of Michael Hartmann, it “is a set of dispositions, a general, basic stance which determines a person’s perception, feeling, thinking, behavior, and which, more than anything else, marks the boundaries drawn for every individual by his social origin and position.” United by a habitus that is based largely upon their position at the top of the economically dominant class, those who exercise political and economic power can disagree on practically anything else without undermining their group consciousness and the unexamined assumption that by virtue of who they are, they have the right, indeed the obligation, to exercise political power. Moreover, since a habitus should be known without ever having been learned, the dominant class (or ruling class, or power elite) tends to reproduce itself, since it is remarkably difficult for non-members to acquire the necessary habitus.

The concept of a “political class,” then, is not simply a folk category utilized by Brazilians to describe their self-proclaimed, semi-hereditary cabal of political elites. Rather, it and related terms have a century-long history in classical and modern elite theory. Though elite theorists have been unable to agree on which elites belong to the political class or the mechanisms for joining it, elite theory reveals that there is a subset of the wider upper class or, in Brazil, classes dirigentes (directing classes), that is not

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15 Hartmann, 48.
16 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004 [1979]), 330. Cited in Hartmann, 49. In Brazil, for example, this helps explains why during the military regime, as the economy expanded and ascendant members of the petty bourgeois like Orestes Quércia and Paulo Maluf (not to mention the working class unionist Luis Inácio Lula da Silva) sought to enter politics, they faced resistance from established members of the political class – they lacked the necessary unlearned knowledge about appropriate outlook and behavior that only the right habitus could provide.
united simply by control of the means of production, but by an entire way of seeing the world, a set of dispositions and behaviors that Bourdieu would call a habitus. Though members of the Brazilian political class may indeed own vast swathes of arable land, factories, or banks, they are also united by their common education, socialization, and even linguistic style. Though new members may enter and old ones leave, the term describes a self-contained group who see themselves as sharing interests that distinguish them from not only the middle and lower classes, but also the rest of the upper class.

In Brazil, the political class encompasses civilian social or economic elites who due to pedigree, wealth, profession, education, or connections choose to participate in political decision-making at the local, state, or national level, particularly through running for or being appointed to public office. This may include career politicians; industrial, business, and landholding elites; major media owners; and lawyers, doctors, engineers, journalists, and other members of the so-called “liberal professions.” At the same time, not all members of the upper strata who could join the political class choose to identify themselves with it. Indeed, despite their wealth and power, many successful intellectuals, businesspeople, and professionals, along with virtually all high-ranking military officers, are disdainful of the political class and would never consider themselves a part of it.

Each Brazilian city and town has its own political class, often comprised of landowning families who are peripheral to state-level politics. Important regional powerbrokers within states, along with members of the industrial, business, professional, and intellectual classes of the large cities, together compose the state political class. In Brazil, where state politics have always exerted great influence on national politics, there
is no cohesive national political class; rather, the federal government in Brasília is effectively made up of delegates from the twenty-seven state political classes; national politicians nearly always have a far greater stake in politics back home than at the national level. This state political class is small, probably no more than a few hundred men (and until recently, they were nearly always men) in number. They attend the same social clubs and functions, send their children to the same schools, dine at the same restaurants, and negotiate marriages and alliances amongst themselves.

I focus on São Paulo, Brazil’s most populous and powerful state. With 25 million residents in 1980, São Paulo was home to 21% of Brazilians. Since the 1950s its population had skyrocketed, as migrants from Brazil’s Northeast came to work in its expanding manufacturing sector. In the 1970s, the state produced between 30 and 40% of the nation’s GDP, and industrialized São Paulo and its political, commercial, and industrial elites benefited most from the 1968-1974 “economic miracle,” when Brazil’s economy grew by an average annual rate of 10.9%. Yet this stubbornly independent state had long been a thorn in the side of the federal government, most notably during its bloody 1932 uprising against the centralizing regime of Getúlio Vargas. Government preoccupation with São Paulo continued after 1964, as its economic strength and opposition movements prompted the military to circumscribe its political power. Despite being home to 21% of Brazilians, the state was allotted only 12.5% of the seats in the federal Chamber of Deputies, and paulistas (residents of São Paulo) were absent among

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the generals who directed the regime. Demographic muscle, a dynamic economy, and rapid urbanization combined with vocal opposition, fierce regionalism, and political marginalization set São Paulo apart from the rest of Brazil and rendered it especially problematic for the regime. It was in this singularly powerful and volatile state that politicians’ support was most vital for the generals, but it was here that they failed most spectacularly.

**Structure vs. Rational Choice and Generals vs. Civil Society: The Historiography**

After the military seized power in 1964, observers were uncertain exactly what the nature of the new government would be, and political scientists and historians attempted to come to terms with democracy’s sudden collapse. Most civilian politicians had enthusiastically supported the coup as a democratic “Revolution” that rescued Brazil from the terrifying mobilization of the popular classes. Yet there was soon cause for

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21 For example, José Stacchini, a reporter for the *O Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper, lauds the “Revolution” as “a practical lesson for foreigners of how Brazilians resolve their problems: they wait for the national consciousness and public opinion to mature, and at the opportune moment, the men in uniform come into the streets to cut the Gordian knot in an instant.” José Stacchini, *Março 64: Mobilização da audácia* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1965), xii. This view of the regime would continue to be common among many of its military and civilian supporters into the twenty-first century. See Adolpho João de Paula Couto, *Revolução de 1964: A versão e o fato* (Porto Alegre, Brazil: Gente do Livro, 1999); Hernani D’Aguiar, *A revolução por dentro* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Artenova, 1976); Sylvio Frota, *Ideais traidos* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editora, 2006). For an especially disconcerting defense of the coup, see Aricildes de Moraes Motta, coord., *1964-31 de março: O Movimento revolucionário e a sua história*, Twelve vols., História Oral do Exército (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2003). This massive apologia for the coup of 1964 consists of over 100 statements by officers and several civilian politicians, in which they defend the “Revolution” in the face of what they consider unfair and untrue criticisms of it by dishonest scholars and politicians. More recently, after years circulating on the Internet, the military’s secret apologia for its rule, originally written in 1985 in response to the *Brasil: nunca mais* project, was published, albeit without official military endorsement. The 925-page book argues that the
concern as it became clear that the military meant to stay in power for the long term, repress opposition, ignore civil liberties, and impose its tutelage on the political class itself. By 1973, the generals were presiding over unprecedented economic growth, armed leftist movements had been crushed, and repeated electoral routs had led the opposition party to consider self-dissolution. Yet despite the regime’s undisputed victories against economic ruin and leftist “subversion,” its success in reforming political culture and institutions remained hotly debated, as political scientists and sociologists debated if the generals had indeed constructed a stable authoritarian political system.

Political scientist Philippe Schmitter described an “institutionally democratic façade” with a “domesticated semiopposition,” while Fernando Henrique Cardoso noted the “nearly complete erosion […] of the power groups and structures” from the pre-1964 period. In contrast, political scientist Juan Linz argued that Brazil was experiencing an “authoritarian situation” and not a true authoritarian regime, since despite economic success and the silencing of the opposition, the regime had not managed to successfully coup was necessary to prevent an imminent communist takeover of Brazil. See Lício Maciel and José Conegundes Nascimento, Orvil: tentativas de tomada do poder (São Paulo: Editora Schoba, 2012).

22 For an early critique of the regime from a disillusioned initial supporter, see Oliveira S. Ferreira, O fim do poder civil (São Paulo: Editora Convívio, 1966). For an early leftist critique that blasts “those on the right who violently fight a dictatorship of the left (communism) but calmly accept a dictatorship of the right (fascism), in order to continue becoming ever richer while the poor become ever poorer,” see Victor Mario, Cinco anos que abalaram o Brasil: de Jânio Quadros ao marechal Castelo Branco (Rio de Janeiro: EditUra Civilização Brasileira, 1965), 3.

institutionalize itself.\textsuperscript{24} For Linz, none of the available models for authoritarian institutionalization – \textit{caudillo} rule, fascism, a corporatist state, one-party rule, etc. – were feasible choices for the generals. Without true consolidation, Linz presciently predicted “a constant and indecisive experimenting with various alternatives” that would combine “administration, manipulation, arbitrary decisions, false starts, and frequent changes in personnel” that could only “be successful as long as the economy [went] well.”\textsuperscript{25} Political scientist Ronald Schneider also saw clouds on the horizon for the regime, arguing that despite the emergence since 1968 of a dictatorial government, dissension within the officer corps about the regime’s future rendered the system unstable.\textsuperscript{26}

These early works, produced largely by political scientists, analyzed regime politics using either structural or interest-based models, with little consideration of culture. They saw officers (by far the most frequently analyzed group), civilian politicians, and opposition movements as influenced by economic factors like dependent development, or by the political exigencies of the moment. The military-dominated state emerges as the only political actor of consequence. Scholars assumed that the political class had been cowed into submission, and despite no sustained studies of the middle or popular classes, they assumed that rapid economic growth had lulled them into a passive acceptance of military rule. While this was understandable in light of the regime’s

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 254.
apparent success and the methodologies scholars employed, events during the rest of the 1970s reshaped much of the political and academic landscape.

In 1974 new military president Ernesto Geisel announced a secure, gradual distensão (détente) of the political system, and the government party’s disastrous defeat in legislative elections revealed unexpected popular opposition to the regime. Social scientists eager to understand the new political configuration turned their attention to electoral behavior and local voting patterns, emphasizing the regime’s precarious support in São Paulo.27 A landmark 1975 volume edited by Cardoso and political scientist Bolivar Lamounier that focused heavily on São Paulo argued that the military regime had only briefly silenced political consciousness, not extinguished it, and that Brazilian voters, including those from the working and lower classes, rather than being “apolitical and apathetic,” in fact revealed “the constitution of a citizenry.”28 Subsequent volumes examining the 1976 and 1978 elections continued to call into question the regime’s long-term viability in light of the opposition’s growth in the most urbanized, fastest growing regions of the country, particularly among the urban working and lower classes.29

Earlier scholars like Linz and Schneider who had noted the regime’s instability had explained it primarily in terms of debates within the military or between the regime and civilian politicians. If the regime had failed to institutionalize itself, it was because it

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27 For the most thorough treatment of the 1974 elections, see the chapters in Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Bolivar Lamounier, eds., Os partidos e as eleições no Brasil (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1975). See also the special issue of Revista de Estudos Políticos 43 (1976).
28 Ibid., 9-11.
had been unable to find a workable model, or because of internal disputes among officers. The new electoral studies also sensed instability but posited as its source not the inner dynamics of the regime but the urban voter of the industrialized South and Southeast. The military regime was under threat, but that threat came primarily from a rising wave of popular dissatisfaction provoked by repression, economic inequality, and a desire for more representative government. These studies, with their focus on voter behavior, were the earliest example of a trend that would eventually come to dominate studies of the military regime – an emphasis on what scholars would call “civil society” as the agent of political change. Yet while the primary characters had changed, much else had not. Scholars still preferred structural explanations – now economic inequality – and interest-based explanations – now the interests of mostly working- and lower-class voters – while the political class, Brazil’s traditional power brokers, remained largely unstudied.

By the end of the 1970s, as the government revoked many of its most repressive laws and returned to a multi-party system, and as new opposition appeared from industrialist, professional associations, labor, students, and a growing segment of the political class, the institutionalization of the regime was the last thing on scholars’ minds. Instead, the question became how long the generals could hold onto power. To make matters worse, in the early 1980s Brazil entered its worst economic crisis in half a century. The military regime finally collapsed in 1985, after the generals lost control of the presidential succession and a civilian government came to power. Expanding upon a trend in their discipline that had begun with the collapse of authoritarian regimes in Spain and Portugal in the 1970s, political scientists began to explore processes of
democratization in Latin America, particularly in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, asking not only why authoritarianism had collapsed but also what democracy’s prospects might be.30

What had led Geisel and his allies in the military to opt for a process of détente and, later, *abertura* (opening)? And why had this process led not to the consolidation of military rule in a more open political system, as originally intended, but to the return of the military to the barracks? A host of possible answers quickly appeared, nearly without exception focusing on the rational choices of generals, politicians, voters, and civil society groups. Historian Thomas Skidmore argued that democratization happened because “Geisel, Golbery, and like-minded officers acted out of a personal belief that Brazil *should* move toward a more democratic regime”31 Lamounier, on the other hand, emphasized parties and elections as the means through which democratization occurred, arguing in effect that rational choice theory could explain the process. “In fact, it involves a *calculus* of decompression, that is, an interactive model in which the various actors, whatever their ideologies, calculate the costs and of the status quo and of alternative

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solutions.” Still other scholars examined specific segments of civil society, and although none of them argued that the group they studied was solely responsible for the regime’s demise, the overall picture was one of a heroic and democratic civil society collectively toppling military rule. Jean Rossiaud put it rather bluntly when he said that the “process of democratization [was] constructed by […] social movements and civil society organizations,” but he was not far off from the view many scholars studying Brazilian democratization would advance.

In their enthusiasm to explore the exciting resurgence of civil society, few scholars paid much attention to the role of the political class in détente and democratization. Those who did almost without fail focused on political parties or Congress. Although they did not usually focus on the political class as a group, these studies cast invaluable light on Brazilian political culture and the dispositions of the political class. In her insightful history of the MDB in São Paulo, political scientist Célia Melhem revealed that the MDB’s continued rapid growth in the state was due not only to voter identification with the party, but also due to patronage, as most MDB politicians sought nothing more than access to the administrative and financial resources that

34 Jean Rossiaud and Ilse Scherer-Warren, A democracia inacabável: Memórias do futuro (Florianópolis, Brazil: Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2000), 7.
accompanied power. The MDB was not so much an anti-regime movement as an anti-ARENA movement, as one faction of the political class sought to seize the spoils of power.\textsuperscript{35} Political scientist Margaret Sarles Jenks took a similar view in her unpublished 1979 dissertation, showing how as late as 1976 politicians continued to use pre-1966 party affiliations, while the ARENA/MDB labels meant little.\textsuperscript{36} And in 2009, in the first book-length study of the government-allied party, historian Lucia Grinberg highlighted its members constant pushing back against military reforms of the political system, as arenistas (members of ARENA) sought to recover their old power and prerogatives.\textsuperscript{37}

The one scholar who studied the political class as such (although without a definition beyond “traditional elites”) without a focus on parties was political scientist Frances Hagopian. Her \textit{Traditional Politics and Regime Change in Brazil} explores the behavior of the Minas Gerais political class under the military regime and during and after democratization, emphasizing continuities through time. Hagopian points out that a major goal for the generals was to reform the political system but that they failed in the face of intra-elite squabbles and opportunism, which were a defining feature of the Minas political class. She notes the rapid growth of the PMDB after 1985, largely due to defections from the PDS (the successor to ARENA), since the PMDB now controlled access to state patronage. She rejects claims that structural factors like “economic


\textsuperscript{36} Margaret Sarles Jenks, “Political Parties in Authoritarian Brazil” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1979). 255-256.

relations or political institutions” are so powerful “that political agents are not free to pursue strategies to revise those relations and institutions and that they cannot be effective in doing so.” Yet the only two options Hagopian considers are structural ones or rational choice. Her analysis lacks a consideration of political culture to understand how actors respond to structural conditions or choose among available rational choices.

While these studies of party politics and the political class cast light on the continuities of elite political culture through “the three pillars of clientelism, regionalism, and personalism,” they make no allowance for elites’ capacity to change. So while scholars studying voters and civil society were aglow as they discovered an emerging democratic consciousness, scholars examining parties and the political class portrayed elites as static, both when comparing the previous Populist Republic with the military regime and the military regime with the post-1985 democracy. Such a static conception of the political class does not reconcile well with the crafty and flexible cabal that has held onto power in Brazil for centuries by constantly re-adjusting the strategies governing its interactions with the rest of society.

By the mid-1990s, with the military regime fading into memory, Brazilian historians began to employ oral history to preserve the recollections of officers and politicians who were active in regime-era politics. At the same time, many officers,
politicians, and other powerful figures took it upon themselves to offer their own versions of events through autobiographies or authorized biographies.41 Other scholars, along with journalists, emphasized (and not infrequently glorified) the leftist opponents of the

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regime, conducting oral history interviews with former guerrillas and student leaders who
had spent years in prison or exile. All these works promised to become invaluable
primary sources as they recorded the perspectives of those who participated within or in
opposition to the regime. Still, the accounts exaggerated the divisions between military
and civilian and state and opposition, as politicians – even those once allied with the
regime like São Paulo governors Paulo Egydio and Paulo Maluf – sought to distance
themselves from the regime they had once claimed to support, while former officers tried
to dissociate themselves from torture and the other excesses of the security apparatus.

The oral history projects that focused on the military served to underline an
apparent contradiction that characterized the literature on the regime into the twenty-first
century. While many scholars had found the cause of the regime’s demise regime in the
heroic resistance of civil society, their explanations co-existed with a continued focus on
the decision-making of Geisel, Golbery, and other “moderate” generals. Much like
Skidmore, who in 1989 had credited the generals’ “personal belief” that Brazil should
become more democratic, these works revealed that officers had seen and still saw the
military as the most important political actor of the period. The most well known
example of this view is journalist Elio Gaspari’s fascinating four-volume history of the
military regime, based largely on the personal papers of Geisel, Golbery, and their

42 For only a few representative examples, see Caio Túlio Costa, Cale-se: A saga de Vannucchi Leme, a
USP como aldeia gaulesa, o show proibido de Gilberto Gil (São Paulo: A Girafa Editora, 2003); Maria
Ribeiro do Valle, 1968: o diálogo é a violência. Movimento estudantil e ditadura militar no Brasil
(Campinas, Brazil: Editora da UNICAMP, 1999); Jacob Gorender, Combate nas trevas: A esquerda
brasileira das ilusões perdidas à luta armada (São Paulo: Editora Atica, 1987); Haroldo Lima and Aldo
Arantes, História da Ação Popular da JUC ao PCdoB, 2nd ed. (São Paulo: Editora Alfa-Omega, 1984);
Luís Mir, A revolução impossível (São Paulo: Editora Best Seller, 1994); Daniel Aarão Reis, Ditadura
militar, esquerdas e sociedade (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editora, 2000); Marcelo Ridenti, O fantasma
da revolução brasileira (São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 1993); Denise Rollemberg, Exílio. Entre raízes e
aides. Naturally, his sources focus on the generals and on conflicts within the military ranks. Since he ends his analysis with Geisel’s 1977 firing of conservative Army Minister Sylvio Frota (he argues that the dismissal consolidated Geisel’s control over the military and marked the effective end of the dictatorship), he pays little attention to civil society’s rebirth, which only truly gained steam the next year with Lula’s first strikes.

This emphasis on the initiative of the generals appeared again in one of the most important works of recent years. In their chapter on the military regime in the long-awaited Brazil since 1930 volume of the Cambridge History of Latin America, historians Leslie Bethell and Celso Castro offered a timely synthesis of over four decades of scholarship on the military regime, questioning some longstanding assumptions while reinforcing others. They explicitly rejected the common practice of dividing the military into moderate and hard line camps in a statement that could just as easily apply to other dichotomous categories scholars have used.

[The categories] used by the actors themselves at the time and by historians and political analysts later should not be seen as representing the fixed features of organised and coherent groups. Rather, they are best seen as Weberian ‘ideal types’ that capture the various positions of groups [...] whose membership and behaviour changed over time.

Like Melhem and Jenks, they take a dim view of political parties, calling ARENA “not perhaps the most efficient tool for defending the ‘Revolution,’” and the MDB “an opposition party with few really committed opponents of the military regime” that was

43 Elio Gaspari, A ditadura envergonhada, As Ilusões Armadas (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002); Elio Gaspari, A ditadura escancarada, As Ilusões Armadas (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002); Elio Gaspari, A ditadura derrotada, O Sacerdote e o Feiticeiro (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003); Elio Gaspari, A ditadura encurralada (São Paulo: Companhia de Letras, 2004).
“too timid, too cautious, too conservative” and “was not an instrument for transforming the system by pressure from below.” At the same time, Bethell and Castro barely mention opposition other than the MDB – labor unions, the Church, professional organizations, and other “civil society” groups are conspicuously absent. Perhaps they do not believe these groups’ opposition was an important factor in the regime’s demise, or perhaps their definition of politics under military rule does not extend beyond institutions. Either way, with parties and civil society out of the picture, Bethell and Castro are left with only one actor of significance – the military.

Much like in Gaspari’s work, a few leading military officers take center stage in Bethell and Castro’s analysis. Indeed, they portray the military as nearly omnipotent. “[D]uring the entire period, the higher echelons of the Armed Forces retained at all times the power to impose their will and keep civilian opposition and popular political participation under strict control.” Yet while political liberalization was still the result of the generals’ initiative, it did not spring from their democratic proclivities. Rather, they were “initiated and for the most part (even in the final stages) controlled and managed from above,” intended not to establish a democratic, civilian government, but to “bring about the much-needed 'definitive institutionalisation' of the principles of the 1964 'Revolution' and restore the regime's legitimacy.” For Bethell and Castro, the nearly omnipotent generals made their decisions based on rational, strategic considerations; structural or cultural factors play no role in their analysis whatsoever.

45 Ibid., 210, 180, 228, 207.
46 Ibid., 166.
47 Ibid., 228, 202-203.
The Limits of Dichotomies: Critique of the Historiography

Despite an exaggerated view of the generals’ power, Gaspari’s and Bethell and Castro’s analyses do not indicate a return to the general-centered narratives of the early 1970s. Rather, they serve as a counterbalance to democratization literature and the proliferating studies of 1960s activists and guerrillas and 1970s and 1980s civil society movements. Collectively, the literature presents a coherent picture – the initiative of the various competing factions of the military and the pressure of opposition parties and civil society groups were jointly responsible for the regime’s ultimate failure.

Yet in seeking to understand the relationships between political actors, much of the scholarship on the military regime does not fully consider their uncertain and contingent nature. Rather, it implies that dichotomous relationships structured regime politics – between state and opposition, government and civil society, military and civilian, or ARENA and MDB. As political scientist Maria Helena Moreira Alves put it, state and opposition had an “essentially dialectical” relationship in which each sought to “control, check, or modify the other.”

Similarly, Skidmore explained:

In the end, liberalization was the product of an intense dialectical relationship between the government and the opposition. The military who favored abertura had to proceed cautiously, for fear of arousing the hardliners. Their overtures to the opposition were designed to draw out the “responsible” elements, thereby showing there were moderates ready to cooperate with the government. At the same time, the opposition constantly pressed the government to end its arbitrary excesses, thereby reminding the military that their rule lacked legitimacy.

While it is not inaccurate to state that generals like Geisel, Golbery, and Figueiredo had to walk a thin line between appeasing the military and offering enough concessions to

48 Alves, State and Opposition in Military Brazil, 9.
49 Skidmore, "Brazil's Slow Road to Democratization: 1974-1985," 34.
convince the MDB to participate in the political game, and while it is true that the MDB pushed the government to move faster, this version of the story is inadequate.

In contrast, I argue that the political system was not characterized by a division between hermetically sealed groups. Many politicians in the 1960s and 1970s had served in the military in the 1940s and 1950s or had fathers or sons in the Armed Forces; it is difficult to place them in either the military or political class. Whether they had a military background or not, individual politicians' relationship with the regime could change with the shifting currents of public opinion, electoral law, intra-military conflicts, state and local politics, and patron-client relationships, as well as personal rivalries and vendettas. When the military instituted a two-party system, most of the political class joined ARENA, not for ideological reasons, but because access to government resources depended upon aligning oneself with the “correct” party. Then in 1979, with the return to a multi-party system, many politicians in São Paulo switched parties again – to the opposition parties because of their popularity with voters, or to the PDS (the successor to ARENA) because the PDS governor controlled the state machine. With party boundaries so fluid and ideology discounted, where does the regime end and opposition begin?

The government/civil society binary also does not hold up well to scrutiny. Most of the goals of civil society movements were not necessarily antithetical to continued military rule. Business leaders were at least as interested in lessening state control over the economy as they were in abolishing military rule. Labor unions like Lula’s metalworkers union certainly yearned for wage adjustments as much as for democracy,
and the Catholic Church sought to bring an end to torture, not only to military rule itself.\textsuperscript{50} Civil society had its own goals, not all of which required the elimination of the military regime; surely the relationship between the government and civil society groups was not as simplistic and dichotomous as the literature has implied.

As French historian Maud Chírio has shown in her outstanding new work on intra-military conflicts during the regime, even the military was divided into competing groups whose composition was in constant flux. In contrast to virtually all the earlier literature, Chírio denies the existence of a consistent “hard line” or group of “radicals.” She instead argues that as the regime changed, the terms of the debates within the military shifted as well; at the same time, military factions were based not only on disputes about the duration and severity of military rule, but also on the same personalism and rivalries that they so reviled in civilian politicians.\textsuperscript{51} Furthermore, military factions all built alliances with sympathetic groups within the civilian political class. Military officers held traditionally civilian posts like president and governor, officers and civilians could ally with members of the other group against factions of their own, and members of both groups could shift loyalties at the drop of a hat. The military/civilian dichotomy tells little about an actor’s ideological orientation or degree of support for the regime. Ultimately, these dichotomies are convenient for scholars attempting to make sense of a confusing array of political actors, but overreliance on them obscures the ever-shifting loyalties and in-between spaces that defined the day-to-day practice of politics.

\textsuperscript{50} For a study of high-level dialogue between the Church and the upper echelons of the military government during the most repressive period of the regime, see Ken Serbin, \textit{Secret Dialogues: Church-State Relations, Torture, and Social Justice in Authoritarian Brazil} (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000). \textsuperscript{51} Maud Chírio, \textit{A política nos quartéis: revoltas e protestos de oficiais na ditadura militar brasileira}, trans., André Telles (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2012).
Even if they are not particularly accurate reflections of real life political practice, dichotomies can still be useful when the categories scholars create, however permeable, have different interests and hence members who make different rational choices, or experience structural influences, like the economic system, in different ways. Such binaries are far less useful for an analysis that focuses on a shared political culture, not structures or rational choice. Officers, the political class, and civil society groups all shared a distinctively Brazilian (and within São Paulo, a distinctively paulista) political culture, one that did not determine their words or actions but did condition the range of the imaginable. Yet this overarching political culture has remained largely unstudied in the literature on the military regime, which has focused on structural and rational choice models. In the last decade historians and anthropologists have produced a small but rich literature on Brazilian political culture, investigating concepts like representation, symbols, rituals, citizenship, discourse, and law and their application in electoral campaigns, conflicts over labor law, community activism in urban peripheries, and elite political conflicts in early twentieth-century São Paulo. However, these works often investigate contemporary Brazilian political culture, contrasting today’s broadly participatory political system with a “lukewarm” politics characterized by “indifference

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and repressed desires” that reigned under the military regime. Political culture under military rule has largely been ignored – a glaring omission for scholars who wish to understand conceptions of democracy and citizenship in the present. Instead of contrasting contemporary political culture with an undemocratic past, I argue that today’s more broadly participatory political system arose out of key shifts in the political culture and dispositions of the political class during military rule.

One of the few scholars to examine political culture under the military regime was Francisco Weffort, who speculated in 1983 that the nation’s political culture had undergone profound changes due to the trauma of military rule. The birth of a true civil society and its unconditional support for democracy prompted Weffort to wonder whether democracy was gaining universal acceptance in Brazil as something that was desirable for its own sake and not merely as a means to a political end. However, while Weffort speculated that Brazilians had come to accept democracy as a core value, his primary evidence for this hypothesis was the resurgence of civil society. As for the political class, he roundly criticized its left wing for its continued “conservatism mixed with simple Machiavellianism.” While it is indisputable that most members of the Brazilian upper class were elitist and condescending toward the lower classes, Weffort’s analysis de-emphasized a point central to this dissertation – elites also have and use political culture and habitus, and both of these can change in response to new situations.

53 Barreira, 11.
55 Ibid., 347-349.
56 Ibid., 331.
This may appear self-evident, but it has not been the focus of recent historical research on political culture. Over the last two decades, historians of Latin America have enthusiastically researched political culture, but, in keeping with the emphases of social and cultural history, they have nearly always focused on “subaltern” political consciousness, while the political consciousness of elites has received less attention. Yet over two decades ago, Emília Viotti da Costa called for scholars to develop a more nuanced study of elites when she wrote, “It is impossible to understand the history of the powerless without understanding the history of the powerful.” While recent work on the ability of subalterns to participate in state building and cultural formation from the margins has brought important insights, the time has come to use the theoretical and methodological tools of cultural history and discourse analysis to study not only subalterns or civil society but also elites. Scholars cannot understand the Brazilian voters, workers, clerics, and demonstrators who have so captivated scholars without a more nuanced investigation of the political culture and habitus of politicians whose beliefs and practices conditioned and responded to their actions.

At the same time, while the politics of elites places limits on the options available to subalterns and civil society movements, it is important not to exaggerate elite power or

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confuse it with that of the state. Yet some scholars do, in fact, ascribe primacy to the state in the formation of political culture. For example, Nils Jacobsen and Cristóbal Alvojín de Losada argue that the formation of modern political cultures is dependent upon the state.

Publicly wielded power, as well as the key dimensions of a polity – citizenship, laws, institutions – is related to the state. [...] Thus, the nature of the state, the nature of civil society, and the nature of their contested relationship are crucial subjects for the political-culture perspective. The way a state operates and is institutionalized sets the framework of politics and shapes political practices and identities. 59

Setting aside here the question of precisely how power, citizenship, laws, and institutions are related to the state, this formulation assumes that the state shapes political practices and identities – that is, the state is the source of political culture. Moreover, the authors posit a “contested relationship” between the state and civil society, a dichotomy that breaks down when confronted with the personal relationships and negotiated deal making that defined the day-to-day practice of politics in São Paulo under the military regime.

In contrast, John D. French defines political culture as a set of “overlapping discourses” that constitute “recurrent and readily identifiable motifs and gestures that cross differences in education, geography, socioeconomic roles, and occupations and professional specializations.” 60 For French, political culture is above all discursive, a set of commonly-held discursive symbols that individuals deploy to advance their political goals. Its contents are not defined by the state but are the sum of the discourses of all those who use it. In French’s formulation the state does not create political culture.

60 French, xi.
Rather, it is merely another participant in it, albeit an especially powerful one, and it deploys the same discursive symbols as the rest of society.

National and state political cultures were not the only factor that conditioned the thought and action of the paulista political class. As stated above, the political class also “collectively orchestrated” a common habitus that structured their attitudes toward politics and popular participation. Yet while habitus is a helpful concept, it must be used with caution. John B. Thompson has pointed out that Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence assumes that the social relations that a habitus enables are maintained through a collective consensus that accurately reflects how the world works. Yet Thompson indicates, “If complicity can be a sign of assimilation to the social order, it can also be a way of circumventing or even disrupting that order by employing the means which are proper to it.”\(^{61}\) He also criticizes Bourdieu for emphasizing only the institutional authority that imparts power and legitimacy through habitus, for in so doing, Bourdieu ignores the actual content of discourses that either sustain or challenge forms of domination.\(^{62}\) I would add that in focusing on the “durable, transposable dispositions” of habitus as a mechanism for perpetuating symbolic violence, Bourdieu does not sufficiently account for the malleability of habitus. If habitus is a “structured structure,” it can be restructured; that is, a habitus can change, as those whose lives are governed by it change their way of interpreting social relations and the world around them. In Brazil, this meant that the effects of the habitus that dictated the hegemony of the political class could be


\(^{62}\) Ibid., 67-69.
circumvented or disrupted. The habitus could shift as the political class faced a rising tide of popular mobilization that could threaten their privileges and power.

In questioning Jacobsen and Alvojín de Losada’s privileging of the state, I place myself among a growing chorus of historians who have called for scholars to de-center the state as a site of cultural production and hegemonic formations. As many of the scholars studying the Brazilian military regime have demonstrated, the temptation to ascribe monolithic power to the state can be overwhelming. But are states really so capable of shaping culture? I argue that they are not, particularly in situations like the Brazilian military regime, in which the political class, who had traditionally run Brazilian politics, suddenly found themselves relegated to the margins of political decision making. Although the military’s economic policies had benefited the elite more than anyone else during the economic “miracle,” support for the regime from the political class, subjected to a humiliating military tutelage, steadily deteriorated from 1968 forward. Despite the formation of a two-party system, purging of recalcitrant politicians, innumerable revisions and manipulations of election law, and the threat of prosecutions for corruption, the political class remained stubbornly self-interested, regionalist, and divided. When the political class did change under military rule, it changed in ways completely antithetical to the military’s original project. Instead of becoming an orderly, benevolent political elite that would govern responsibly for the good of the country under military direction, politicians grudgingly came to accept a more broadly participatory political system. No longer could the political class simply repress and co-opt its way to domination; as a result of the dramatic São Paulo metalworkers strikes of 1978-1980, its members realized
that in order to regain a portion of their privileges, they would have to accept and adapt to a more broadly participatory democracy.

I thus depart from analyses that assert a dichotomous relationship between the state and civil society/opposition, privilege structural and interest-based explanations for the Brazilian transition, and make either the state or subaltern political consciousness privileged site of cultural formation. Instead I examine how the political culture and shifting habitus of the political class helped frustrate the military regime’s efforts to reform politics and institutions and contributed to its demise. By 1985, their efforts would end in failure, due not only to the resistance of civil society, but also to the continued stubbornness of the political class, whose members refused to permanently conform to military tutelage and, when they did change, changed in ways that the generals had never imagined. The days of elite-dominated liberal democracy that most of the military so reviled came to an end, but instead of being replaced with a bureaucratic-authoritarian, military-dominated, “relative democracy,” they were supplanted by the most participatory democratic system Brazil had ever known, one that, despite continued elite resistance to the diminishment of its privileges, has lasted for 28 years through five transfers of power and made astonishing progress in reducing social inequality.

Dissertation Sources

This dissertation is based upon over 20,000 sources gleaned from eighteen archives in Brazil, the United States, the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Spain. The most important of these sources are newspapers, which offer rich possibilities for achieving a textured reading of the culture of the political class. Controlled by powerful families with
an extensive network of political connections, the paulista dailies contain a wealth of political analysis and editorials, enabling the construction of an intricately detailed narrative. Political reporters enjoyed access to politicians and were often more informed about meetings, alliances, rumors, and vendettas than the politicians themselves. Newspapers were also fond of publicizing politicians’ missteps – details that seldom appear in interviews or memoirs. Furthermore, while newspaper readership was low, they had a greater influence than their limited circulation suggests. As Anne-Marie Smith points out, “Data, analyses, criticisms, accusations, judgments, and rumors are delivered to the elite by this medium, and newspapers thus have the power to affect elite debates.”

Of course, newspapers, controlled by members of the elite and aimed toward the upper and middle classes, privilege political and economic coverage, and they tend to exaggerate the importance of the political class while downplaying the role of non-elite groups. Moreover, both major paulista dailies (Folha de S. Paulo and O Estado de S. Paulo), key political players in their own right, interpreted events in accordance with their own agendas – a vague sense of moderation and conciliation in the case of the Folha, though tempered by the paper’s many leftist reporters, and a strident old-style liberalism in the case of O Estado, uncompromisingly opposed to both regime encroachment on its privileges and popular participation. None of this detracts from

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newspapers’ value as a source, but it does require the historian to remain aware that their narratives, rather than simply reporting facts, actively create discourses about politics.\textsuperscript{65}

In the years since the regime collapsed, politicians, journalists, and, to a lesser extent, major military figures, have sought to glorify or justify their own roles in the military regime’s rise, rule, and fall through biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and collections of oral histories. They contain detailed and sometimes contradictory behind-the-scenes accounts of closed-door meetings, personal conflicts and slights, and rumors and innuendos that newspapers often only hint at. Still, it is necessary to use these works with caution. They were most often composed in the 1990s or 2000s, when politicians had compelling reasons to glorify their opposition to and minimize their collaboration with a dictatorship that was coming to be remembered with a great deal of bitterness. Still, when compared and combined with newspapers and other sources, these works provide a remarkably rich inside source for the study of the political class.

One set of sources that proved surprisingly useful was the documentation produced by the Brazilian Congress. Each house of Congress maintains its own institutional archive, and the archive of the Chamber of Deputies has organized and digitized a staggering amount of material. The \textit{Diário do Congresso Nacional}, analogous to the \textit{Congressional Record} in the United States, is the daily record of the proceedings of both the Senate and Chamber. The highlight of the \textit{Diário do Congresso Nacional} is the (sometimes edited) transcripts of nearly every congressional speech given during the twenty-one years of military rule. Even more exciting, the audio archive of the Chamber

of Deputies has digitized recordings of Chamber speeches from the 1960s to the present. Comparisons of the *Diário do Congresso Nacional* with the recordings often reveal telling edits to the former designed to soften the speeches before the generals could read them. Even more important, the rare opportunity to listen to historical sources enables me to conduct an aural history that analyzes not only words, but also tone, cadence, applause, interruptions, and shouting matches among the deputies. The congressional archives also hold unpublished documentation related to legislation and congressional votes, including the famous 1968 attempt to try a deputy for insulting the Armed Forces (the subject of chapter 2). In addition, the state printing press in São Paulo has digitized the *Diário Oficial do Estado de São Paulo*, which contains the proceedings of the unicameral state legislative assembly, with transcripts of state deputies’ speeches.

Another extraordinary source was the archive of the Centro de Memória Eleitoral of the Tribunal Regional Eleitoral in São Paulo (the regional branch of the electoral justice system). The archive contains thousands of boxes of candidate registries, electoral prosecutions and appeals, and electoral results. The staff there allowed me to examine the registrations of all the candidates for senator, governor, and federal and state deputy from the 1974 elections, enabling me to gather an enormous amount of raw data on the demographic characteristics of the political class – age, profession, place of birth, education, wealth, and more. I also collected several fascinating appeals to the candidacies of Paulo Maluf for governor (the topic of chapter 6) and Fernando Henrique Cardoso for Senate in the 1978 elections.
One particularly intriguing and seldom-utilized source for the study of the political class is correspondence from embassies in Brazil to their home foreign ministries. The records of the State Department until 1976 held at the U.S. National Archives in College Park, Maryland, as well as a cache of later documents that I obtained directly from the State Department via a FOIA request, provide an exhaustive, though biased, account of politics under military rule. The telegrams and airgrams sent from Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Brasília back to Washington contain detailed accounts of American diplomats’ and military attaches’ constant meetings, dinners, and cocktail parties with Brazilian political, military, religious, and business leaders. While one must exercise caution to avoid uncritically accepting American diplomats’ sometimes crude and nearly always condescending caricatures of Brazilian politics, diplomatic correspondence often provides information that politicians would not have repeated to the press and probably would have been censored if they had. While the US embassy, due to its large staff and preoccupation with Latin America during the Cold War, has the largest cache of documents, I also discovered similar documents in the British National Archives and the archives of the Spanish and Portuguese foreign ministries in Madrid and Lisbon.

The military regime also maintained an extensive network of intelligence services, and their archives have slowly, amidst much controversy, been made available to scholars and the public. The state political and social police, the Departamento de Ordem e Política Social (DOPS), established under Vargas, remained active under the military regime, gathering files on prominent politicians as their officers attended the political rallies of the opposition. The São Paulo DOPS archive and that of its semi-
clandestine successor, the Departamento de Comunicação Social (DCS), have both been made available to researchers with very few restrictions. The investigations of the information-gathering arm of the federal Justice Ministry, the Divisão de Segurança e Informações (DSI-MJ), are also available in the Arquivo Nacional in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, the records of the regime’s primary intelligence gathering service, the Serviço Nacional de Informações (SNI), are held by the Arquivo Nacional in Brasília, although byzantine government regulations prevent researchers from accessing any document that mentions a person’s name without his or her written consent. All these sources provide fascinating insight into the mindset of the repressive organizations that the regime utilized to help enforce the political and social changes it envisioned, and they occasionally contain key details not included in other sources.

Other sources came from the Instituto Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Fundação Mário Covas in São Paulo, both founded in part to glorify the accomplishments and preserve the personal archives of their namesakes, key opposition politicians in São Paulo. And the Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil (CPDOC) in Rio de Janeiro holds a vast collection of private archives (including that of the fourth general-president, Ernesto Geisel), as well as the archive of the national directorate of the regime-allied political party and transcripts of the thousands of oral history interviews the center has carried out over the decades. From Memória Globo, the archive of Brazil’s largest television network, I obtained recordings of newscasts. And the Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth in Campinas holds political public opinion polls conducted by the Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística (IBOPE).
Dissertation Structure

On March 31, 1964, a coalition of military and civilian opponents of João Goulart, after months of conspiracy, launched a revolt that forced the left-leaning President from the country in a bloodless coup. Civilian allies of the military expected that as they had done so often in the past, the Armed Forces would return power to them after a brief political intervention. Yet they quickly discovered that this time, this was not to be the case. The military intended to rule for far longer and envisioned sweeping changes to Brazilian politics and institutions – a “Revolution,” as they called it – and many of these reforms would target a political class seen as corrupt, untrustworthy, and in some cases, subversive. The military stripped hundreds of politicians of their political rights, decreed the end of direct presidential and gubernatorial elections, abolished the old political parties, and finally in 1967 imposed a new authoritarian constitution, ratified by their still-compliant congressional supermajority, that was intended to institutionalize the “advances” of the “Revolution” by reducing the powers of the legislative and judicial branches still further. Yet after all these forced reforms, politicians were hopeful by 1968 that with its objectives accomplished, the military would permit a return to civilian rule.

The uneasy truce between the military and political class was shattered in the second half of 1968. First, as chapter 1 describes, the military and political class clashed over the repression of the revitalized leftist student movement, especially at the University of Brasilia. In contrast to other scholars and former student activists, who have posited the separation of the student movement from traditional politics, I demonstrate that due to social and family ties, politicians identified strongly with rebellious students,
in whom they saw younger versions of themselves. Yet for the military, politicians’ refusal to condemn students’ “subversion” reinforced what they had long suspected – civilian politicians could not be trusted to support the “Revolution.” In the face of politicians’ vicious denunciations of the August invasion of the University of Brasilia, the military demanded that the Chamber of Deputies grant them permission to prosecute an opposition deputy for supposedly insulting the Armed Forces in a congressional speech.

Chapter 2 analyzes the high drama that followed, as the Chamber of Deputies, which was dominated by regime allies, decided whether to revoke the parliamentary immunity of Guanabara deputy Márcio Moreira Alves. After two months of attempts to find a compromise that would satisfy the military’s honor while leaving that of Congress intact and impassioned appeals to the constitution, the heroes of the past, and the judgment of history, the Chamber refused to revoke immunity. After four years of military infringement on their prerogatives, the political class would tolerate no more. In response, an infuriated military recessed Congress for nearly a year, suspended many civil liberties, ruled by decree, and resolved to punish a rebellious political class. After four years of military-civilian rule, open military dictatorship had arrived in Brazil.

As Chapter 3 details, the generals, heirs of a liberal yet authoritarian tradition, now attempted to forcibly transform politics while retaining the shell of democratic institutions. To that end, they spent most of 1969 removing over 300 elected politicians from office and reforming the constitution to ensure that the parliamentary rebellion of 1968 would never repeat itself. Civilian politicians would continue to have a limited voice, but there would be no doubt about where ultimate authority lay. Politicians had
refused to collaborate with the Armed Forces for the good of Brazil; now they would be forced to collaborate, or at least not contest the “Revolution,” or they would be removed.

By 1974, as chapter 4 shows, politicians had found several ways of reaching accommodation with the new status quo. Though some young members of the opposition, dubbed autênticos (authentics), were determined to frontally challenge the regime, most politicians preferred to, as one put it, “wait under the tree for the storm to pass,” hoping to survive until the regime collapsed. Other politicians chose a third way, as exemplified by a young MDB mayor in São Paulo who decided to accept the rules imposed by the regime and seek to arrive in power by winning elections, through emphasizing everyday issues that mattered to voters, with opposition to the regime’s dictatorial excesses fading into the background. Except for a few noisy autênticos, it appeared that politicians had acquiesced to military tutelage, convincing the generals that their political model was succeeding. In order to secure politicians’ continued co-operation, new general-president Ernesto Geisel resolved to allow a limited relaxation of the political system.

Chapter 5 explains how Geisel’s plan to institutionalize the regime through détente was dealt an unexpected blow in the 1974 legislative elections. The MDB, armed with a new strategy that emphasized socioeconomic inequality in the midst of macroeconomic growth, performed surprisingly well against a divided and disorganized ARENA, shockingly winning 16 of 22 open Senate seats, nearly half of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and control of six state legislative assemblies. For the first time, the opposition began to believe that they could take power through elections, and for the
first time the generals began to entertain doubts about the long-term prospects for their plan to reform political institutions by keeping the political class compliant.

As a revitalized opposition protested the military’s dictatorial excesses, Chapter 6 shows how regime allies in São Paulo slapped the generals in the face in 1978. After the regime made gubernatorial elections indirect yet again, Geisel and his handpicked successor, General João Batista Figueiredo, had nominated a former governor to be approved by an ARENA nominating convention. But instead of meekly accepting the generals’ dictates, as they had done so often since 1964, the delegates chose the dissident regime ally Paulo Maluf, using his candidacy to express their dissatisfaction with the military’s usurpation of their prerogatives. In addition to having to contend with a more combative opposition, a blossoming labor movement, and new student protests, the generals were facing dissent from their own civilian allies on a level unseen since 1968.\(^66\)

Then, as Chapter 7 shows, in 1978-1980 politicians were confronted with a “new unionism” that demanded a direct political role for workers. Metalworkers’ strikes in São Paulo, led by future president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, forced some politicians to accept expanded popular political participation, as opposition politicians defended striking workers in Congress, protected workers and police, and mediated between workers and employers. For the first time, politicians were forced to face the unsettling prospect that the popular classes would no longer tolerate their marginalization from political power. Opposition to the regime became about not simply restoring the privileges of the political class, but about a far more profound change in Brazilian social relations that rejected

\(^{66}\) A version of this chapter was published as Bryan Pitts, “The Audacity to Strong-Arm the Generals: Paulo Maluf and the 1978 São Paulo Gubernatorial Contest,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (2012).
military rule and elite-dominated liberalism, and politicians had to decide whether to take the side of a revitalized civil society or attempt to preserve their dominance. Unlike 1964, when most politicians had accepted a coup reacting against demands for popular participation, this time a significant number of politicians took the workers’ side.

In 1982, the opposition won control of key states in direct gubernatorial elections, and in 1985, the regime finally collapsed, as government-allied politicians in the electoral college abandoned Maluf, the “official” presidential candidate, to vote for moderate oppositionist Tancredo Neves. The “Revolution” had ended in the midst of an unprecedented debt crisis and the collapse of its political base of support. The military returned to the barracks. In 1988 a new “citizen’s constitution” gave unprecedented opportunities for participation to the masses, and in 2002, Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, the former shoeshine boy with an elementary school education who had led the 1978-1980 strikes, won the presidency. The twenty-one years of military rule had profoundly reshaped Brazilian political institutions, but due in large measure to the failure of politicians to accept military tutelage, those institutions where transformed in ways that the generals could never have imagined or desired. Politicians’ resistance to military rule had just as much to do with regaining their prerogatives or “sticking it” to the military as with defending democracy or advocating or popular participation, but it ultimately contributed decisively to the collapse of authoritarian military rule.

On the morning of August 29, 1968, acting on orders from the military and justice ministry, hundreds of police wielding truncheons and machine guns descended on the campus of the University of Brasília (UnB), located a scant two miles from Brazil’s futuristic skyscraper of a Congress. Brandishing arrest warrants for five leftist student activists, they kicked in classroom doors, smashed laboratory equipment, and marched hundreds of the children of Brazil’s elites across campus, hands on their heads, to be held in a basketball court for processing. When federal deputies and senators rushed from Congress to discover what was happening, they were met with insults, and a São Paulo deputy was beaten as he futilely waved his congressional identification.

Civilian politicians had largely supported, or at least tolerated, a “Revolution” that promised to save the country from leftist subversion, economic ruin, and political malfeasance. Yet the military soon demonstrated that it envisioned not a passing intervention but rather a profound transformation of Brazil’s political system that would cure politicians once and for all of their pettiness, selfishness, and corruption. Over the next four years, it began to appear that if the military wanted a partnership with its civilian allies, civilians were ever to be the junior partners. In 1968, politicians’ mounting frustration with the regime reached its breaking point, first as a result of the brutal repression of the student movement and then when the military attempted to prosecute a deputy for harshly criticizing them in the wake of the UnB invasion.

After a brief explanation of politicians’ reaction to the political changes imposed after 1964, this chapter will analyze the first act in the showdown of 1968 – the political
class’s surprising reaction to repression of the leftist-dominated student movement. Due to the social and family ties that connected wealthy, educated politicians to the small percentage of Brazilian youth who attended university, both regime allies and opponents were furious when the military turned its repressive apparatus on students. Senators and deputies, frustrated by their inability to stop the violence, could only hurl denunciations at the police, the military, and the regime from their respective rostrums. How had a “Revolution” intended to save the country from communism devolved into Soviet-style repression akin to what had just happened in Prague? Regime allies had never dreamed that the “Revolution” they had supported would one day turn on their own children, and even the opposition was shocked at the intensity of the repression.

From Jubilation to Disillusion: A “Revolution” Gone Astray

On March 31, 1964 a military uprising drove the left-leaning president João Goulart, the vice-president who had come to office when Jânio Quadros resigned in 1961, into exile. In violation of the 1946 constitution, Congress declared the presidency vacant even before Goulart left the country and ten days later elected General Humberto Castelo Branco to serve the remainder of his term. A significant portion of civilian politicians and their military, clerical, landowning, and business allies were overjoyed. Goulart’s talk of leftist reforms was threatening to a political and military elite that had been profoundly shaken by the Cuban Revolution, and his friendliness to labor, discussion of rural land reform, and encouragement of popular mobilization challenged deeply ingrained elite social, cultural, and economic dominance. Moreover, Goulart had been “the beloved
disciple of the dead dictator”¹ Getúlio Vargas (whose centralizing rule was still recalled with horror by regional political classes), and a potential return to a populist dictatorship was unthinkable to politicians who Vargas had marginalized.² Thus, in the discourse of its military and civilian protagonists, the coup represented not the collapse of democracy but its salvation; not a violation of the constitution, but its preservation. This message resonated strongly in São Paulo, which in 1932 had fought a war – the famed Constitutionalist Revolution – against the Vargas regime. As an O Estado de S. Paulo editorial crowed, “As one man, São Paulo finds itself today fully mobilized, and, with the same spirit as three decades ago, rises up in defense of the present Constitution.”³

Unsurprisingly, the most enthusiastic politicians came from the ranks of the National Democratic Union (União Democrática Nacional – UDN), the right-leaning party established in 1945 to oppose Vargas. São Paulo federal deputy Herbert Levy applauded Brazil for “vigorously repelling its Cubanization and demonstrating its democratic maturity […] as it rises up in unison to obstruct the path to dictatorship.”⁴ Roberto de Abreu Sodré, former president of the state legislative assembly and current president of the paulista UDN, claimed that the coup “was imposed by the Brazilian people, [who were] betrayed by the ex-President.”⁵ Yet it was not only members of the UDN that cheered. Governor Adhemar de Barros, of the Social Progressive Party (Partido Social Progressista – PSP), congratulated paulistas for “ris[ing] up […] once more in

¹ “O significado maior de uma vitória,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 2 Apr. 1964, 3.
² The unlikelihood that an aspiring populist dictator in the mold of the semi-fascist Vargas was preparing to turn Brazil over to Soviet-style Communists appears to have remained unnoted.
³ “São Paulo repete 32,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 1 Apr. 1964, 3.
⁵ “Abreu Sodré afirma que o povo impôs o movimento,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 3 Apr. 1964, 8.
defense of democratic ideals, [and] safeguarding the supreme values of our Christian civilization.”  

Federal deputy Antonio Cunha Bueno, of the centrist Social Democratic Party (Partido Social Democrático – PSD) expressed joy that São Paulo was “absolutely integrated and united in defense […] of the spirit of legality, in the spirit of defense of constitutional principles, and the most lofty spirit of preventing the Brazilian Pátria from being communized.”  

Even some politicians who would later join the opposition did not complain when Goulart was deposed. PSD federal deputy Ulysses Guimarães had been critical of Goulart and “even discreetly assisted in his overthrow, although less through action than through omission,” as he remained silent during the coup. 

Deputy André Franco Montoro, of the Christian Democratic Party (Partido Democrata Cristão – PDC), and Goulart’s labor minister from 1961-1962, rushed to Brasília when he received news of the coup but also did not criticize it openly.  

The press was equally enthusiastic. O Estado de S. Paulo had taken a pro-UDN stance since 1945. So it was no shock when on April 2 an O Estado headline screamed, “The democratic movement, victorious!”  

Behind the scenes, the paper went further still. In a letter to the coup’s leaders, the paper’s owner, Júlio de Mesquita Filho, proposed an extra-legal “institutional act” that would dissolve Congress, state legislatures, and municipal councils; empower the executive to remove governors and mayors, and suspend habeas corpus for crimes against national security or the “constituted order.”

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6 “Empolgou São Paulo a vitória das armas libertadoras,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 2 Apr. 1964, 5.
8 Gutemberg, 99.
9 Montoro and Cavalcanti, 137-138.
10 “Vitorioso o movimento democrático,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 2 Apr. 1964, 38.
11 Stacchini, 18, 22-24. Numerous scholars have analyzed the enthusiastic press support for the coup. For representative discussions of the role of the paulista press, see Luiz Antonio Dias, “Informação e formação:
The other paulista daily, the *Folha de S. Paulo*, agreed that Goulart had brought the crisis on himself. The weeks and months before had seen Goulart embark on a campaign to weaken, if not eliminate, Congress and concentrate power in the hands of the executive branch. He had criticized and proposed reforms to the current constitution when the initiative for constitutional reforms should come from Congress. He had issued decrees that should have been proposed to Congress for consideration as laws. His “bold-faced interventionism” at the state level had become “almost routine.” Thankfully the military, conscious of its responsibilities as defender of democracy, had stepped in just in time to stop Goulart’s power grab. His overthrow marked “the victory of the spirit of legality, re-establishing the primacy of the Constitution and the Law.”

Over the next week, it became apparent that something was amiss – the military did not intend to immediately return power to civilians, as it had after interventions in 1945 and 1954. Paulo Egydio Martins, a successful young businessman and aspiring politician who had actively participated in the conspiracy, later complained:

> Days after the Revolution, we civilians in São Paulo felt that our role had ended, that […] we became totally forgotten. […] The phone calls that we used to receive ceased, and we had no way to get in touch with our old military associates. We felt literally dismissed; we realized that power that was in the hands of the Army and that we would have nothing more to do with it.

The military promptly decreed an “Institutional Act” that proclaimed, “The victorious Revolution […] legitimates itself,” and, among other measures, granted the president 60
days to *cassar* (remove from office) politicians and public employees and suspend their political rights for ten years.\(^{14}\) Yet despite the misgivings of Egydio and other political and business elites, the act stopped short of the measures Mesquita had suggested, and it was clearly not an attack on the political class as a whole; rather, it was to be a temporary measure enabling the new government to rid itself of communists, *getulista* holdovers, and assorted other “subversives.” Indeed, as early as April 2, de Barros had called for Congress to cassar any communist or anarchist members.\(^{15}\)

The next 60 days saw the cassação of three former presidents (one of whom, Juscelino Kubitschek, was currently a senator), three governors, 62 current and former federal deputies and substitutes, 53 current and former state deputies and substitutes, 15 current and former mayors and vice mayors, and 12 municipal councilors. It was a traumatic event, to be sure, but at the same time, it had mainly targeted allies of the deposed president. And one state, Goulart’s home of Rio Grande do Sul, had borne the worst of the punishment, with a quarter of the cassações. As Montoro pointed out years later, the Institutional Act had not gone very far – it had an expiration date and left untouched the direct presidential election, which remained slated for October 1965.\(^{16}\) Even after June, when ex-President Juscelino Kubitschek (the leading candidate for that election) was cassado and Castelo Branco’s term extended by a year via constitutional

\(^{14}\) The verb *cassar* (noun: *cassação*; plural: *cassações*; participle: *cassado*) does not translate readily. Although it means “to annul,” “to cancel,” “to repeal,” “to revoke,” or “to abrogate,” it was used under the military regime to refer to the cancellation of a politician’s term in office or the dismissal of a public employee for political reasons, most often with a ten-year suspension of the right to vote or hold public office. Reflecting the difficulty in translating the word, consular correspondence from U.S. State Department personnel in Brazil renders it with the neologism “cassate.”

\(^{15}\) “Enérgica advertências do governador e Kruel contra as transigências,” *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 3 April 1964, 4.

\(^{16}\) Montoro and Cavalcanti, 140.
amendment, by 1966 at the latest, the so-called “revolutionary process” would be over, and direct elections would pick Castelo Branco’s successor. It appeared that the purging of the political class of its “subversive” elements was complete.

A political crisis in October 1965 shattered this illusion and began to turn elements of the political class against the regime. In response to the victory of Kubitschek-allied candidates for governor in Guanabara and Minas Gerais, Castelo Branco decreed a new institutional act. The first act in 1964 had had 11 articles; this one had 33. In addition to renewing the president’s right to cassar politicians and public employees (for 17 months instead of just 60 days), AI-2 (Ato Institucional no. 2) made presidential elections indirect, decided by a simple majority in Congress; allowed the president to place Congress in recess; stacked the Supreme Court; and transferred jurisdiction over crimes against national security to military courts. Most traumatically for politicians, in an expression of military dissatisfaction with factionalism and non-ideological parties, AI-2 abolished the existing political parties and consequently radically altered political life in Brazil for more than a decade.17

Thirty-five years later, Montoro identified AI-2 as “the watershed of Brazilian political life,” when “the government renounced all its promises of redemocratization and plunged the country into the night of the discretionary regime.”18 Similarly, Paulo Egydio later argued that by caving to military pressure, Castelo Branco had chosen the unity of

17 There is a rich literature on the three main political parties during the 1945-1965 period. For a history of the UDN, see Maria Victoria de Mesquita Benevides, A UDN e o udenismo. Ambiguídues do liberalismo brasileiro (1945-1965) (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1981). For the PSD, see Lucia Hippolito, De raposas e reformistas: o PSD e a experiência democrática brasileira (1945-1964) (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1985). Finally, for the PTB, see Maria Celina Soares d'Araújo, O Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro e os dilemas dos partidos classistas (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil, 1991).
18 Montoro and Cavalcanti, 143.
the military over the good of the nation. Yet at the time, neither Montoro nor Egydio voiced their disagreement publicly. Many politicians who did react publicly to AI-2 did so cautiously, although their discontent often shone through. Upon receiving a phone call with news of AI-2, São Paulo governor Adhemar de Barros was overheard remarking, “May God our Father help us to endure this crude blow.” Yet later, when a telegram arrived from Brasília containing the Justice Minister’s justification for the act, the governor sent a reply expressing “the full trust of […] São Paulo in the patriotic action of our President Castelo Branco.” Abreu Sodré released a statement on behalf of the paulista UDN that applauded many of the measures contained on the Act, but specifically condemned, “with all vehemence, the measure that extinguishes the political parties.” Furthermore, the note affirmed that the UDN could not “applaud indirect elections, which abruptly alter the tradition of our republican life.” A more timid joint statement by PSD federal deputies explained that the party was “surprised by this discretionary manifestation,” and insisted that the PSD had had nothing to do with the Act, while promising “to fight for the full recuperation of the normality and tranquility of democratic life in our country.” PDC state deputy Roberto Cardoso Alves, a Montoro protégé and president of the party in São Paulo, released a tepid statement affirming the continuing commitment of the party’s members to Christian democracy and calling for “a noble-minded effort of unification.”

19 Alberti, Farias, and Rocha, 202-203.
21 Ibid.
In Congress, federal deputy Ivette Vargas, niece of Getúlio Vargas, remarked, “For the last year and a half, we’ve been proclaiming that there was a dictatorship. Now they’ve taken the mask off.”25 Similarly, Santa Catarina deputy Doutel de Andrade, national president of the PTB, remarked that Castelo Branco had “dealt a mortal blow to what remained of republican institutions,” and called on Congress to “react against the attempt to implant a state of exception,” lest Brazil suffer “the irremediable liquidation of the democratic regime.”26 Deputies from across the country echoed Vargas and Andrade.

Even O Estado de S. Paulo, whose owners and editors had so elatedly welcomed the coup in 1964, expressed misgivings. Although an October 28 editorial argued that the new Act was the result of an inevitable choice between “the survival of the Revolution and the pure and simple return to the past,” it also worried that the immense powers it gave the president could, if not used responsibly, “open the path to dictatorship.”27 An editorial the next day further criticized AI-2’s incorporation into the Constitution of the indirect election of the president and remembered that the last time indirect elections for president had been instituted in Brazil, they maintained Vargas in power. In another probable reference to Vargas, it recalled that the abolition of political parties was always a precursor to dictatorship but expressed hope that the coming complementary act regulating the formation of new parties would avert such an outcome.28

While AI-2 abolished the old parties, it also stipulated that the president, via a forthcoming complementary act, would set rules for the formation of new parties. While

26 Ibid.
it was widely accepted that there needed to be far fewer parties, the next month saw intense Congressional discussion about how many parties there should be. A one-party system; a two-party system with a government-allied party and an opposition party; and a three-party system with a government-allied party, an opposition party, and a third “independent” party were all considered. In the end, the complementary act permitted the formation of up to three new parties, with a minimum of 20 senators and 120 federal deputies required to form one. Yet politicians – particularly from the UDN, PSD, and smaller regional parties – were so eager to join the new government-allied party, the Alliance of National Renovation (Aliança Renovadora Nacional – ARENA), that there were barely enough legislators remaining to form even one more party. The few legislators – mostly from the PTB, with some from the PSD, and assorted allies of cassado ex-presidents Quadros and Kubitschek – who wished to risk open opposition (or who were unable to stomach co-existing in the same party with enemies who had joined ARENA) formed the Brazilian Democratic Movement (Movimento Democrático Brasileiro – MDB). (According to one oft-repeated story, Castelo Branco had to

29 A one-party system was rejected, as it would have been incompatible with the generals’ concern with maintaining the appearance of liberal democracy. Even if the opposition were to be afforded little real power, its existence was necessary to preserve what remained of the “Revolution’s” democratic credentials.

30 Skidmore, The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-85, 48. Ulysses Guimarães, one of the MDB’s founders, received credit for selecting the name. At first, the new party was leaning toward calling itself the Brazilian Democratic Alliance (ADB – Aliança Democrática Brasileira) to differentiate itself from ARENA. But Guimarães argued that it was necessary to select a name with masculine gender, as opposed to the feminine aliança. He remembered that jokes and political cartoons had frequently portrayed the UDN (a feminine união) as a woman, while the PSD (a masculine partido) had appeared as a man. Guimarães hoped to encourage the same representation of ARENA and the MDB, with the movimento portrayed as a man and the aliança as a woman. See Gutemberg, 99. In another version of events, Guimarães proposed Brazilian Democratic Action (Ação Democrática Brasileira) but Minas Gerais deputy Tancredo Neves jokingly proposed the masculine movimento because “the UDN, which had a woman’s name, only complicated matters; it even got involved in that coup against the [democratic] institutions. Let’s pick a macho name.” See Melhem, Política de botinas amarelas: O MDB-PMDB paulista de 1965 a 1988, 75. Regardless, as Lucia Grinberg has demonstrated in her analysis of regime-era political cartoons,
intervene personally to convince Paraíba senator Rui Carneiro to join the MDB in order for the party to manage 20 senators.\textsuperscript{31}

AI-2 and the abolition of the old parties was certainly a disaster for politicians, but it did not go as far as many had feared. Castelo Branco used the Act to cassar only one governor, a vice governor, six federal deputies and substitutes, 39 state deputies, 10 mayors and vice mayors, and 5 municipal councilors. Most notably, Adhemar de Barros was removed as governor of São Paulo, due largely to his increasing divergences from the generals, not his notorious corruption. In February 1966, AI-3 extended indirect elections to gubernatorial elections and stipulated that the governors would nominate mayors of state capitals, to be confirmed by the state legislatures.

Castelo Branco acceded to military consensus and chose General Artur da Costa e Silva as his successor, and Congress duly ratified the choice in October 1966. At the same time, Castelo Branco and his legal experts drafted a new constitution granting greatly expanded power to the president at the expense of the legislative branch and including many of the provisions of AI-2, like indirect presidential elections. With minimal revisions, Congress approved it in January 1967. The MDB issued a manifesto blasting the new constitution for its totalitarian tendencies, institutionalization of military rule, and suffocation of liberty, yet at the same time, MDB secretary general José Martins Rodrigues confided to US embassy personnel that the statement was “more a declaration

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of position than [a] call to sabotage [the] Constitution,” and that the MDB would wait and see how Costa e Silva applied it before deciding whether to try to amend it (a move doomed to failure, since ARENA enjoyed a commanding congressional majority). 

Rodrigues’ private position was similar to the attitude taken by many politicians. On the one hand, they were displeased with the abolition of the old parties, institution of indirect elections, and curtailment of legislative powers, yet on the other, politicians were uncertain how to express their discontent. Vocal opposition to military rule was one option. Unconditional public support despite private disagreement with the new political order was another. Yet another option was measured criticism of specific measures, without challenging military rule. Or a politician may have moved between positions depending on the winds at the moment, the instructions of a prominent politician with whom he or she was allied, or the cassação of a mentor or ally. As a result, criticism sometimes came from unexpected sources. In a January 1968 interview, ARENA senator Carlos Carvalho Pinto, a former paulista governor, criticized the two party system and indirect elections, which he feared were “retarding dangerously” Brazil’s return to full democracy. Moreover, as a presidential hopeful, he argued that while individual members of the military should be free to participate in politics, the military as a body should have no role in politics beyond the defense of democratic institutions. Now that the military had saved Brazil from anarchy, it was time for civilian politicians to prove they were responsible enough for the military to hand power over to them.

33 Airgram 175, 16 Jan. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1901, Pol 2 BRAZ.
Carvalho Pinto was not an isolated example. Whatever public attitude they took, privately many Brazilian politicians profoundly disagreed with the direction their “Revolution” had taken. In January 1968, the magazine Realidade published the results of a survey of 246 federal deputies and senators (149 from ARENA and 97 from the MDB – over half of Congress) based on five months of exhaustive interviews. An overwhelming 85% supported a multi-party system over the two-party one, 84% believed states did not have sufficient autonomy, 80% preferred direct presidential elections, 69% believed the legislative branch should have the exclusive power to cassar politicians, and 65% thought the executive branch had taken over too many powers rightfully belonging to the legislative branch. A miniscule 11% believed that the new Constitution adequately reflected the aspirations of the Brazilian people. While the survey included the opinions of a disproportionate number of opposition politicians, it did show that a sizable portion of ARENA was dissatisfied with the military’s reforms. Moreover, it demonstrated that most of the dissatisfaction stemmed from the regime’s encroachment on the prerogatives of the political class.

Yet despite the cassação of additional politicians, the curtailment of legislative powers – and by extension, those of the political class – and the enshrinement of indirect elections in a more authoritarian Constitution, things were looking up as 1968 began. AI-2 had expired on March 15, 1967, when Costa e Silva took office. The act had been used only sparingly to purge the political class, politicians were settled (albeit often uncomfortably) in two new parties, Costa e Silva began his term with talk of a “humanization” of the Revolution, and the new constitution, if it limited the powers of

34 Airgram 132, 5 Jan. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1901, Pol 2 BRAZ.
Congress, also theoretically gave the regime the power it needed to effect its
transformation of the Brazilian economy, politics, and society without the need for new
institutional acts. Moreover, the new constitution stipulated that additional cassações
could only be carried out through a Supreme Court trial, with congressional approval.

The validity of the “Revolution” depended upon the claim that it had saved
democratic institutions from dictatorship; it was essential for the military collaborate,
however one-sidedly, with elected politicians, in order to prove that it had not supplanted
democracy. Despite dissatisfaction with their forced deference to the executive branch
and military, politicians had room to maneuver. In 1964, former members of the UDN,
ever able to win power via elections, had conspired with the military to overthrow
Goulart. Now, even if the political class overall had seen its power decline, they now
found themselves with key leadership posts in Congress, and UDN stalwarts like senator
Daniel Krieger (president of ARENA) and federal deputy Rondon Pacheco (the
president’s civilian chief of staff) enjoyed ready access to the president. Even in the
practically powerless MDB, politicians remained free to criticize the government as they
saw fit. By early 1968, then, the political class and military had reached an uneasy truce.
“I Stand in Solidarity with the Students”: Politicians and the Student Movement

Yet beginning in March 1968, the truce was dealt a series of punishing blows as the military and police engaged in increasingly violent repression of student protestors, who in some cases were leftist militants calling for the fall of the dictatorship, but in others were simply calling for more funding, more admissions, and better study conditions. In late March, Rio de Janeiro secondary student Edson Luis, a working-class migrant from the northern state of Pará, was killed in a confrontation with military police during a protest over cafeteria food, sparking a series of protests across the country. The protests culminated in June when, after clashes with police led to more repressive treatment of demonstrators, students marched in Rio de Janeiro in the famous “March of the 100,000.”35 A short-lived “war” between students of the University of São Paulo and the conservative private Mackenzie University killed a student in October. Two weeks later, the military disbanded the clandestine congress of the banned National Student Union (União Nacional de Estudantes – UNE) and arrested hundreds of students.

Politicians, even many of those who supported the regime, were sympathetic to the students in their confrontations with the police. For in a country where a university education was the privilege of a tiny elite, the students protesting in the streets were often

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“our children, our brothers, our relatives.”36 Guanabara deputy Breno da Silveira had a son in school at the University of Brasilia who was arrested during a demonstration against the killing of Edson Luís in March; his other son, who was in the Army, was part of the force sent to break up the demonstration.37 One of the organizers of the March of the 100,000, Vladimir Palmeira, who would spend nearly a year in prison for his “subversion,” was the son of ARENA senator Rui Palmeira. As former colonel and ARENA deputy Paulo Nunes Leal put it, “When we have children in school, we associate our first reactions with them, imagining that the parents who cry today at the disappearance of their beloved child could be us, since no one can presume to claim that their child will never participate in a student demonstration.”38 Mário Piva put it more pointedly: “Those who today try to defend the ones responsible [for the death of Luís] or who overlook the graveness of the problem were either never young themselves, or don’t have children studying in university like I do.”39

Politicians saw younger, idealistic versions of themselves in university students, who one deputy called “the vanguard of the people’s conscience.”40 It was natural that the deputies, over 80% of who had themselves attended university, would identify with students; in them they saw “future economic, political, and financial leaders,” the “new elite of an ignorant country.”41 Mário Covas (MDB-SP), Chamber minority leader, was particularly impressed with Honestino Guimarães, a student leader at the University of

36 Sadi Bogado (MDB-Rio de Janeiro), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 26 June 1968, 3675.
37 Breno da Silveira (MDB-Guanabara), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 3 April 1968, 1062-63.
38 Paulo Nunes Leal (ARENA-RO), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 30 March 1968, 937.
39 Mário Piva (MDB-BA), ibid., 951.
40 Paulo Campos (MDB-Goiás), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 29 June 1968, 3794.
41 Paulo Macarini (MDB-SC), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 3 Sept. 1968, 5754; Márcio Moreira Alves, A velha classe (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Arte Nova, 1964), 15. For the percentage of deputies who were university graduates, see Carvalho, 86.
Brasília, once remarking to his wife, “He’s going to be a great politician. I was impressed with the arguments he used in his speech. […] I was overcome when I heard that born leader.”

UDN stalwarts like Júlio de Mesquita Neto (not a politician, but son of the owner of the powerful paulista daily O Estado de S. Paulo) and São Paulo governor Abreu Sodré had fought as students against Getúlio Vargas and the Estado Novo decades before. Both Mesquita’s and Abreu Sodré’s activities were extensive enough that they generated a file with the São Paulo political police and earned the latter more arrests than he could count. Despite their sympathies for the “Revolution,” politicians who had struggled against Brazil’s last authoritarian regime could identify with students who protested against the present government. Although arenista Miguel Feu Rosa was too young to have opposed Vargas, he was speaking for many politicians who had done so when he said, “Whatever my party affiliation, I cannot deny my origins. It was in student politics that I forged my personality as a public man; where I learned to interpret my country’s political and social phenomena. […] I stand in solidarity with the students of my country; I participate in their sufferings and in their pain.”

Repression of students aroused such indignation because deputies could identify with them in highly personal ways. Idealistic by nature, students were “generous, impulsive, noble, and patriotic,” and their elders owed them “a little bit of

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42 Lila Covas and Luci Molina, *Lila Covas: Histórias e receitas de uma vida* (São Paulo: Global Editora, 2007), 89. Lila Covas’s memoir provides rare insight into the life of a politician’s wife. The book is part memoir, part cookbook. For example, during the darkest days of the dictatorship, when Mário would grow depressed, Lila recalls, “What else could I do for him? The only thing I knew to do was give him a little comfort. And one of the ways was at the stove. With recipes. Lots of recipes,” at which point she provides recipes for sauces to serve with beef or fish. (Covas and Molina, 98.)

43 See “Prontuário Del. 24.280: Júlio de Mesquita Neto,” Departamento de Ordem e Política Social (DOPS), Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo (APESP); “Prontuário Del. 6.699: Roberto de Abreu Sodré,” DOPS, APESP; Sodré, 34.

understanding.” They were “the most enlightened segment of the Brazilian population, […] citizens who have a cultural and humanistic refinement far above the average.” As former university students themselves in a country where most people did not study past primary school, members of Congress could identify with student activists in ways that they could not with members of other social movements. While many deputies may not have endorsed Brazil’s longstanding repression of urban labor unions and rural peasant movements, or the routine police violence against the lower classes, repression of students was fundamentally different in the eyes of the political class because it pitted uneducated, lower-class, often black or brown police against the wealthy, educated, white children of Brazil’s elites. Their denunciations of police and military violence against students was an indignant cry of, “How dare you do this to people like us!”

In the wake of each new confrontation between students and police, senators and deputies denounced the violence, nearly invariably blaming the police and, occasionally, the military itself. Márcio Moreira Alves was perhaps the most forceful deputy after the death of Edson Luís. “What this military regime has done in Brazil is transform every uniform into the object of the people’s execration. […] [The government] has turned [the Armed Forces] into a shelter of bandits.” Cunha Bueno, who during his studies at the São Paulo Law School had been active in student politics, offered his “vehement protest” of police repression of students, which, “if not restrained, will inevitably create the

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45 José Mandelli (MDB-RS), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 26 June 1968, 3671.
47 Márcio Moreira Alves (MDB-GB), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 30 March 1968, 950.
climate necessary for the implantation of a dictatorship.”48 The protests came most frequently from younger, vocal members of the MDB, but they were joined by several members of ARENA who were horrified by the attacks on students. Other arenistas, while deplored police violence and defending the students, argued that nefarious, presumably communist, subversives were exploiting students’ “enthusiasm, good faith, and excitement” in order to advance their own “criminal and unspeakable objectives.”49

For paulista Nazir Miguel, when student protests included the burning of American flags or throwing rocks at the American embassy, “That is communist infiltration. And communists belong in jail, because they are subversives. Students should be in school studying, not starting street riots.”50 Still, surprisingly few arenistas defended the police or attempted to shift the debate to violence committed by students against police or property.51 Most government allies kept silent, joined by more cautious oppositionists.

Due to their sympathies for the student movement, many deputies, particularly from the opposition, left the halls of Congress and joined students in the streets. Such activities were controversial; ARENA vice-leader Haroldo Leon Peres provoked a lengthy shouting match in the Chamber when he implied that MDB deputies were inciting students and were thus responsible for the ensuing violence.52 The image of politicians standing alongside “subversive” leftist students who were often related to

48 Cunha Bueno (ARENA-SP), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 24 Oct. 1968, Suplemento, 10. For Cunha Bueno’s participation in student politics during the Estado Novo, see Carneiro, 45-61.
49 Oceano Carleial (ARENA-AL), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 2 April 1968, 997. See also Benedito Ferreira (ARENA-GO), Ibid., 998; Adhemar Ghisi (ARENA-SC), Ibid., 1004-05; Adhemar Ghisi (ARENA-SC), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 3 April 1968, 1061-62.
50 Nazir Miguel (ARENA-SP), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 3 April 1968, 1067.
51 For defenses of the police, see Antônio de Lisboa Machado, Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 3 April 1968, 1062. For attacks on student violence, see Paulo Freire (ARENA-MG), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 3 April 1968, 1067.
52 Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 30 March 1968, 953.
them had to be infuriating to the many in the military who already resented the political class. As Costa e Silva’s military chief of staff, General Jayme Portella, later complained, opposition deputies, “using their immunities, were inciting agitation.”

Media File 1: Tumult During the Speech of Haroldo León Peres, 29 March 1968

At the same time, there were limits to politicians’ involvement. Covas insisted that his respect for the autonomy of the student movement would not permit him to interfere in its internal functioning; his role was limited to dialogue and mediation. Moreira Alves agreed that politicians’ actual participation in the student movement was limited, not because they did not wish to interfere, but because leftist student activists were highly suspicious of even opposition politicians, whose attempts to oppose the regime through legal channels, they believed, were insufficiently revolutionary. Former student leader Franklin Martins, looking back on the student movement in 2002, agreed, arguing that in 1968, a chasm separated the student movement from opposition politicians. “They had been defeated in 1964 without putting up any resistance. […] They were content to wait for better days. Why, then, should the youth take their advice into

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53 Jayme Portella de Mello, A Revolução e o Governo Costa e Silva (Rio de Janeiro: Guavira Editores, 1979), 560, 564-565. Portella’s argument, sustained throughout his 150-page discussion of the events of 1968, was that politicians – both “subversive” MDB leftists and counter-revolutionary arenistas – were solely responsible for that year’s political crisis.

54 If you are unable to play the tumult provoked by Peres’s speech, you may download it at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKUmh0Z055c0OydEk/edit?usp=sharing.


account?” The MDB was merely “a plaything in the hands of the military whose sole objective was to prop up a simulacrum of a Congress and a mimicry of democracy.”

Students heaped even more scorn upon politicians who supported the regime; even if they stood up to the military, “it was because they had no other alternatives, because they had been thrown overboard by those who held power.” In São Paulo, the anger of students was vividly illustrated on May Day, when Abreu Sodré attempted to speak to 10,000 workers and students but drowned out with cries of “Out with the murderers!” and “Down with the dictatorship!” Soon the jeers were accompanied by eggs, wood, and rocks, and after he was hit in the head by a rock (or in his account, a nail-studded potato), the governor retreated to the safety of a cathedral. Students and workers took over the stage and unfurled a banner with an image of Ché Guevara to thunderous applause. Although Abreu Sodré blamed communist infiltrators pretending to be students, the event served as a particularly striking demonstration of the disgust student activists felt for regime-allied politicians. If politicians like Abreu Sodré could look back on their own student activism with nostalgia, the very students with whom they sympathized were determined not to grow up to be like them.

“Like Russians Entering Prague”: The Invasion of UnB

Although the largest marches took place in Rio de Janeiro and repression of student demonstrations occurred all over the country, federal legislators were most

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58 Ibid.
directly involved with events in Brasilia. In part this was due to the new capital’s isolation. Though Brazilians since independence had dreamed of establishing a capital in the country’s sparsely populated interior, it was only during the administration of Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-61) that the dream came to fruition. Designed in the shape of an airplane by the communist architect Oscar Niemeyer, Brasília was a potent symbol of Brazil as the “country of the future,” proudly poised to take its place among the world’s developed nations. But the new capital had been rushed to completion in 1960 in time for Kubitschek to inaugurate it before leaving office, and in 1968 many government agencies and most foreign embassies had yet to relocate from Rio. Located over 1,000 kilometers from Rio and São Paulo, its isolation was enhanced by a poor road system and unreliable, expensive telephone service. As one deputy lamented, “We live in a capital that most of the time is poorly informed about the reality of events, due to its distance from the large cities where news is made and things happen.”62 The metropolitan area’s population was only 400,000 in 1968, and many of those were poor migrants who were working in the city’s construction and had little in common with legislators and federal employees. At the same time, lofty aspirations for Brasília as the harbinger of a modernizing Brazil combined with its isolation meant that events there were enormously relevant to politicians who found themselves forced to spend time there.

This was particularly true for events at UnB, where politicians’ children often studied. The University of Brasilia was part of the original “pilot plan” for the city – a national university for the new capital of an emerging modern nation. In the vision of its first rector, anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro, UnB should challenge outmoded ideas about

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admissions, pedagogy, and university governance. The university was also unique among
Brazilian universities in that it united all its academic programs on a single campus – an
arrangement that not only facilitated intellectual exchange but also heightened the
opportunities for student mobilization.\(^{63}\) Yet only two years after he began to implement
his ambitious plan at UnB, the military coup brought to power the enemies of Ribeiro, the
one-time Goulart minister of education and culture, and the generals suspended his
political rights ten days after the coup. Despite their enthusiasm for development and
modernization, the regime was suspicious of Ribeiro’s reforms and the faculty they
attracted. Academics who held progressive ideas about education may have also been
politically progressive, even subversive. UnB’s location at the center of political power
and its unorthodox approach to education placed it at the center of the regime’s gaze. The
campus, barely six years old in 1968, was only two miles from Congress. Demonstrations
nearly always occurred on weekdays, when it was easiest to assemble a crowd – and at
the same time Congress was in session. Thus while politicians also remained informed
about events in their home states through telephone calls, newspapers, and visits, their
proximity to UnB during the week meant that they were always aware of events there,
often more so than at universities in their home states.

UnB students knew that their deputy or senator fathers (or friends’ fathers)
enjoyed a measure of security due to their parliamentary immunity, which protected them
from arrest. After all, Covas and other deputies had demanded an explanation from
justice minister Luiz da Gama e Silva and visited students in the hospital in April 1967
after police invaded the UnB library and beat students protesting the visit of the

\(^{63}\) Gurgel, 31.
American ambassador. Starting with the death of Edson Luís in Rio de Janeiro in March, students at UnB again mobilized, and a group of opposition deputies attended their protest march. When the police began attacking the students, Covas and fellow MDB deputies attempted to intervene, but the police ignored their pleas, and in the melee Martins Rodrigues was hit in the head with a truncheon. A few days later, after students captured a plainclothes National Information Service (Serviço Nacional de Informações – SNI) agent and confiscated his revolver, at the urging of their professors they agreed to give it back – but only if they could hand it over to an opposition deputy. In response to the capture of the SNI agent, the police occupied UnB. Then, at a mass to commemorate the death of Luis, the police arrived to arrest Honestino Guimarães; he fled into the sacristy, and while the bishop held the police at bay, other students rushed to Congress, where the congressional leadership was in the midst of a closed-door meeting with other student leaders to negotiate the end of the military occupation. Covas and ARENA vice-leader Leon Peres – who had accused opposition deputies of inciting student violence – rushed to the church and saved Guimarães from arrest, and Guimarães and fellow student leaders left the church in official cars of the Chamber of Deputies.64 Another time, Covas reported that students took refuge in Congress after a demonstration; after twelve hours of negotiations with the authorities, politicians used their private cars to return the students to their homes.65 And at a march at the end of June, Covas and several other MDB deputies marched at the head of the students’ procession. Later, Covas hid

64 Ibid., 123, 131, 134-135.
65 Interview with Mario Covas in Paulo Markun, "AI-5: O Dia Que Não Existiu," (Brazil: 2001).
Honestino Guimarães and five other students in his apartment with his wife and children for two days while the police searched for them.66

On the morning of August 29, 1968 the longstanding tension between the regime and UnB erupted into open conflict. With arrest warrants for Guimarães and four other “subversives,” officers of the political and social police (Departamento de Ordem e Política Social - DOPS) and the federal police, backed up by 200 members of the military police, descended on the campus “as though they were Russians entering Prague” and arrested Guimarães.67 Students fought back, a patrol car was tipped over and set on fire, and police began a brutal sweep of the campus and its classrooms, kicking in doors, smashing lab equipment, and using tear gas, truncheons, rifles, and machine guns to round up students and herd them to a basketball court until they could decide who else to arrest. One student was shot in the head, another in the knee, and others suffered broken bones, either at the hands of the police or when they fell attempting to escape.68

Congress was in the midst of its morning session when the invasion began. In the Senate, Aurélio Vianna (MDB-GB) announced that he had just heard news of a confrontation at UnB and would be leaving immediately with a group of senators to find out what was happening. Celestino Filho made a similar announcement in the Chamber. At the urging of ARENA leader Ermani Sátiro and Chamber president José Bonifácio Lafayette de Andrada (great-great nephew of the famed patriarch of Brazilian

68 For interviews with students who were at UnB, along with footage of the invasion shot by a student, see the documentary by Vladimir Carvalho, "Barra 68: sem perder a ternura," (Brazil: Europa Filmes, 2002).
independence, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva), a group of deputies rushed to their cars and departed for UnB, a short drive away down two of Brasília’s broad, sweeping avenues. On their way out, they were joined by Covas, who had rushed to Congress upon hearing what was happening. All told, at least twenty deputies and three senators from both parties converged on the campus. São Paulo deputy José Santilli Sobrinho rushed to UnB with his son to find his daughter and take her home. When they exited their car, police surrounded them and began to beat the deputy’s son with a truncheon. Santilli Sobrinho attempted to intervene, waving his congressional identification and crying that he was a deputy, but the police knocked the ID out of his hand and began to beat him too, shouting, “That’s why we’re doing this!” They were only saved from arrest when other legislators intervened as they were being dragged to a police car, as Santilli Sobrinho shouted, “You’re beating a federal deputy! I protest!” The police tried to arrest them too, until senator Argemiro de Figueiredo (MDB-PB), whose own son was in the basketball court, stated that if they attempted to arrest legislators, they would encounter violent resistance, as they wouldn’t go without a fight.

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69 The number was reached by comparing a newspaper report and several congressional speeches that afternoon. See “DOPS e PM invadem a Universidade de Brasília”; Márcio Moreira Alves (MDB-GB), Fernando Gama (MDB-PR), Hermano Alves (MDB-GB), and Elias Carmo (ARENA-MG), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, Suplemento, 30 Aug. 1968, 16, 23, 25; Aurélio Vianna (MDB-PB), Diário do Senado Federal, 30 Aug. 1968, 2503, 2505; Mário Covas (MDB-SP), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 24 Oct. 1968, 7530.

70 Castello Branco, “De onde parte o terror em Brasília”; “DOPS e PM invadem a Universidade de Brasília,” Jornal do Brasil, 30 Aug. 1968, 12.

71 Aurélio Vianna (MDB-PB), Diário do Senado Federal, 30 Aug. 1968, 2503. The responses of Santilli Sobrinho and his fellow deputies vividly illustrate a Brazilian cultural trait first noted by anthropologist Roberto da Matta. When challenged by someone perceived to be a social inferior, rather than responding with the “Who do you think you are?” characteristic of North Americans, for example, Brazilians tend to respond with “Do you know who you’re talking to?” According to Da Matta, the former expresses a North American focus on individualism, while the latter expresses a Brazilian concern with the violation of established social hierarchies. See Roberto Da Matta, Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).
The university was in chaos. Deputies and senators saw a group of perhaps 300 students being marched across the campus at machinegun-point, hands on their heads. The police refused to allow wounded students to leave for the hospital before receiving orders from above. The press took special note that female students and faculty had fainted under the stress and that the police had entered ladies’ restrooms where women were hiding. An ARENA deputy gave an impromptu speech calling for reductions in funding for DOPS and the SNI, and Ceará emedebista (MDB member) Martins Rodrigues told a federal police commander who had just arrived to take control of the apparently leaderless operation, “General, I’m proud to be on the side of the students and the people, and against these bandits,” to which the commander shot back, “You’re the

Figure 1: Federal Deputies Scuffle with Police at UnB  
Source: Centro de Documentação (Cedoc)/UnB Agência

72 Aurélio Vianna (MDB-PB), Diário do Senado Federal, 30 Aug. 1968, 2504.  
Figure 2: Police March Students across UnB Campus at Gunpoint
Source: Cedoc/UnB Agência

bandit here!" Even ARENA deputy Clovis Stenzel, an UnB professor of social psychology and enthusiastic supporter of the regime, was overheard exclaiming, “I, who am identified as belonging to the hard line, think all of this is an atrocity.”

Eventually the police allowed most students to leave, arresting only a few judged to be ringleaders of the resistance to Guimarães’s arrest. They left behind bloodstains on the floors, spent shell casings and gas canisters, kicked-in doors, and shattered lab equipment. A group of politicians remained to take statements from professors. Politicians were in shock, and each one who lived in Brasília had a story to tell about that day. Oswaldo Zanello (ARENA-ES) feared for his daughter, who had received threats from DOPS. Aniz Badra (ARENA-SP) was stung when his son accused him of serving a

74 “DOPS e PM invadem a Universidade de Brasília.”
75 “Flashes.”
Nazi government. For nearly all the deputies, their children and friends’ children had been beaten, arrested, and treated like common criminals. Deputies themselves had suffered violence and threats of arrest by police that respected neither congressional credentials nor social class. Few had any doubts as to the source of the invasion. It may have been DOPS and the federal and military police who conducted the invasion, but the orders had obviously come from above. The most likely source appeared to be the hated Gama e Silva, to whose justice ministry the federal police was subordinate.

“**It Is Our Children Who Are There”: Politicians’ Reactions to the Invasion**

Reaction in Congress began during the morning session, as the delegation of senators and deputies was preparing to leave for UnB. After the announcement of the invasion, 16 of the remaining 33 deputies scheduled to speak discarded their prepared remarks and instead denounced the invasion. Nearly all questioned why hundreds of police armed with machine guns were necessary to arrest one student. Was it designed to provoke a violent student reaction, thus giving right-wing military elements an excuse to issue a new institutional act and implant of a total dictatorship? Two deputies compared it to the invasion of Czechoslovakia the week before, when Soviet tanks crushed the Prague Spring. Others took the opportunity to inveigh against not so much the police as the ones who gave them orders (by implication, the military). “We protest against those who ordered these poor, incompetent, completely unlettered and incapable policemen to

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77 Castello Branco, “De onde parte o terror em Brasília.”
78 Doin Vieira (MDB-SC) and Antônio Carlos Pereira Pinto (MDB-RJ), *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, 30 Aug. 1968, 5661, 5665-66.
commit these acts of violence against the students of Brasília.**79 Before rushing to UnB, the MDB’s Martins Rodrigues expressed what were likely the feelings of many deputies: “It is our children who are there, and we find ourselves powerless.”**80

Emotions were raw during the tumultuous afternoon session; it nearly had to be suspended five times amidst hostile confrontations between deputies.**81 In the first speech, Wilson Martins lamented, “Those of us who have children in university, instead of being content, expecting that tomorrow we’ll have a doctor, an engineer, a liberal professional in our home, [now] fear at every moment that we’ll find their corpse in their own classrooms.”**82 Seven deputies, including two from ARENA, gave speeches decrying the invasion, and eleven more deputies, including three arenistas, offered sympathetic interruptions to a speech by paulista Gastone Righi blasting the police. Agreeing with Righi, Moreira Alves inveighed, “We don’t have a government in this country; we have a mob in power, a gang, a group that uses its hired guns against the nation.”**83 In another response to Righi, Dorival de Abreu asked, “How long will the Armed Forces […] give cover […] to violent tyranny? How long will our Armed Forces endure […] a government of violence and corruption?”**84 Another deputy argued that it was clear that the police had received their orders from the Army and that the arrest warrants were but a pretext for a meticulously-planned operation of psychological warfare designed to demoralize the university. Righi agreed, claiming that the factions of the military now in

**79 Getúlio Moura (MDB-RJ), ibid., 5665. 
**80 Martins Rodrigues (MDB-CE), ibid., 5661. 
**82 Wilson Martins (MDB-MG), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, Suplemento, 30 Aug. 1968, 11. 
**83 Márcio Moreira Alves (MDB-GB), ibid., 16. 
**84 Dorival de Abreu (MDB-SP), ibid., 17.
power had opposed Kubitschek’s plan to place a university in the capital, due to their fear of the potential for unrest provided by 15,000 students.\(^{85}\) Only paulista Cantídio Sampaio, an unyielding ally of the regime, supported the police, arguing that the students had attacked them first. When fellow paulista David Lerer shouted that he was a liar, Sampaio punched him in the face, and other deputies had to step in to separate them.\(^{86}\)

ARENA vice-leader Leon Peres, staking out the party’s official position, begged the deputies to calm their emotions and suspend judgment until all the facts came to light. Peres admitted that abuses might have occurred, but such things were to be expected in such a tense atmosphere. Deputies above all, he reasoned, should know this, since they had all been involved in political rallies or protests that had gotten out of hand – what right did they have to cast stones at the police when they had all similarly repressed unruly mobs?\(^{87}\) ARENA’s Carlos de Brito Velho interrupted, to thunderous applause, “I’ll cast the first stone! […] I have committed many acts of violence against the strong and the powerful, but against the weak, never.”\(^{88}\) Regardless, Peres emphasized, if the police committed excesses, the students had too; after all, a police car had been set afire, and an officer had been shot in the arm (a claim disputed by MDB deputies). If the deputies wished to condemn violence, they should condemn it when all sides committed it, not just the police.\(^{89}\) When Ernani Sátiro, ARENA’s leader, jumped in to defend Peres for his “equilibrium and serenity,” he was roundly booed, not only by the MDB, but also

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\(^{85}\) Righi (MDB-SP), ibid., 16. In his chronicle of the UnB student movement, Antonio de Padua Gurgel also argues that that opponents of a university in the capital were hostile to “students in the neighborhood of [political] power, because their presence was associated with political agitation.” Gurgel, 31.  
\(^{86}\) Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, Suplemento, 30 Aug. 1968, 17; “Justificativa de Sátiro foi vaiada.”  
\(^{87}\) Haroldo León Peres (ARENA-PR), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, Suplemento, 30 Aug. 1968, 22.  
\(^{88}\) Carlos de Brito Velho (ARENA-RS), ibid., 22.  
\(^{89}\) Haroldo León Peres (ARENA-PR), ibid., 22.
by his ARENA colleagues, and Unírio Machado exclaimed, “How can you be so callous? It is utterly astonishing!”

When Bonifácio ordered the deputies to listen “with tranquility,” Machado cried, “Tranquility? When the blood of our youth is flowing? I want to see how tranquil some of you are when it’s your children in this situation!”

After Peres concluded his “dispassionate” call for deputies to listen to both sides of the story, Mário Covas gave the position of the MDB in a speech that was sufficiently vehement that he requested it withheld from publication in the *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, the daily record of Congress’s proceedings. He began with a meticulous blow-by-blow account of events at UnB, emphasizing that unlike Peres’ “police version,” his own account contained the written eyewitness testimonies of deputies and professors who had witnessed it firsthand, not to mention his own. Other deputies spoke up to add details as he went along. Moreira Alves reported that he had heard that the student shot in the head had been left lying atop a table for an hour before the police would allow him to be taken to the hospital. Mário Maia (MDB-AC), a practicing physician, arrived from the hospital where he had just served as the anesthesiologist for the brain surgery that had removed the bullet and saved the student’s life.

An ARENA deputy received cries of

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90 Unírio Machado (MDB-RS), ibid., 16. The phrase I have translated as “It is utterly astonishing!” is “Pasmem os céus!” which literally means “Let the heavens be astonished.”

91 Ibid.

approval and lengthy applause when he proposed that the Brazilian flag above Congress be lowered to half-mast in mourning of the day’s events.\(^93\)

For Covas, the police were not the real problem; as victims of a society “that did not educate them or give them the conditions to have the human reactions worthy of a civilized people,” they were not at fault for their boorish behavior. Rather, the fault lay with Brazil’s government, which had still not held anyone response for the killing of Edson Luís five months before, a “dictatorship” that used the “magic word” of “subversive” as an “excuse for all sorts of violence.” He stated that if he thought that resigning from Congress could help the students’ cause, he would do it in a heartbeat and promised that if he found himself in a similar situation again, he would offer himself for the police to beat instead. He said that although he had no children in college, after a day like this, he suspected that he may not want them to go when they grew up; “a lack of knowledge and culture” might be preferable to “one day having to pass through the grievance and humiliation” that students in Brasília had had to experience today.\(^94\)

The UnB invasion dominated the Chamber of Deputies the next day, Friday, and was still hotly discussed into the next week. Behind the scenes, some arenistas were reported to be infuriated. Although Cantídio Sampaio had punched David Lerer for questioning his claim that the students had attacked first, his wife was rumored to be part of a group of women preparing a letter to Costa e Silva demanding that the government stop ordering their husbands to defend lies. And it was later claimed that Jorge Curi had proposed that ARENA vice-leaders refrain from giving speeches defending the

\(^{93}\) Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 24 Oct. 1968, 7532.

\(^{94}\) Mário Covas (MDB-SP), ibid., 7530-7534.
government. “No one can violate their conscience to defend the indefensible. I’ve had it with tolerance and swallowing toads.”95 In public, over the next three business days 47 deputies from both parties gave speeches, overwhelmingly condemning the invasion. Still, at first they used a modicum of caution. Despite vicious attacks on specific generals, for the most part speeches on Thursday and Friday focused their criticism on the police, or perhaps on the regime (that is, the Costa e Silva administration), not the Army itself. There was an implicit understanding, reinforced by the withholding of the Covas speech, that the situation required a healthy dose of caution, particularly when deputies speculated about the military’s role in the invasion. By Monday, however, no explanation had come; rumor had it that ARENA leader Ernani Sátiro had gone to the Planalto Palace on Friday, seeking an explanation, but had been denied an audience with Costa e Silva.96 The sense of frustration was palpable, and MDB deputies, especially younger ones who were known for their vehement criticisms of the government, went on the attack.

Hermano Alves complained that five days had passed with no investigation, no explanation, no identification of the ones responsible, and speculated that the deafening silence from the presidential palace was because those who had issued the orders were “shielding themselves with Army officers’ uniforms.”97 Martins Rodrigues interjected that he had heard that the police and DOPS officers who ordered the invasion were in fact Army officers who had been assigned to the police forces, noting sarcastically, “All the

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95 Gurgel, 270. Gurgel does not provide a source for the stories about Sampaio’s wife’s letter and Curi’s proposal. Though neither was made in congressional speeches, both are in keeping with other politicians’ comments, and it is likely that Gurgel’s account is correct. The expression, “Politics is the art of swallowing toads,” attributed to First Republic gaúcho senator José Gomes Pinheiro Machado, expresses politicians’ conviction that politics is marked by the necessity of accepting unpleasant compromises.

96 Doin Vieira (MDB-SC), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 3 Sept. 1968, 5753.

97 Hermano Alves (MDB-GB), ibid., 5750-5751.
honors for this exceptional military operation go to those who make up […] the ‘glorious Army of Caxias.’”

All speakers agreed that the UnB invasion was not the fault of the Army as a whole, but of a small faction of “militarist” extremists who sensed subversives lurking in every shadow, saw in every Brazilian a potential enemy, and sought to turn the Armed Forces into a political party and distract them from their true mission. The end result of this alienation of the Armed Forces from the people, Jairo Brum warned, could be “a blood-soaked tragedy,” because, “One day Brazilians will arm themselves and take to the streets with weapons in hand to defend themselves from the police who rather than defending us only threaten us and wound our children.” He called on Costa e Silva to find and punish “these Nazi police from the sub-basement of the Gestapo […] these dregs of communism and Nazism.”

Yet in the midst of such terrible events, Congress found itself powerless, and the congressional leadership was shirking its duty to demand an explanation from the president. Arenista Paulo Freire, who had criticized students for their supposed acts of violence at the end of March, now exclaimed, “I will by no means give my modest vote to support the government as long as they refuse to punish these bandits and criminals who want to implant Hitler’s system in Brazil.”

It was then the turn of Márcio Moreira Alves. No one could have imagined that his speech today and a shorter one the next day would spark the decisive crisis between the military and the political class. Indeed, the tone of his September 2 speech was not so

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98 José Martins Rodrigues (MDB-CE) and Hermano Alves (MDB-GB) ibid., 5751, 5753. Luiz Alves de Lima e Silva, Duke of Caxias (1803-1880), one of the foremost military commanders and politicians of the Empire, was universally acclaimed as the father of the Brazilian Armed Forces.

99 Francisco da Chagas Rodrigues (MDB-GB), ibid., 5752.

100 Jairo Brum (MDB-RS), ibid.

101 Paulo Freire (ARENA-MG), ibid., 5751.
different from the ones preceding him. Moreira Alves complained that there were no
answers, only questions, about the events at UnB on Thursday. Who had ordered the
invasion? To what extent could Gama e Silva and the justice ministry be held
responsible? Who had written the police press releases justifying the invasion? Did the
Costa e Silva administration endorse the content of the press releases? And how would
the government respond? The speech’s crescendo came in a series of rhetorical questions:

When will the nation’s hemorrhage be stanched? When will troops stop machine-
gunning the people in the streets? When will a boot kicking in a lab door cease to be
the government’s proposal for university reform? When will we, as a country,
when we see our children leave for school, be sure that they will not return carried
on a stretcher, cudgeled, or machine-gunned? When we will be able to trust those
who ought to execute and carry out the law? When will the police stop being a
band of criminals? *When will the Army stop serving as shelter for torturers?*
When will the federal government begin to fulfill a minimum of its obligation, as
it should for the good of the Republic and the tranquility of the people?102

Mariano Beck broke in to read a letter signed by 175 “Mothers and Wives of
Brasília,” at least 30 of whom were married to deputies and senators. The letter decried
the “scenes of savagery and indescribable violence that once again have bloodied the
University of Brasília. […] What we mothers and wives want is only to see our children
and husbands studying and working in peace and security.”103 While the mothers and
wives may or may not have had children at UnB (the wife of the 32-year old Moreira
Alves, for example, had neither a husband young enough to be in college nor children old

102 Márcio Moreira Alves (MDB-GB), ibid., 5755. (Emphasis added.)
103 Mariano Beck (MDB-RS), ibid., 5755. To discover which signatories were married to politicians, I
compared the list with the names of deputies in the *Dicionário Histórico Biográfico Brasileiro (DHBB)*,
which nearly always notes the full name of each entry’s spouse and the number of children they had.
enough to be), the discursive kinship that they (and by extension their husbands) invoked illustrates the extent to which politicians identified with university students.\textsuperscript{104}

That night Moreira Alves went to Covas’s apartment to practice a shorter but even more vehement speech for the next day.\textsuperscript{105} This time he proposed that in protest of the military’s refusal to investigate its own role in the UnB invasion, parents keep their children away from military-sponsored Independence Day festivities on September 7 and young women “who dance with the cadets and date the young officers” withhold sexual favors. Tying his tongue-in-cheek proposal, which he later dubbed “Operation Lysistrata,” to the manifesto from the “wives and mothers of Brasília” the day before, Moreira Alves suggested that the boycott could serve as part of a wider movement of female resistance to the regime.\textsuperscript{106} As Moreira Alves pointed out later, his suggestion (which he said he hoped the girlfriends had taken) could be taken as a direct challenge to the military’s manhood. “Here was this spoiled brat, scion of a long line of politicians […] not only calling them a gang of torturers, but going to the groin and attacking their machismo!”\textsuperscript{107} Implicitly questioning the military’s morality and patriotism was bad enough; challenging its collective manhood went an enormous step further.

\textsuperscript{104} It is also noteworthy that the wives of politicians who signed the letter were almost invariably married to the same politicians who spoke most vocally against repression of the student movement. While this certainly indicates a coincidence of spouses’ political views, it is also likely that politicians used their wives’ motherly or spousal concern as another weapon in their rhetorical arsenal against the regime.\textsuperscript{105} Mário Covas was in Santos and would only return later that night, so Moreira Alves practiced his speech in front of Covas’s wife Lila, who remarked later that the young deputy, with his young son in a Boy Scout uniform in tow, hardly looked like a dangerous subversive. (Covas and Molina, 95.)\textsuperscript{106} Mário Moreira Alves (MDB-GB), \textit{Diário da Câmara dos Deputados}, 4 Sept. 1968, Suplemento, 9. “Operation Lysistrata” refers to Aristophanes’ fifth-century BCE play \textit{Lysistrata}, in which the women of Greece withhold sex until their husbands agree to end the Peloponnesian War.\textsuperscript{107} Mário Moreira Alves, \textit{A Grain of Mustard Seed: The Awakening of the Brazilian Revolution} (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1973), 12-13.
Born in Rio de Janeiro, Moreira Alves came from an old Minas Gerais family “where politics was lived intensely.” His paternal grandfather had served for nearly three decades as a federal deputy during the First Republic (1889-1930), a brother of his paternal grandmother was foreign relations minister for Vargas, and his father was an appointed mayor of the city of Petrópolis under the Vargas regime. After several years as a political reporter for the left-leaning daily Correio da Manhã, which saw him win a national award for his coverage of a shootout in the Alagoas legislative assembly (written from a hospital bed after himself being wounded in the melee), he parlayed his journalistic accomplishments into a successful run for Congress in 1966. From the beginning, he was a vociferous opponent of the regime; his 1967 book denouncing torture of political opponents had won him no friends in the military. In Brasília, whose notoriously dull nightlife and cultural offerings made many politicians’ families reluctant to move there, he initially rented a house on Lake Paranoá with three other left-leaning MDB deputies that was humorously dubbed the “Socialist Republic on the Lake.” He had been born into politics, was educated and fluent in English and French, and had a French wife; in many respects he personified the ideal for a member of the political class.

Moreira Alves, his roommates, and 20-30 other young deputies together comprised a bloc in Congress dubbed the imaturos (immature ones) by São Paulo deputy Ivete Vargas, the niece of Getúlio Vargas and long-time PTB deputy. As a group they were notorious for their impassioned speeches blasting the government for attacks on

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109 For a fascinating analysis of the shootout in Alagoas, see Jorge Oliveira, Curral da morte: o impeachment de sangue, poder e política no Nordeste (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2010).
democratic institutions, torture, and foreign business-friendly economic policies.

Imaturos, of course, was a derisive term. However far the image was from reality in a Congress filled with politicians of questionable scruples who were prone to outbursts of violence, the ideal “public man” (*homem público*) was assumed to be stately and dignified, firm in his convictions but measured in his reactions, willing to defend his honor but knowing when to turn the other cheek. The young imaturos, with their fiery speeches, disregard for parliamentary procedure, and brash behavior were the opposite, more akin to impulsive students than homens públicos. As Moreira Alves complained later, “Every conservative body calls those who represent rebellious forces of change ‘immature,’ ‘hasty,’ ‘insane,’ ‘infantile,’ as if adjectives could stop time.”111 The imaturos delighted in interrupting arenistas’ speeches with attacks on the government; Moreira Alves later ruefully recalled when one of the “little bastards who tried to make a career of kissing the military ass,” complained that their interruptions had ruined the speech he had paid someone to write and intended to distribute to his constituents as proof that he was fighting for their interests.112 The imaturos were not well liked, and Moreira Alves attracted little sympathy. One ARENA deputy described him as “very radical, intolerant in his ideas, and not very amenable to democratic dialogue. He has an enraged disposition and is almost always full of resentment.”113

The first speech, taken alone, might not have had further repercussions. After all, he had gotten away with calling the Army a “shelter of bandits” in March – an expression almost identical to his “shelter of torturers” comment now. Assuming that Lila Covas told

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112 Ibid., 15-16.
113 José Penedo (ARENA-BA), *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, 26 Nov. 1968, 8454.
her husband about the second speech after Moreira Alves dropped by to rehearse it, Mário Covas could have warned him to moderate his tone. Or once Moreira Alves gave the speech, if the Chamber leadership had been more attentive, the offending phrases might have been edited or stricken before the Diário da Câmara was published, or the Diário could have been withheld from circulation.114 Indeed, after he had called the government “bandits and gangsters,” on August 29, the Chamber leadership had censored out “bandits,” leaving only “gangsters,” which he had spoken in English.115 It appears that something similar may have happened on September 3. A comparison of the typed transcript of the second speech with the version actually published the next day reveals minor edits, made by the Chamber leadership or Moreira Alves himself, in an effort to soften the harsh language. The version in the typed notes urged young women who freqüentam young officers to boycott them. Freqüentar, which translates to English as “to frequent,” can also mean “to have relations with,” and can serve as a euphemism for “to have sexual relations with.” In the notes, however, freqüentar is crossed out and replaced with a handwritten namorar, meaning simply “to date”; its substitution for the sexually charged freqüentar was an attempt to render the speech less objectionable.116

114 The incident highlights an important dimension of the production of truth in Brazilian politics – nothing has truly happened unless it is published in an official government journal.
115 Castello Branco, “Quem tem responsabilidade e quem é irresponsável no Govêrno.”
116 Similarly, a few lines after freqüentar/namorar, after Moreira Alves called for women to “refuse entry to the door of their homes those who slander the Nation, to refuse to accept those to keep silent and in so doing become accomplices,” a handwritten note added: “Disagreeing in silence does not accomplish much. It becomes necessary to act against those who harm the Armed Forces, speaking and acting in their name.” The new version, published in the Diário da Câmara, encouraged the interpretation that Moreira Alves believed that only a few rogue elements were behind the invasion and that the silence of the rest of the military harmed the Armed Forces themselves. In so doing, like the substitution of namorar for freqüentar, it sought to soften language that castigated the military for its complicity in the invasion. It is unclear who actually made the changes. It is possible that it was simply a proactive congressional transcriber or secretary. It may also have been the congressional leadership, seeking to avoid negative repercussions from the military. The most likely possibility is that the changes originated with Moreira Alves himself.
Although congressional rules allowed ARENA deputies to interrupt the first speech to refute his arguments, and although one of the arenistas speaking after his second speech could have repudiated it, none did so. Their silence indicates that Jorge Curi, who had urged ARENA vice-leaders to “go on strike” from defending the government, was not alone in his sentiments. After all, while there was honor to be found in loyalty to the government, defending the regime’s repression of students stretched one’s honor to the breaking point. Even majority leader Ernani Sátiro had been tepid in his defense of the regime since August 29. He had remained conspicuously absent since the day after the UnB invasion, hoping to avoid explaining why he had not yet wrangled an explanation from Costa e Silva; he briefly entered during Moreira Alves’s first speech, only to leave abruptly when he realized its subject. When he finally deigned to speak later that afternoon, he promised that he would offer an explanation for the “lamentable events at UnB” as soon as he had one – Costa e Silva had not appeared at their meeting on Friday, and today the president had canceled his Monday appointments in light of the tragic death of the son of his civilian chief of staff, Rondon Pacheco, in a car accident over the weekend.\footnote{Ernani Sátiro (ARENA-PB), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 3 Sept. 1968, 5757.} The subsequent crisis was due not only to the speeches, then, but also to ARENA’s failure to more proactively defend the regime.

Published on September 3-4 in the Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, the speeches were apparently not uncommon for deputies to submit a written version of their speech in advance for publication in the Diário da Câmara but make impromptu changes as they gave it. It is possible, then, that Moreira Alves submitted the speech with freqüentar but softened it to namorar when he spoke, in addition to adding an extra sentence. Regardless, it soon became clear that these efforts, wherever they originated, were not enough. For a copy of the typed notes, see Augusto Rademaker to Luis Antônio da Gama e Silva, 20 Sept. 1968, CD-CEDI, Dossiê Márcio Moreira Alves, 15-16. For the version that was actually published, see Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 4 Sept. 1968, Suplemento, 9.
in which the political class held the military. Military critics of Moreira Alves seized on three passages – the reference to the Army as a “shelter for torturers,” the proposal to boycott Independence Day commemorations, and, above all, the suggestion that young women should “boycott” their cadet and officer companions. On September 5, Army minister Lyra Tavares sent a letter to Costa e Silva, requesting that he take measures to prevent more attacks like the ones Moreira Alves had made and repair the damage done to the military’s honor. The stage was set for an unprecedented showdown.

Conclusions

In 1968, the many indignities heaped upon politicians over the last four years culminated in the military’s repression of the student movement. Politicians had watched, and in some cases collaborated, as colleagues were cassado, institutional acts decreed, laws re-written, and a new constitution imposed. Yet now the regime had turned its sights on politicians’ own children and their friends, the privileged elite who, despite their youthful rebellion and hostility to their politician parents today, would one day inevitably assume their rightful place as leaders of Brazil. These attacks on their children and their social class were more than many politicians in Congress could bear, and they showed their displeasure by protecting students from arrest, joining their marches, and making speech after speech blasting the regime for its ham-fisted handling of a situation that, in their eyes, should have been handled with tolerance and understanding.

On the surface, this sympathy for the student movement is surprising. After all, few politicians, even those on the left, found much in common ideologically with

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118 It is not clear who distributed the speech in the barracks, as news reports at the time ventured no guesses. Twenty-five years later, Moreira Alves claimed that it had been General Emílio Garrastazu Médici, head of the SNI. See Moreira Alves, 68 mudou o mundo, 151.
students who read Marx, Mao, and Lenin; idolized Fidel and Ché; and dreamed of a socialist revolution to overturn the structures that facilitated the continued dominance of the political class (and the students themselves). Former members of the student movement like Franklin Martins have emphasized these differences. Students would never dream of some day becoming politicians themselves; for them, politics were only useful when “directed toward transforming society, not gaining posts or positions.”

Scholars have similarly highlighted the divergences between the student movement of 1968 and parliamentary politics, and they have nearly without exception ignored the involvement of the political class in the student movement. In part, this is because scholars have focused on the massive student movements in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where politicians took a less prominent role than in Brasilia. But this oversight is also due to their assimilation of the rhetoric of the students. “The coup of 1964 had opened an enormous chasm between the youth and politicians, without exception.”

Yet as this chapter has demonstrated, the ideological and generational differences between politicians and students were not enough to overcome the ties of family and class that bound them together. Indeed, Franklin Martins, who recalled that he and his fellow student activists were so hostile to politicians, was the son of Guanabara MDB senator Mário Martins, a long-time member of the UDN who had turned against the regime shortly after the coup. Politicians sympathized with the students because the

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121 Preface by Martins in Gurgel, 19.
students were their own children, because they remembered their own days as student activists with nostalgia, or at least because students belonged to their social class. Perhaps they were communists; perhaps they were “subversive.” But they were politicians’ children and potential members of the political class. When students were arrested, beaten, and tortured by poor, unlettered soldiers and policemen, it was a fundamental violation of the way the political class believed that the world was supposed to work.

When students appealed for politicians’ mediation or took refuge in Congress, it was because they recognized, perhaps subconsciously, that despite the ideological divide they were part of the same social class and could expect aid. It is difficult, after all, to imagine ARENA politicians or the more conciliatory members of the MDB agreeing to allow industrial unionists or landless rural workers to stay in Congress overnight to escape the police who had cracked down on their organizations since 1964. Despite their dreams of a revolution to bring about a dictatorship of the proletariat, student activists were part of the same class as their parents, and many of them, like Franklin Martins, São Paulo student leaders José Dirceu and José Serra, or most notably, student and armed militant Dilma Rousseff, would go on to have political careers of their own. In the end, Covas was correct when he equated Honestino Guimarães’s leadership of students with preparation for politics. Although Guimarães was arrested in 1973, never to be seen again, time has proven that in the 1960s, activity in a student movement hostile to “traditional politics” could still be a springboard to a political career.

In 1968, however, the military had little patience for leftist students or their sympathetic politician parents. Though we have few sources relating reaction within the
military, it is not difficult to imagine. The “Revolution” of 1964 had been necessary, in their eyes, to root out subversion, wherever it might be found. If communist “subversion” came from the children of Brazil’s political elites, the response should be no different than if they were rural workers, urban unionists, or leftist priests; the threat was not lessened simply because students were young and idealistic. But instead of recognizing the danger and repudiating their children’s errors, politicians, including supposed allies, were seeking to shield their leftist children. To the military, suspicious of civilian politicians from the beginning, it must have looked as though they were tolerating such behavior in their children because they secretly wished that they too could frontally oppose the regime. Adding insult to injury, out of control oppositionists like Moreira Alves were recasting the military doing its duty as torture, questioning their honor as patriots, and worse still, challenging their manhood. The time had come to send a message to the political class once and for all, and the regime resolved to do so by demanding that Congress revoke Moreira Alves’s immunity so that he could be tried for his insults to the military’s honor. The next chapter will turn to the confrontation between the political class and military that ensued over the next three months.
Chapter 2: “To the King I Give All, Except My Honor”: The Showdown with the Military and Institutional Act No. 5

“Brazil is watching the decision we will make. But history alone will judge us.”

With this weighty closing line, Márcio Moreira Alves stepped away from the rostrum in the Chamber of Deputies on December 12, 1968. For the last two months, he had stood at the center of an unprecedented crisis in the already strained relationship between the military regime and political class. In the wake his two congressional speeches in response to the University of Brasília invasion, the ministers of the Army, Navy, and Air Force had demanded that the Chamber revoke his parliamentary immunity so he could be tried for his “attack on the democratic order.” Now, after weeks of legal drama, Congress would take the final vote. Would the 369 deputies present, two-thirds of whom belonged to ARENA, cave to military pressure and give up yet another of their legislative prerogatives? Or would they take the bold – and perhaps politically suicidal – step of denying the regime’s demand, of sending a message that that the military had gone too far in its efforts to reform and control Congress and, more broadly, the political class?

For politicians, something like this was not supposed to happen. The 1967 constitution had supposedly given the “Revolution” the tools it required to carry out its reforms of the Brazilian economy, politics, and society. Even that constitution, which had greatly increased the power of the executive branch, promised that legislators were inviolable in the exercise of their office. Now the military was attempting to extend its reach to the very rostrum of Congress, to tell deputies what they could and could not say,
to stifle dissent, to render immunity meaningless. For many politicians, the attempt to prosecute Moreira Alves was the last straw, particularly coming as it did on the heels of the repression of the student movement. The showdown that ensued between Congress and the military between October and December of 1968 would fundamentally alter the relationship between civilian politicians and the military.

Although it is widely recognized that the Moreira Alves case was a pivotal moment in the history of the military regime, key questions remain about this second act in the 1968 showdown between the political class and the military. Why, despite the “chaos” the student movement unleashed, was it ultimately a congressional speech that incited the military to action? Why, after four years of tolerating the erosion of their influence, did politicians, including many government allies, choose this moment to take a stand? And what were they taking a stand in favor of? Through an analysis of the military’s response to Moreira Alves’s speeches, the frantic attempts to find a solution that would satisfy both politicians and the military, politicians’ attempts to guess the military’s reaction to a refusal to hand over Moreira Alves, and above all the final debate and vote, this chapter will answer these questions, still unresolved after four decades of memoirs, interviews, and academic analysis of this pivotal event.

“Disparaging the Military Collectivity”: The Military Response to Moreira Alves

In the wake of Moreira Alves’s speeches denouncing the UnB invasion on September 2-3, vaguely defined yet deeply offended “lower military echelons” complained to Army minister Lyra Tavares.\(^2\) In a letter to Costa e Silva dated September

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5, one day after the second speech was published, Tavares went out of his way to take an apparently moderate position, referring to the “lamentable and sad events” at UnB and emphasizing that the carioca (resident of Rio de Janeiro) deputy’s speech was his “legitimate right as an adversary of the government” and did not express the thinking of the Chamber as whole. At the same time, the military, “to which Brazilian democracy already owes so much,” itself existed to defend other “National Institutions,” including Congress. Consequently, the “restraining of such unjustifiable violence and verbal aggression against the Military Institution” would constitute a “measure to defend the regime itself.” The letter concluded with a cautious statement that held a hint of a threat: “Notwithstanding the manifest gravity of the insults […] the Army continues to make every effort to contain them within the bounds of the discipline and serenity of its attitudes, obedient to the civilian authorities and confident in the steps that you decide to take.”

Tavares thus gave a nod to the military’s submission to the “civilian authorities” but implied that the Army might not look kindly upon any failure to restrain Moreira Alves. Significantly, however, he did not specify the form that the restraint should take; there was no mention of a trial or the removal of the offending deputy from Congress.

What ensued over the next three months vividly illustrates the military regime’s remarkable concern with maintaining the appearance of legality, however tenuous. In Argentina, if a civilian politician after the 1976 coup had made a similar attack on the military (had Congress been kept open), he or she probably would have been abducted in

claimed to speak on behalf of the aggrieved Army rank and file. Yet his complaint was sent to Costa e Silva only 24 hours after the second speech appeared in the Diário da Câmara dos Deputados – hardly enough time for a survey of the rank and file. “Razões do Deputado Márcio Moreira Alves perante a Comissão de Constituição e Justiça,” 18 Nov. 1968, CD-CEDI, “Dossiê Márcio Moreira Alves,” 167-169.

the dead of night and perhaps never seen again. In Brazil, however, the 1967 constitution had supposedly institutionalized the “Revolution” of 1964, returning Brazil to what the military dubbed a full democracy. Even in such a circumscribed “democracy,” Costa e Silva could not arrest a troublesome deputy; there was a legal procedure to follow if any illusion of the rule of law was to be maintained. Consequently he forwarded Tavares’ letter to the justice minister, who spent the next two weeks concocting a legal argument to allow the Supreme Court (Supremo Tribunal Federal – STF) to try Moreira Alves.

Justice minister Gama e Silva, the 55-year old son of a judge, was one of the regime’s most polarizing figures. A graduate of the São Paulo Law School, in 1939 he lost his job as political editor for a small paulista newspaper due to his opposition to the Vargas regime, a position he regained after the end of the Estado Novo in 1945. A few years later he was hired as a law professor at the University of São Paulo (USP), and in 1963 he was named rector of the university. He supported the coup wholeheartedly and left USP in 1967 to become Costa e Silva’s justice minister. His unconditional support for the regime, enthusiastic repression of the student movement, harsh demeanor, and petty vindictiveness earned him a well-deserved reputation as one of the regime’s most “radical” figures and a host of enemies among the political class and even the military. General Olympio Mourão Filho, one of the original plotters of the coup, later described him as someone “lacking character, who confuses […] violence with authority.”

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While Gama e Silva planned, he received (or perhaps solicited) letters from the Navy and Air Force ministers that echoed Tavares in stronger terms. Air Force minister Márcio de Souza e Mello asked him to take the “legal steps capable of restraining the repetition of these verbal aggressions that deliberately aim to disparage” the “military collectivity.”6 The Navy minister, Augusto Rademaker, called the comments “subversive and unacceptable,” and asked Gama e Silva to prosecute Moreira Alves for attempting to “place the Armed Forces in conflict with the people with the clear intention of attacking the democratic order.”7 Based on the ministers’ letters, along with his “meticulous study of the problem,” Gama e Silva submitted a report to Costa e Silva recommending prosecution.8 Costa e Silva approved it without comment, and on October 2 Gama e Silva sent it to attorney general Décio Miranda, asking him to assemble a case to send to the STF. Miranda duly forwarded the case on October 11. Should the STF agree that the evidence justified a trial, it would first have to request that the Chamber of Deputies revoke Moreira Alves’s parliamentary immunity.

Gama e Silva’s argument, repeated by Miranda and several ARENA politicians, was based on Article 151 of the constitution, which stated that the individual right to freedom of expression did not apply in cases of “an attack on the democratic order” or the practice of corruption. Should the person violating this article be a federal legislator, the applicable house of Congress would have to grant permission for him or her to be tried. At the same time, Article 34 guaranteed that deputies and senators were “inviolable in the

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exercise of their office, for their opinions, words, and votes.” Although it was not clear precisely what constituted “exercising their office,” giving a speech in Congress would certainly seem to be included. This principle of parliamentary immunity, as even Gama e Silva admitted, was a hallowed principle of Brazilian law, enshrined in five of Brazil’s six constitutions (the sole exception being Vargas’s authoritarian 1937 constitution).9

There were two questions in play. First, did the exceptions to freedom of expression enumerated in Article 151 override the parliamentary immunity enshrined in Article 34? And second, if they did, did Moreira Alves’s comments constitute an “attack on the democratic order”? Gama e Silva argued strenuously that the answer to both questions was “yes.” If the Chamber agreed, it could give permission for the STF to try him, and the STF (which AI-2 had stacked via an increase from 11 to 16 justices) could then remove him from office. If the exceptions did not supersede immunity, or if his speeches had not constituted an attack on democracy, Moreira Alves could not be tried.

**Weighing Benefits and Risks: The Political Class Maneuvers under Threat**

After the attorney general formally requested that the STF try Moreira Alves and the case went public, for the next two months it became a topic of near-obsessive discussion among the political class. The *Folha de S. Paulo* took a cautious but decidedly negative attitude toward the request, and editorial after editorial repeated the paper’s position that regardless of the case’s legal merits, it came at a highly inopportune time, would only serve to exacerbate political tension, and benefited no one.

Is it worthwhile to add another crisis to the ones that already exist? Is it worthwhile to make the relations between the Executive and Legislature even more difficult? […] Is it worthwhile to exacerbate passions, when everything

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indicates the appropriateness of smoothing things over, undoing mistakes, and uniting Brazilians? Even if the perfect legality of the initiative were assumed, it would still be flagrantly and totally politically inopportune.\(^\text{10}\)

If anything, the case should lead ARENA to more assiduously defend the government from opposition attacks and the government to ask itself why ARENA was reluctant to defend it, but it was ultimately a political crisis that demanded a “political solution,” not cassação.\(^\text{11}\) Moreover, the only ones who would benefit from a confrontation between the regime and Congress were those who were “adept at chaos, proponents of the worst the better” – a probable allusion to both “radical” military elements seeking to provoke a crisis in order to reverse the regime’s nascent liberalization, as well as the revolutionary left, which hoped to use any regime radicalization to spark an armed struggle. In order to stave off a crisis that could only harm the nation, Brazilians needed to realize:

This regime may not be ideal, but it is still the best among the possible alternatives. As a result, all people of good will and good faith should unite themselves around the President of the Republic and his goal to maintain himself within strict legality, so that he can resist radicalisms from the right and the left. [...] We cannot ignore the pressures on the President to renounce his democratic commitments and adopt extralegal measures; but on the other hand, we cannot ignore the provocations of those who, alleged defenders of liberty and democracy, in fact seem to be engaged in the installation of a dictatorship.\(^\text{12}\)

The Folha’s position was typical for a paper that spent almost the entire period of military rule making vague, deferential calls for conciliation, dialogue, and moderation. At the same time, while it was careful to distance itself from Moreira Alves’s rhetoric and refused to take a position on the legality of the government’s request, the paper carefully criticized elements of the military – “alleged defenders of liberty and democracy” – who

\(^{10}\) “Inoportunidade,” Folha de S. Paulo, 15 Oct. 1968, 4.
sought to manipulate the crisis to serve their own dictatorial ends. The Folha’s ownership and editorial staff hoped that gentle pressure on the military to accept a compromise could defuse the situation and avert a showdown.

For their part, politicians realized that the case could spark a dangerous confrontation, and throughout October and into November they scrambled to find a way to keep Congress from having to vote on the matter at all. Perhaps the STF would decide that there was insufficient evidence to proceed, or perhaps it would conclude that Moreira Alves could not be prosecuted for a congressional speech. For their part, politicians realized that the case could spark a dangerous confrontation, and throughout October and into November they scrambled to find a way to keep Congress from having to vote on the matter at all. Perhaps the STF would decide that there was insufficient evidence to proceed, or perhaps it would conclude that Moreira Alves could not be prosecuted for a congressional speech. Perhaps a flurry of meetings and letters between the ARENA leadership, Costa e Silva, and military leaders could somehow defuse the crisis. A rumored across the board military pay raise became reality in early November when the government agreed to a salary increase of 30% for military and civilian public employees. Other proposals included a special Chamber session in tribute to the Armed Forces; censure for deputies who insulted the military, with repeat offenders forfeiting two weeks’ to one month’s pay; and a constitutional amendment limiting immunity for insults to the president or Armed Forces. Yet once these solutions were suggested, they never appeared again. In all likelihood, they were trial balloons, designed to gauge military interest in a variety of negotiated settlements. When no one in the military responded, a showdown became increasingly likely.

Although the press and political class were paying avid attention to every development, their debates and proposed solutions occurred in a vacuum, as most Brazilians were utterly uninterested in the unfolding crisis. A poll in the *Jornal do Brasil* in late October revealed that 40% of respondents in Guanabara approved of the case against Moreira Alves (who hailed from their own state), while 38% had no opinion. Only 22% were opposed. Of course, the government had access to these polls and was well aware that the public did not care what happened to Moreira Alves; as a US embassy intelligence report put it, “It is doubtful that many Brazilians perceive any important relationship between their own lives and the political intrigues at the federal level.”

However irrelevant they were to most Brazilians, the “intrigues at the federal level” were highly relevant for Moreira Alves himself, as not only his career, but also possibly his life, were in danger. Though he made light of the danger later, the months after his speeches were extremely stressful for him and his family. After a series of threatening phone calls and a report from a military contact that a group of officers planned to kidnap, beat, and possibly castrate him, he installed floodlights around his home, hired a bodyguard, and purchased a stockpile of guns, including a .38 caliber pistol in a jeweled case for his wife. His experience as a correspondent in the Suez Canal Zone and his wounding during the shootout in Alagoas had earned him a reputation as a marksman, though he had fired a gun in neither Egypt nor Maceió; however, he did...
nothing to set the record straight, as “inaccuracy can be rewarding.” A Pernambuco
deputy who had extensive experience with violent political disputes ridiculed his
precautions; this sort of situation, he explained, required at least two machine guns, five
rifles, 3,000 rounds of ammunition, and five seasoned bodyguards.19

At the end of October, the STF announced that it would take the case. Justice
Aliomar Baleeiro pointed out that since Gama e Silva had expended so much effort
explaining why the immunity guaranteed in article 34 did not apply to Moreira Alves, it
was clear that there were questions about whether the “extremely new and innovative”
restrictions on freedom of expression in article 151 could be applied to speeches given in
Congress. Still, he ruled that these concerns, in and of themselves, were not sufficient to
sink the case, though they could be debated more fully at an eventual trial.20 The court
immediately sent a request to the Chamber for permission to try Moreira Alves.21 For the
next five weeks, while the case worked its way through an initial review by the
Constitution and Justice Committee, the Chamber carefully weighed its options. There
were compelling reasons to believe that the deputies would accede to the request. In the
government’s favor was the fact that due to the imaturos’ confrontational style, Moreira
Alves was unpopular with his colleagues.22 He did nothing to help his case when in late
October, while the STF was still considering Gama e Silva’s request, he gave a speech
castigating Rio de Janeiro police after they invaded a hospital where students had taken

Moreira Alves, 39-40.
22 Tel. Brasília 3196, 13 Nov. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1905, Pol 15-1 BRAZ.
refuge after police broke up their demonstration and shot at least nine students.\textsuperscript{23} The speech framed the invasion as emblematic of the failure of law. “The law that reigns here is that of the gun and the outlaw.”\textsuperscript{24} At one point Moreira Alves referred to the police as bandits, and at another he was reported to have called them “crazy sadists.”\textsuperscript{25}

The ARENA leadership and Covas convinced Moreira Alves to authorize the exclusion of the most offensive lines from the \textit{Diário da Câmara}. Probably hoping to deflect attention from Moreira Alves, Covas finally authorized the publication of his August 29 speech blasting the UnB invasion in the next day’s \textit{Diário}. But much of the Chamber, including many MDB deputies, was incensed that he spoke so aggressively at such a sensitive moment. Was he completely devoid of common sense? Was he not conscious of the gaze of the regime upon him and upon all of Congress? As one newspaper put it, the general feeling was, “If he behaves in such a way as to aggravate the threat that also hangs over the entire institution, it would be better for the institution to throw him overboard [to lighten the ship] to try to avoid a shipwreck.”\textsuperscript{26}

Deputies also feared that the Armed Forces might retaliate against Congress, perhaps even close it altogether, if they refused to hand over Moreira Alves. ARENA’s Clovis Stenzel, availing himself of close military contacts, warned that a new institutional act could result from the MDB’s involvement with “subversion” (that is, it support of the student movement) and that the act could “reinstitute a process of expurgation of various

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Diário da Câmara dos Deputados}, 24 Oct. 1968, 7518.
\textsuperscript{26} “Inclina-se a Câmara para permitir a cassação,” \textit{Jornal do Brasil}, 24 October 1968, 6.
sectors” of society – an obvious threat that cassações could follow.\textsuperscript{27} As José Bonifácio put it to ARENA vice-leader Geraldo Freire, “Don’t worry. No one’s going to trade their place in Congress for Márcio’s.”\textsuperscript{28} No one, he argued, would risk the closure of Congress and the loss of their own position merely to save Moreira Alves’s neck.

Still, deputies also had good reasons to deny the request. The prosecution of even an unpopular deputy would set a terrible precedent – if the Chamber handed over Moreira Alves, who might be next? What would happen to parliamentary immunity and to Congress’s remaining power and prestige? As it stood now, Congress had lost many of its legislative functions to the military-dominated executive, but it was still free to protest specific regime policies and communicate its misgivings about police repression. Now even that right to serve as a moral check was threatened. As the \textit{Folha} put it, “The political class fears […] establishing a precedent and [having to] later passively watch a process of mutilation of the Legislative Branch, with cassações \textit{en masse} reinstated.”\textsuperscript{29} Years later, Covas agreed, “If you approved that [request], everyone [else] who was inconvenient for the regime would be successively removed from parliamentary life. And this was […] the limit of what the Parliament could endure.”\textsuperscript{30} Deputy Fr. Antonio Godinho put it starkly: “If the Chamber hands over one head, it will automatically be putting its own neck on the guillotine.”\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} Interview with Freire in \textit{AI-5: o dia que não existiu}.
\textsuperscript{30} Interview with Covas in \textit{AI-5: O Dia Que Não Existiu}.
\textsuperscript{31} “Cassações: pronto o pedido de licença,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 5 Nov. 1968, 3.
Indeed, rumors circulated that the government had its sights set on São Paulo MDB deputies Hélio Navarro, Dorival de Abreu, David Lerer, and Gastone Righi. Government allies were sent into a panic in late October when someone started a rumor that four arenistas would be next. Meanwhile rumors swirled that the government was preparing a list of Guanabara state deputies for cassação; the rumor was quickly quashed by Gama e Silva, who offered the tenuous reassurance that nothing of the sort was planned – for now. Then in mid-November, a military court sent a request to the Chamber to grant permission to try Hermano Alves for violating the national security law in articles in a Rio de Janeiro daily. It was clear that the witch-hunt would not stop with Moreira Alves; any legislator who criticized the regime or military could be next.

The request was dealt a serious blow by its failure to win the support of key ARENA leaders, in particular its national president, Rio Grande do Sul senator Daniel Krieger. A foe of Vargas who was thrice imprisoned under the Estado Novo, Krieger was first elected to the Senate for the UDN in 1954, when he defeated Vargas protégé João Goulart. He supported the “Revolution” from the beginning, and he had accepted many of its most controversial extralegal measures, including the one-year extension of Castelo Branco’s term and the dissolution of the old parties. When ARENA was formed in early 1966, Castelo Branco trusted Krieger enough that he asked him to lead the new party, even though he had not been the president of the UDN. Still, differences with the regime

32 Tel. Brasília 3173, 30 Oct. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 3061, SOC 11 BRAZ.
33 “Pronto processo contra deputado de SP,” Folha de S. Paulo, Edição da Tarde, 31 Oct. 1968, 3.
35 “Chegou à Câmara processo contra Hermano,” Jornal da Tarde, 13 Nov. 1968, 7. As Daniel Krieger pointed out, Hermano Alves’ attacks on the regime had been made in his capacity as a journalist, not as a deputy exercising his office, so his “attacks on the democratic order” could have been prosecuted. Krieger, 336.
36 Ibid., 179-189, 198-200.
emerged too. After the coup, he helped author a proposal for an institutional act that the military rejected as too timid, instead adopting a more aggressive text that would become AI-1. In late 1966 he had declined Costa e Silva’s invitation to serve as justice minister and expressed opposition to the new constitution’s restrictions on civil liberties. From the beginning he opposed the prosecution of Moreira Alves, arguing that it violated the basic principle of congressional immunity, and in early October, before the case was sent to the STF and went public, he sent Costa e Silva a letter explaining his disagreement. He also resolved that the party would not take a formal position and declined to pressure deputies to vote in favor of the request. As he put it a decade later, “I could not permit myself to cooperate, out of fear of reprisals, with the castration of Congress and the rape of the Constitution of 1967.”

Publicly, however, when asked his opinion of the case by reporters, the ARENA president maintained a prudent silence, limiting himself to quoting an Arab proverb, “Saying little is worth silver; saying nothing is worth gold.”

Krieger’s position was a slap in the face for the military because he was the sort of politician they had thought they could trust. He had supported the coup, accepted the regime’s extralegal measures, and worked hard to deliver votes in Congress. He was generally believed to be honest and untouched by corruption, and though he would stand on principle at times, he avoided ruffling feathers or publicly embarrassing the regime. If the military could not trust Krieger, what civilian politician could they trust? For members of the military still fully committed to the ideal of a “Revolution” that would

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38 Krieger, 330-331.
39 “Krieger prefere calar sobre a situação.”
reshape political practice, Krieger was acting as though the “Revolution” had been
transitory, as though politicians could revert to their own habits. Jayme Portella fumed
that Krieger “refused to understand that a case like this could not be handled with
amiability. […] There had to be a formula or a measure to hold [Moreira Alves]
accountable, because the Revolution had not extinguished itself.”

Such intransigence was utterly alien to politicians accustomed to compromise,
and they searched desperately for a solution that would leave the military’s honor intact
without requiring them to give up their own by betraying Congress by revoking
immunity. Krieger was particularly involved in the search for a compromise. He
preferred that the matter be decided as an internal decision of the Chamber, which would
apply an “unprecedented” penalty – suspension of Moreira Alves from Congress, a
solution that he claimed MDB leaders like Martins Rodrigues, Rio de Janeiro deputy
Amaral Peixoto, São Paulo deputy Ulysses Guimarães, and Minas Gerais deputy
Tancredo Neves were prepared to support. For politicians, there was no reason why a
pay raise, change to congressional rules, formal reprimand, suspension, or constitutional
amendment could not resolve the impasse. Should it not be enough for Congress to
demonstrate that it regretted the speeches, did not agree with their sentiments, and would
discipline Moreira Alves on its own? As the saying went, “Politics is the art of
swallowing toads.” If the political class had swallowed many toads since 1964, surely the
military could swallow a compromise over Moreira Alves.

40 Portella de Mello, 586.
41 Krieger, 335.
The problems did not end with Krieger. Ernani Sátiro had been forced to take a leave of absence due to heart trouble, leaving one of the ARENA vice-leaders in the Chamber, Geraldo Freire, in charge of defending the case.\(^{42}\) Freire later recalled that when Gama e Silva came to inform him, Sátiro, and other ARENA leaders of the request (after it had already been sent to the STF), Sátiro, aware that deputies would not respond well to the repeal of their own immunity, warned the justice minister, “You’re bringing a storm onto our heads; this is going to bring us serious problems.”\(^{43}\) Why would Gama e Silva and the military want to stir a hornets’ nest? Could they not see the threat that the request posed not only to politicians’ immunity but also to their honor? With Krieger unwilling to defend the request and Sátiro ill and less than enthusiastic, that left only Freire, an obedient but less known and respected deputy, to marshal the ARENA troops.

**Sectors, Echelons, and Radical Minorities: Predicting the Military Response**

If the attempts at compromise bore no fruit, and if lack of support of key ARENA leaders led to a refusal to permit the prosecution of Moreira Alves, what would the military do next? In the best-case scenario, the president and military would serenely accept Congress’s decision, and political life would continue as before, perhaps with more a concerted effort to reign in the imaturos and prevent similar crises in the future. But in the worst case, military “hardliners” would overthrow Costa e Silva or force him to sign a new institutional act to close Congress and reinstitute cassações. Yet no one knew how likely this scenario might be. If as many feared, there really was a movement afoot in the military to “radicalize” the “Revolution,” would it do any good to hand

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\(^{42}\) Portella de Mello, 611.

\(^{43}\) Freire interview in *AI-5: O Dia Que Não Existiu.*
Moreira Alves over? After all, in 1937 the Chamber had revoked the immunity of deputies opposed to Vargas, and it had done nothing to stop the establishment of the Estado Novo and closure of Congress only a few months later.44

Who precisely was offended? Was it only a few lower echelon “radicals”? Were the military ministers speaking for themselves when they demanded prosecution, or had their subordinates pressured them? How invested was Costa e Silva, and how would he, the ministers, officers, and the rank and file react if Congress resisted? And if Costa e Silva were willing to tolerate a solution that fell short of the military’s demands, would he be able to resist elements in the military that might call for a more punitive response?

Even the usually well-informed U.S. embassy was uncertain what was happening. A telegram to Washington worried that the “President [is] finding it increasingly difficult to balance the ‘needs’ of the Revolution as expressed by the military who brought him to office against his constitutional responsibility toward civilian institutions and his own sincere desire to avoid a move to the right,” yet concluded that comparisons to the tense atmosphere in October 1965, when irresistible military pressure had led a reluctant Castelo Branco to sign AI-2, were “overly alarmist.”45 As for the source of pressure on Costa e Silva, the Americans expressed confusion as late as December 4, when “senior Army contacts in Rio and Brasília” did not appear to be in crisis mode.46 Due to the cozy relationship between the American and Brazilian militaries, the embassy should have been well informed about military goings on. Unless officers were deliberately

45 Tel. Rio 13116, 28 Oct. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1905, Pol 15-1 BRAZ.
46 Tel. Rio 13997, 4 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1905, Pol 15 BRAZ.
misleading their American contacts, it seems that there was hope that the military might be willing to accept a compromise or even an outright congressional refusal.

Politicians were not as well informed as the Americans and, unless they had military contacts of their own, were reliant on the press, always a key source of news, rumor, and gossip for Brazilian elites. Reporters in Brasília and Rio de Janeiro thus expended considerable effort reading the political tealeaves to ascertain the attitudes of Costa e Silva and top military brass. Periodically, Costa e Silva or those who had spoken with him offered their take on the President’s position. Reports from one meeting between Costa e Silva and the military high command in October claimed that Costa e Silva had called Moreira Alves’s comments “inconsequential stupidity” and argued that the “rules of the game” would have to be maintained if Congress failed to give permission to prosecute Moreira Alves. Yet transportation minister Mário Andreazza (a colonel with a 30-year military career who doubtless still enjoyed close military contacts) claimed in early November that Costa e Silva “will not stand back from his democratic commitments […] and for this reason is not considering exceptional measures. […] There is no possibility that he will stand back from [the constitution’s] text and destroy the regime.” Was this encouraging evidence? Or was it evidence that Costa e Silva was indeed under pressure? After all, other rumors held that although the President was willing to accept Congress’s decision, he might not be able to restrain enraged military elements that would accept nothing less than a cassação.

Even as they searched for hints to Costa e Silva’s position, the press monitored the military for indications of the depth of the crisis. In October, the *Folha* cited vague “measurable sectors” in the Army who were opposed to the prosecution, arguing that it made the military look “intolerant and antidemocratic” and that the request probably originated from a “radical minority” who wanted an excuse to turn the regime into a right-wing dictatorship.\(^{50}\) Yet only nine days later the *Jornal do Brasil* cited equally vague “military sectors” in Rio who expected from politicians “flexibility […] to heed the necessities of the moment,” arguing, “The Revolution […] cannot hinder itself with laws that hamper its efficiency.” The inefficient laws, of course, referred to parliamentary immunity.\(^{51}\) Another source – a general in the Army ministry – claimed that the military ministers would be willing to accept failure to hand over Moreira Alves but that they were being pressured by the overwhelming weight of military “lower echelons,” who would accept nothing less than a cassação to restore the military’s honor.\(^ {52}\) After all, politicians’ attacks on the military were only one symptom of growing “subversion” against the regime. Interior minister Afonso Albuquerque Lima, a general with a large military following who had open pretensions of succeeding Costa e Silva, declared:

> [The military will not remain silent in the face of] leftist groups who, having forgotten their duty to the Pátria, hurl themselves against those who have devoted themselves to her and give even their very lives to defend her. […] All sorts of injustice is committed against the military, who at this moment are in the backlands opening up roads, digging wells, while these melodious singers get rich at pompous festivals, singing the hymns of subversion.\(^ {53}\)

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\(^{50}\) “Militares começam a reagir contra cassação de deputado,” *Folha de S. Paulo*, 14 Oct. 1968, 3.
While the immediate targets of the threat were probably students and singer Geraldo Vandré, whose thinly veiled call for armed resistance against the regime had become a hit song that year, Albuquerque Lima’s comments reflected a sense betrayal shared by many in the military. The pampered middle and upper classes – not only singers and students, but also the political class – whose fortunes had been preserved when the military saved Brazil from communism, were now committing “injustices” against the very institution that had saved them and was continuing to work for Brazil’s development.

The Military Turns up the Heat: The Vote in the Justice Committee

Even with the stakes so high, with the opposition of powerful members of the ARENA leadership, and with the hope that Costa e Silva and the military could tolerate a refusal to hand over Moreira Alves, there was no reason to believe that the request would not pass, given ARENA’s commanding majority of 282-127 in the Chamber of Deputies. Even with a unanimous MDB vote, it would take 78 ARENA defections to defeat the measure. Yet before the full Chamber could take up the request, it had to be reviewed by the Constitution and Justice Committee. The committee was made up of 21 arenistas and ten oppositionists, all known for their legal expertise, particularly in the field of constitutional law. Committee chairman Djalma Marinho, an arenista and former UDN stalwart from Rio Grande do Norte, held a degree in law and was a 13-year veteran of the

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54 Vandré’s 1968 song “Pra não dizer que não falei das flores” (more commonly known as “Caminhando”), which accused the military of teaching soldiers to “die for the country and live without reason,” and urged its listeners, “Come on, let’s go / If you wait you’ll never know / The ones who know choose the time / They don’t wait for it to happen.” A hit at the III International Song Festival in Rio de Janeiro earlier that year, the song was promptly banned, and Vandré, threatened with arrest, was forced to seek refuge in São Paulo, where Abreu Sodré claimed to have sheltered him in the governor’s mansion. See Sodré, 158.
committee. Like Krieger he opposed the request on constitutional grounds and moved it through the committee slowly, hoping to find a compromise.

When the case arrived from the STF in early November, the first order of business was to gather a defense. The resulting 41-page document by Moreira Alves and his lawyer, addressed not to the committee but to the entire Chamber, brilliantly dismantled Gama e Silva’s case. Turning the accusations against him on their head, he argued that the case was being brought not against one deputy, but against the democratic order itself. Unlike a legislator’s immunity from criminal charges, the “inviolability of the rostrum” was not a personal prerogative but an “essential attribute of the Chamber of Deputies itself;” a threat against it represented “an attack on the prerogatives of all Brazilians.”

The mandate of the people confers upon the deputy not only the right but also the duty of freely expressing his or her opinions. […] Never is this duty more sacred than when it is exercised to oppose violence, arbitrary decisions, [or] the disobedience, abuse, and crimes of the powerful. The exercise of the [right of] denunciation can close a Congress, but without it no Congress can remain open. Exercising it honors the will of the people. Betraying it earns the execration of all true men for popular representation itself. Silence is complicity.

To those who thought that sacrificing him would satiate the military’s hunger, he reminded them of Neville Chamberlain’s attempt to appease Hitler with the Munich Agreement. “The fundamental principles of human rights cannot be negotiated with tyrants.” He situated the attempt to prosecute him in the context of his resistance to the regime. He proudly reminded the Chamber of his time at the Correio da Manhã, “the hope of the wronged, the bastion of nationalism, and the herald of a future that we have

56 Ibid., 157-158.
57 Ibid., 158.
yet to build,” where he had helped write “some of the most glorious pages in the history of Brazilian thought.”⁵⁸ He had twice won cases against the justice ministry – once in 1966 when it asked the electoral court system to invalidate his candidacy on the grounds that he was a communist, and again when the ministry sought to ban his book on the torture of political prisoners – and speculated that Gama e Silva was desperate for any pretext to be rid of him.⁵⁹ After arriving in Congress, he had defended ideals contrary to the interests of “those who want to impose […] a government divorced from the people, contrary to national aspirations, the guarantor of privileges that time and justice no longer allow to survive. I never opposed the democratic order or social peace.”⁶⁰

He questioned whether his comments had offended large portions of the armed forces, or whether offense existed “only in the imagination of a small group of officers with access to the [Army] minister.”⁶¹ Regardless, he had not targeted the Armed Forces at all, but simply a contingent of militarists trying to distract them from their true mission. Quoting esteemed statesman Ruy Barbosa, he insisted, “Politics in the Army inevitably leads to militarism. Therefore, between the Army and politics the highest possible wall should be erected.”⁶² Even if his comments had constituted an attack on the military, it could be a defense of democracy if one believed that the military was “destroying democracy itself by force of arms, seeking to install in its place a true military oligarchy,” or “intending to impose tutelage upon the country’s political life […] so that all the nation’s political institutions might end up dominated and subjugated to a

⁵⁸ Ibid., 160.
⁵⁹ Ibid., 161-162.
⁶⁰ Ibid., 167.
⁶¹ Ibid., 168.
⁶² Ibid., 171.
rule of force.” How could it be unpatriotic to oppose “the implantation of a militarist dictatorship” by men desirous of “enjoy[ing] the profits of power, […] who in a democracy are eternal runners-up and can only manage a permanent role in political life by murdering liberty”? How could he remain silent when faced with men who “wish to declare war on progress, on the nation’s development, in order to get rich with public money and satisfy their personal frustrations with unbridled arbitrariness”?

The centerpiece of the argument came in a twelve-page section, probably written by his lawyer. It cited the West German constitution and nine French and Italian legal authorities (always quoted in the original French or Italian), all backed up by an impressive array of Latin legal terms. Moreover, through a close reading of both articles in question, it convincingly demonstrated that the inviolability promised in article 34 superseded the exceptions to freedom of expression outlined in article 151. Finally, in an apparent attempt to extend an olive branch, they argued, “Only the Chamber, through its regimental norms, is able to punish its members who possibly abuse their inviolability.” That is, if Moreira Alves had done something wrong, it would be acceptable for the Chamber to discipline him internally. Moreira Alves apparently gave copies to the press, since the defense received prominent coverage the next day.

After Moreira Alves submitted his defense, Lauro Leitão, the ARENA member assigned to examine the case and write an opinion to guide the committee, submitted an unconventional opinion that laid out the legal arguments for both sides but refrained from

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63 Ibid., 178.
64 Ibid., 183.
65 “Márcio se defende e diz que voto dá o direito de crítica,” Jornal do Brasil, 18 Nov. 1968, 3; “Deputado: Camara não pode renunciar à inviolabilidade; Márcio entrega defesa,” Folha de S. Paulo, 19 Nov. 1968, 3; “Tôda a defesa de Marcio Moreira Alves,” Jornal da Tarde, 19 Nov. 1968, 7.
taking a position. In response, São Paulo MDB deputy Oscar Pedroso Horta, who had served as justice minister in the short-lived Jânio Quadros administration, submitted his own opinion that cited a host of legal scholars and thirteen dictionary definitions of “inviolable” to argue against the government’s case. With an eloquent defense from Moreira Alves, Leitão’s surprising refusal to endorse the government’s position, and Pedroso Horta’s meticulous refutation of Gama e Silva’s arguments, if the committee made its decision based on legal criteria, it would clearly recommend a denial of the request. Sure enough, it quickly became apparent that at least eight of the committee’s arenistas were not disposed to vote in favor. If the ARENA dissidents joined the committee’s ten MDB members in voting against the request, the case would still go to the full Chamber, but with a negative recommendation from the committee, its passage would be in serious jeopardy. The top legal minds in a Chamber dominated by lawyers had decided that Gama e Silva’s convoluted justifications were absurd.

Costa e Silva, Gama e Silva, and ARENA acting leader Geraldo Freire thus began to apply intense pressure to both the committee and Congress as a whole. Costa e Silva, in concert with state governors and Freire, was utilizing what the press described as “the classic resources for such situations – threats and compromises.” Personal contact was key. Costa e Silva met quietly with Marinho and the rebel ARENA committee members. He expressed sympathy for their legal reasons for opposing the request but reminded

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68 “Costa e Silva comanda as pressões,” Jornal da Tarde, 26 Nov. 1968, 6. Costa e Silva appealed to the secretary-general of ARENA, Pernambuco deputy João Roma, to help Freire apply pressure, but Roma refused on the grounds that he was personally opposed to the revocation of immunity. See Portella de Mello, 623.
them that he argued that the final decision should be based on “political,” not legal, criteria.\textsuperscript{69} Deputies were “terrified.” The pressure strongly indicated that either the president was deeply invested in the request, or he was under irresistible pressure from powerful military forces. The tension was palpable, and it was hard “to believe, in that environment, that it could be possible to maintain any spirit of resistance.”\textsuperscript{70}

While ARENA was under pressure, the MDB tried to obstruct the committee vote. To that end, Covas instructed MDB deputies to give lengthy speeches in the Justice Committee against the request. The plan was to delay until Congress’s summer recess began on December 1, postponing a final decision until the Congress came back from its summer recess in March and buying time to find a compromise.\textsuperscript{71} As his biographer would put it, a norm of behavior for the political class was, “When you arrive at an impasse, you put off the decision.” Marinho collaborated with Covas by refusing to enforce the twenty-minute speech limit, allowing MDB members to drone on for over an hour.\textsuperscript{72} Meanwhile, Marinho met with Costa e Silva and his civilian chief of staff to suggest putting off the vote until the new year, and the president and Pacheco indicated their approval.\textsuperscript{73} Here was the beginning, politicians hoped, of the negotiated solution they hoped for; surely in the coming months a compromise could be reached.

But the very next day, Costa e Silva dashed their expectations by asking the ARENA leadership to reclassify the case as “urgent,” which would require the committee...
to vote immediately.\footnote{4} Geraldo Freire, acting leader of the party in the Chamber, was instructed by the president and justice minister to replace nine ARENA committee members opposed to the request with less qualified but more pliable deputies.\footnote{5} Costa e Silva then called a special December session to force a decision, ending hopes that further delay could yield a compromise. On December 10, the puppet committee took the “political” decision, recommending that the Chamber grant permission to try Moreira Alves.\footnote{6} After the committee vote, the normally shy Marinho, who became nauseous when he had to speak publicly, gave an emotional speech. “Rejecting this request is an act of moral courage,” he insisted and added, paraphrasing Calderón de la Barca, “To the king [I give] all, except my honor.”\footnote{7} He then quit the committee in protest, and all ten MDB members joined him. The regime had pulled out all the stops. “Now Márcio’s closest friends know that he is doomed, and they’ve lost hope,” mourned the Jornal da

\footnote{4} “Márcio: Governo agora quer urgência,” Folha de S. Paulo, Edição da Tarde, (DATE), 3.  
\footnote{5} Thomas Skidmore referred to the new members of the committee as “deputies whose lack of expertise in constitutional law was exceeded only by their eagerness to follow presidential orders,” while Krieger later blasted the maneuver as “a huge error that could only have been committed by people completely devoid of sensibility” and blamed Gama e Silva, with whom he had “profound differences” and a “relationship that went no further than protocol demanded.” Krieger, 335, 328; Skidmore, The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-85, 80. At least two of Freire’s replacements refused to serve on the Committee, forcing him to select replacements for the replacements. See “Decisão sobre Márcio até amanhã ou convocação do CN,” Folha de S. Paulo, Edição da Tarde, 29 Nov. 1968, 3.  
\footnote{7} For Marinho as shy and unassuming, see “Ser um bom partido, eis a questão,” Veja, 11 Dec. 1968, 20. For the quotations from his speech, see “Ao rei tudo, menos a honra,” Jornal do Brasil, 21 Apr. 2004. The Calderón de la Barca quotation is from El Alcalde de Zalamea. Although the line has entered Brazilian political lore, it does not appear in press transcriptions of the speech, nor does it appear in the version reproduced in Krieger’s biography a decade later. Perhaps Marinho left it out of the transcript he gave the press, or the papers intentionally left it out, to avoid exacerbating tensions. It is also possible that the speech did not include the line, but that Marinho made the comment privately to colleagues. See “Comissão aprova cassação de Márcio; Djalma Marinho renuncia,” Folha de S. Paulo, 11 Dec. 1968, 3; “MDB quer aproveitar a hora,” Jornal da Tarde, 11 Dec. 1968, 3; Krieger, 339-341.
What all of Congress had desperately sought to avoid was going to happen – the Chamber would have to vote, choosing between yet another capitulation the regime, or a principled resistance that could result in the recess or even the closure of Congress.

While the new Justice Committee deliberated, Covas and other MDB leaders were reported to have met with an influential colonel, Francisco Boaventura Cavalcanti, who reassured them that if Congress refused the request, the military would do nothing. Then on December 4 the Army released a statement denying that it was pressuring Congress, claiming, “The Chamber of Deputies is sovereign in its decisions.” However, this was followed two days later with a “clarification” that the Army did not believe that democracy included “impunity for those who abuse their prerogatives to offend an institution that has the right to be respected and is determinedly disposed to defend that right.” Rumors swirled that “radical” military factions would accept nothing less than the cassação of Moreira Alves and were pressuring Costa e Silva to issue a new institutional act if Congress did not comply (although some believed the rumors were merely a bluff to pressure Congress).

The stage was set for the final showdown. Congress could take the “political” decision that Costa e Silva recommended and sacrifice Moreira Alves, hoping that it would placate the military, keep Congress open, and preserve what few of its powers

79 Portella de Mello, 625, 632. As always, Portella’s claims are questionable. While he claims that the SNI was carefully watching Covas and Cavalcanti and provides the address for a meeting in Rio, it is unclear how he would have been privy to the content of the conversation. He claims that Covas told friends about the meeting, who presumably then reported to the SNI, but by the time Portella wrote in 1979, he had an axe to grind with Cavalcanti, who had later been purged from the military for criticizing the regime’s dictatorial excesses and would later participate in several military schemes to support democratization.
82 “Governo pode recorrer a um novo Ato,” Folha de S. Paulo, 4 Dec. 1968, 3.
would remain in the wake of a capitulation. Or it could stand up for principle, send a message that the military had gone too far – and risk the closure of Congress, perhaps permanently. Which option would the deputies choose?

“To the King, I Give All, Except My Honor”: The Congressional Debate

For the last two months the debate had raged, culminating in nearly 100 speeches about the case in the two weeks after Costa e Silva ordered the substitution of the rebellious arenistas on the Justice Committee. Some deputies advocated capitulation, either because they agreed with the request or because they feared the consequences of a refusal. José de Carvalho Sobrinho, a São Paulo arenista, said that he would review the case carefully, and if he decided that Moreira Alves had dishonored the Armed Forces, he would vote for his cassação. “The people don’t elect their representatives to be ignorant or corrupt, to mislead [people with] their ideology, to be subversive or degrading toward the institutions or the branch [of government] that they represent.”

His fellow paulista Cantídio Sampaio argued that the request was completely justified. Clovis Stenzel, a deputy with close military connections, called on the government to issue an institutional act “to thwart the illegal opposition that is disturbing the country,” and predicted that the Chamber, “with many votes from the MDB,” would revoke immunity.

Nevertheless, opponents drowned out the supporters. As expected, the MDB was strident in its opposition; between October 10 and December 12, 62 of the party’s 127

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83 “Covas: cassação é problema da Câmara,” Folha de S. Paulo, 6 Nov. 1968, 3.
84 “José Bonifácio sobre pedido para cassar deputado: Câmara deve julgar sem medo,” Folha de S. Paulo, 16 Oct. 1968, 3.
85 “Esperada decisão do caso Márcio antes do recesso de dezembro,” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 Nov. 1968, 3.
deputies spoke 140 times, all against the request. Yet the real surprise was the 43 speeches by 22 arenistas who, like the dissident members of the Justice Committee, were aghast at this attack on the autonomy of the legislative branch and fearful for the future of Congress. Some of the very deputies who had welcomed the coup, stomached successive waves of cassações, accepted the dissolution of their old parties, raised little protest at the abolition of direct elections for more and more offices, and tolerated the steady erosion of their power now chose to take a stand. A steady stream of lawmakers made congressional speeches expressing their opposition to the request, culminating in the dramatic final two days of debate on December 11-12, when 36 deputies gave emotionally charged speeches against the request, while only one, Geraldo Freire, spoke up to defend the measure, and that only because as acting leader he was obligated to give a speech defending the party’s position prior to the final vote. The speeches provide profound insight into not only politicians’ motivations for opposing the revocation of immunity, but also the content of elite political culture after four years of military rule. What was important for the political class was not ideology, party, or social divisions; rather, they were united by a common educational and social background; the intense sociability of life in a new, isolated capital; and familial ties that produced a shared way of seeing the world and their place in it as a group. Their speeches reveal common attitudes toward democracy, Congress, and

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86 Five of the 140 speeches were withdrawn by the speaker, probably due to their belligerent tone, and never published, but based on other speeches by the same deputies or references to the withdrawn speeches made in speeches that were published, it is certain that these five speeches also opposed the request.

87 The speeches from 12 December only came to light three decades later when a former congressional employee came forward with the typed notes; they were belatedly published in a supplement to the Diário da Câmara on 1 June 2000. See Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, “Documentos referentes à sessão matutina do dia 12-12-1968.”
the law and contain repeated references to honor, regional political heroes, and the
witness of history – all essential elements of their political culture.

The 84 deputies who spoke against the request between October 10 and December
12 were from 21 of Brazil’s 22 states.88 Significantly, 44 (52.4%) were from only five
Already, the most adamant opposition to the excesses of the regime was coming from the
urban, industrialized states in the southern half of the country. The role of deputies from
São Paulo is deserving of special attention. Twelve paulista deputies (more than any other
state) gave speeches – from the venerable statesman Cunha Bueno to the more
tempestuous young Covas, who, just before the final vote, gave an impassioned defense
of Moreira Alves in his capacity as leader of the opposition party.

Considering the fact that 54% of deputies had graduated from law school, the
most direct argument against the revocation of immunity was a legal one based on
whether immunity applied when a deputy stood accused of making an “attack on the
democratic order” from the floor of Congress.89 Brito Velho argued that when speaking in
Congress, a deputy was not simply utilizing his personal right to free speech; rather, he
was exercising the function of a federal deputy – debating and voting on laws.90 For his
actions in Congress, Moreira Alves could not be prosecuted, even if they attacked the
democratic order. Indeed, a vote to revoke immunity would be a vote against the very
constitution. Nísia Carone (MDB-MG), one of the few female deputies, exclaimed to

88 The small Northeastern state of Sergipe was the only one without a deputy giving a speech.
89 For the percentage of deputies elected in 1966 who had degrees in law, see Carvalho, “Elites políticas
durante o regime militar: um estudo sobre os parlamentares da ARENA e do MDB”, 86.
90 Brito Velho (ARENA-RS), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 12 Dec. 1968, 9008.
applause, “It is preferable to be a housewife, where we give the orders, than to be a
deputy, be called ‘Excellency,’ and have to vote against the Constitution.”91 If the
collection said Moreira Alves could not be prosecuted, that was the end of it; as Pedro
Gondim (ARENA-PB) put it, “We are vassals of the law, vassals of the Constitution.”92

Media File 2: Clip of Nísia Carone Speech, 12 Dec. 1968

Of course, the constitution was not the real issue. After all, as Benedito Ferreira
(ARENA-GO) pointed out, the MDB had bitterly opposed this very constitution when it
was voted on in 1967. “I would like to express my astonishment at the regard in which
many in the opposition seem to hold our constitution […], when not long ago […] [they
were saying it was] bestowed from above, savage, ‘Polish,’ imposed by manu militari.”94
As for arenistas, their loyalty to the constitution was suspect as well; many of them had
participated in the extra-legal coup, and Congress had flagrantly violated the 1946
constitution by declaring the presidency vacant while Goulart was still in the country.
Rather, defense of the constitution was an attractive rhetorical device because it provided
an excuse for defying the military. This was probably the thinking of six paulista
arenistas who released a statement announcing their intention to vote against the
government. “We consider lucid loyalty to be the best way to serve the government, as

92 Pedro Gondim (ARENA-PB), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 41.
93 If you are unable to play the clip of Carone’s speech, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B5b2jICz6iLxL7Nn5XNzZVpWvX.
94 Benedito Ferreira (ARENA-GO), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 10 Dec. 1968, 8886. The “Polish”
appellation established a comparison with Vargas’s so-called “Polish” constitution of 1937 that was
modeled upon Poland’s authoritarian, corporatist April Constitution of 1935.
opposed to blind subservience. In a government repeatedly placed at the service of the Constitution, the most appropriate way to follow is to obey what the Constitution commands.”\textsuperscript{95} In the words of Carone, “A constitution made by the Revolution should be respected by the Revolution.”\textsuperscript{96} If one were going to flout the will of the generals, what better justification could there be than defense of their own constitution?

Similarly a deputy’s loyalty to the “Revolution” of 1964 could also be invoked as either a defense of a refusal to comply, or as an attempt to convince the military that the Moreira Alves prosecution was a distraction from the “Revolution’s” true objectives. Cunha Bueno cited his “steadfast behavior in the events which […] culminated in the Revolution” to justify his opposition. At the same time, he had “intransigently and steadfastly defended the principle that the inviolability of the [legislator’s] mandate is fundamental” and promised that if he had to choose between sacrificing that inviolability and seeing Congress closed, he would choose the latter.\textsuperscript{97} Feu Rosa, who had earlier defended students against police repression, similarly argued that the “Revolution” had been a noble attempt to save Brazilian democracy, to institute political and institutional reforms that would set the country on the path to development. So far, however, the “Revolution” had failed in its efforts to transform the political system. Yet by standing up for its prerogatives and refusing to revoke Moreira Alves’s immunity, politicians could put their “Revolution” back on the right track:

\textsuperscript{95} “Declaração de voto,” \textit{Diário da Câmara dos Deputados}, 12 December 1968, 9004.
\textsuperscript{96} Recording of Nísia Carone (MDB-MG), Pequeno Expediente, 12 Dec. 1968, CD-CEDI, Arquivo Sonoro. The typed transcript omits the second “by the Revolution,” reading, “The constitution made by the Revolution should be respected.” \textit{Diário da Câmara dos Deputados}, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 50
\textsuperscript{97} Antônio Cunha Bueno (ARENA-SP), \textit{Diário da Câmara dos Deputados}, 31 Oct. 1968, Suplemento, 3.
Everyone knows that since April 1964, a group of soldiers and civilians with the most idealistic and purest desires has desired profound and true transformations in national life. And all of us have been permanently frustrated. The same structures, the same systems, the same old habits, and, in many cases, the same men continue disappointing us, vexing us, and even making us nauseous. […] I hope that the decision of this Chamber today serves as a turning point from the lame, inferior, slack-legged Revolution of paper and of spittle, to the true Revolution for which this country begs, the Revolution […] of progress and development, of new mentalities and the modernization of customs.  

Appeals to the constitution and “Revolution” were not directed only at fence-sitting colleagues who had not decided how they would vote; they were also directed at the military – the protagonist of the “Revolution” and supposed supreme defender of the constitution. Consequently, politicians often combined their invocations of the constitution and “Revolution” with attempts to convince the military that either the Moreira Alves speeches were inconsequential or that the attempt to prosecute him played into a subversive plot to provoke political and social chaos. Jonas Carlos da Silva, arenista from Ceará, praised the military as “true patriots and sincere democrats, […] a learned class devoted to the service of the Pátria.” Yet he invoked his reputation a defender of the Armed Forces to challenge the revocation of immunity. Moreira Alves was a “useful innocent, politically imaturo” – young and hotheaded, but not subversive. His speech had in fact done a service to the regime by proving how broad its support was – after all, had anyone heeded his calls to boycott Independence Day, and was there any evidence that young women had abandoned their officer boyfriends? But by attempting to prosecute Moreira Alves, the Armed Forces were falling into a communist trap – leftist subversives would love nothing better than to provoke a radical response from the military, proving that the regime was, in fact, a dictatorship that would require a

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98 Miguel Feu Rosa (ARENA-ES), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 35.
communist revolution to overthrow. The best way to avoid that trap was for the military to forget the matter and allow Congress to sanction Moreira Alves internally.99

Other deputies appealed to the military’s sense of honor. Jairo Brum insisted that anyone who accused the military of pressuring Congress was “attempt[ing] to wound the honor and dignity of our Armed Forces.” It was “inadmissible” that they “could be pressuring [us] to become cowards and assault the institution that they are supposed to protect and preserve. […] No one can accept that! I can’t accept it!” he thundered. How could men willing to “shed their blood in defense of […] the Pátria” be “preparing to turn themselves into the torturers of the Brazilian people”?100 Or as Covas put it, “How can we believe that the Brazilian Armed Forces, who […] went to defend liberty and democracy on foreign soil [in World War II], would place as a requirement for their survival the sacrifice of liberty and democracy in Brazil?”101

Appeals to the constitution, the “Revolution,” and military honor all comprised attempts to influence the military or justify disobedience, but they were not the reason deputies opposed the revocation of immunity. Several deputies, eschewing debates about constitutional law, offered a compelling explanation for their opposition in arguments based on the principle, fundamental to what they understood as democracy, of the separation of powers and the autonomy of the legislative branch. For them, the revocation of immunity would represent an unacceptable level of subservience to the executive branch and the loss of Congress’s prestige before the Brazilian people. For Antonio Magalhães, the request represented an unjust attempt “to establish as a norm of behavior

100 Jairo Brum (MDB-RS), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 12 December 1968, 9009.
101 Mário Covas (MDB-SP), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 109.
the docility of the Legislative Branch.” Moreover, if Moreira Alves’s immunity were revoked, it would set a dangerous precedent and turn Congress into “a mere appendage of the Executive, to which it would confer legality.”  

102 The problem was not simply that the request to revoke immunity trampled the constitution or violated the ideals of the “Revolution”; the problem was that it trampled on Congress and the political class. The Revolution was going too far in its attempts to reform politics.

Moreover, a vote against the revocation of immunity was not just a vote in defense of Congress, but also a vote in defense of democracy itself. This represented a liberal conception of representative democracy that the deputies held universally; that is, in a democracy, the three branches of government remained equal and independent, and Congress, legitimized by the popular vote, could speak its mind without fear of repercussion. Brum argued that Congress had an obligation to defend parliamentary immunity, because “without it, there is no Chamber, there is no Congress, there is no democracy.”  

103 Similarly, for Flores Soares, “If immunity is violated, the [legislative] branch will be destroyed, and with it, democracy itself.”

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Democracy, then, was fundamentally linked to an independent legislative branch, which served as the spokesperson for the nation. “The Chamber of Deputies [is] the branch [of government] in which the people deposit all their hopes,” proclaimed one deputy, while another stated, “This is the House of the Brazilian people. Here, and nowhere else, the people are present. Here, the Brazilian people appear every day, to

102 Antonio Magalhães (MDB-GO), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 12 December 1968, 8978.
103 Jairo Brum (MDB-RS), ibid., 9009.
104 Flores Soares (ARENA-RS), ibid., 9010.
discuss and debate their destiny." Of course, the Brazilian people gathered in Congress were nearly uniformly white, male, educated, and wealthy, and they had been elected by only literate Brazilians. Yet this does not appear to have generated much concern; after all, as Brito Velho put it, “Man is the builder of history […] However, that role, to any significant or considerable degree, belongs not to everyone, but to the few.” Ordinary people would not participate directly in politics, other than (if literate) through voting.

In the deputies’ democratic discourse, this meant that identifying oneself with one’s voters was enormously important. After all, if a demographically homogeneous cabal of elites was to exercise a monopoly over political power, it was vital that they justify their actions with constant references to their voters, even if it was known, as the October public opinion survey had revealed, that most voters supported prosecution or did not care one way or another. The deputies reminded their colleagues, “The eyes of the people are upon us.” They thus owed it their constituents to protect democracy and Congress. For example, Doin Vieira affirmed that he would vote against revoking immunity “above all out of reverence, admiration, and respect for my voters from Santa Catarina. […] I would not, in any way, shape, or form, be worthy to return to my state and present myself before public opinion if I did not take this position.”

When deputies appealed to the will of their constituents or otherwise sought to justify their disobedience, it is certain that some acted to protect themselves from

105 Mário Gurgel (MDB-ES), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 58; Jairo Brum (MDB-RS), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 12 Dec. 1968, 9009.
retaliation. Moreover, Moreira Alves later claimed that many stood accused of crimes ranging from corruption to murder and were fearful that if immunity were weakened to exclude criticism of the military, it could in turn be weakened to exclude crimes they were accused of.\textsuperscript{109} And the refusal to obey the generals was certainly a reaction against the erosion of the political class’s prerogatives under military rule. Yet this is not all that was happening. Politicians were not motivated only by self-preservation; rather, their impassioned defenses of “democracy” were the fruit of nearly a century and a half of elite participation in liberal institutions, institutions that were now threatened by an encroaching, military-dominated executive branch. Moreover, the speeches contain impassioned references to honor, historical heroes, and the judgment of history that are not simply the justifications of men and women eager to preserve political power, but of men and women concerned at a deeply emotional level with preserving their honor.

Arruda Câmara, a priest and arenista from Pernambuco, explained that he would vote against the request, not only because he disagreed with it, but also because a vote to revoke immunity would damage his reputation. “Old and poor, I possess but one treasure: my name, which I need and want to leave undamaged to my relatives and to posterity.”\textsuperscript{110} Joel Ferreira explained, “I cannot leave the legacy to my children and the generations that come after me of a man who, after reaching maturity, after serving in four Congresses, submitted himself to the weight of despotism and force and failed to do his duty.”\textsuperscript{111} For Mário Maia, “It would be better for us to die than to live without honor and debased.”\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{109} Moreira Alves, \textit{A Grain of Mustard Seed: The Awakening of the Brazilian Revolution}, 22.
\textsuperscript{110} Arruda Câmara (ARENA-PE), \textit{Diário da Câmara dos Deputados}, 12 Dec. 1968, 9003.
\textsuperscript{111} Joel Ferreira (MDB-AM), \textit{Diário da Câmara dos Deputados}, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 56.
\textsuperscript{112} Mário Maia (MDB-AC), \textit{Diário da Câmara dos Deputados}, 10 Dec. 1068, 8885.
As he put it again, “At this moment, it doesn’t matter whose head will roll […], because my honor is worth much more, and I am standing at this rostrum to defend the honor of the Brazilian people, […] the honor of the House of the people.”

The honor the deputies defended was a gendered concept. It was not just their honor as politicians that they defended; it was their honor as men. The regime’s attempt to undermine immunity was an attack on the deputies’ masculinity. ARENA’s Paulo Freire argued that if they capitulated, Congress would become “a group of well-trained high school boys, standing in line. […] It would be better to padlock the doors of this House, to close it forever.” For Getúlio Moura of the MDB, the committee endorsement of the case had set the stage for an “already profoundly emasculated” Congress to become a “mere puppet of the executive branch.”

Rio de Janeiro deputy Júlia Steinbruch, whose husband was a senator, recalled three decades later the argument she had used to convince her fellow deputies to vote against the request, “Look at your wife, how she’s an idealistic person, someone who admires you. Imagine how she’s going to be saddened, embittered, if she sees her husband become feeble now.”

Honor was closely tied to history. One’s honor lay not only in upholding the law or democracy, but also in measuring up to the heroes of yesteryear. Deputies thus

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113 Mário Maia (MDB-AC), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 61.
114 If you are unable to play the clip of Ferreira’s speech, you may download it at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKaVBDO1hwTmllRFU/edit?usp=sharing.
115 Paulo Freire (ARENA-MG), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 12 Dec. 1968, 8979.
116 Getúlio Moura (MDB-RJ), ibid., 8984.
117 Interview with Júlia Steinbruch (MDB-RJ) in AI-5: o dia que não existiu.
frequently invoked the memories of biblical, classical, regional, or ethnic champions who had challenged the powerful, stood for the law, or defended democracy. Mário Maia cited the biblical story of the teenager David defeating the giant Goliath with a slingshot.118

This lesson should serve as an example in the face of all the forces that are being raised up against this House: the weapons that cost the money and sweat of the people, the swords, the guns, the machine guns, and the tanks represent the armor of the Army minister. [...] And we must be like David, armed with the stones of dignity, morality, and honor, for only with these shall we defeat brute force.119

Yet if the scriptures contained positive examples, they also contained warnings. Feliciano Figueiredo compared Moreira Alves to Jesus, accused of sedition by the priests and Pharisees. Just as God had supposedly punished the Jews with two millennia of suffering, culminating in the Holocaust, for allowing Jesus to be crucified, divine judgment would befall the Chamber if it capitulated today.

The simplistic reasoning of the fisiológicos, the blind obedience of the cajolers of the executive branch [...] – none of this will save us from the eternal condemnation and degrading afflictions reserved for those who disobey the duties of morality and independence, submissive automatons to the impositions of bayonets, who criminally give service to those who aspire to tyranny.120

Bernardo Cabral freely paraphrased Simonides’ famed epitaph at the site of the battle of Thermopylae: “Passerby, tell Sparta that you saw us fallen here because we fulfilled the sacred laws of the Pátria.” Just as the Spartans had died in defense of the laws of their Pátria, so also should the deputies be willing to sacrifice all in the defense of their ideals. “If this Congress is impeded from functioning [...] for maintaining

118 1 Samuel 17:1-58.
119 Mária Maia (MDB-AC), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 10 Dec. 1968, 8885.
120 Feliciano Figueiredo (MDB-GO), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 12 Dec. 1968, 9007. Fisiológicos (literally "physiologues") is a derisive term applied to politicians devoid of principle. In contrast to ideologues, who base their actions on the defense of ideas, “physiologues” base their actions on the physical, material world, that is, on reality and pragmatism. For a detailed story about the origin of the term from MDB deputy Ulysses Guimarães, see Gutemberg, 103.
untouchable the principle of inviolability, let a monument be raised at its entrance with this inscription: ‘Visitor, this House is closed because the majority of its members decided to defend its honor, dignity, and decency.’”

For Arruda Câmara, granting the request would signify Congress’s passive acceptance of a forced suicide. “This is Rommel’s cup of poison. It is the ‘Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant’ of the gladiators. It is the moral death of the Parliament, like the Gospel writer says: ‘You have the appearance of life, but in fact you are dead.’” While the scriptural allusion probably would have been recognized by many in a devoutly Catholic country, it is noteworthy that Cabral and Arruda Câmara assumed that their listeners would recognize quotations from Simonides and Suetonius, hardly commonplace cultural references for the vast majority of Brazilians. (Of course, even for deputies who had not read the Greek and Latin classics, the citations undoubtedly sounded quite impressive nonetheless.)

Brazilians also had their own heroes to emulate. Nísia Carone invoked the slogan of the Inconfidência Mineira, Brazil’s first rebellion against Portugal, “Libertas, quae ser tamen” (“Freedom, albeit late”). São Paulo’s Yukishigue Tamura called on the deputies to “do justice to the glories of our forebears” and cited such heroes as a Japanese legislator who had opposed militarism, the paulista bandeirantes, Bonifácio de Andrade e

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121 Bernardo Cabral (MDB-AM), ibid., 9002. The epitaph placed at the burial site of the Spartans after their 480 BC battle against the invading Persians stated, “Stranger, proclaim to the Spartans that here we lie, having fulfilled their laws.” In Cabral’s paraphrase, it became, “Transeunte, dize a Sparta que tu nos viste caído aqui por termos acatado as leis santas da Pátria.” (Passerby, tell Sparta that you saw us fallen here because we fulfilled the sacred laws of the Pátria.)

122 Arruda Câmara (ARENA-PE), ibid., 9003. Von Rommel’s cup of poison refers to the forced suicide of German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel after he was accused in the 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler. The Latin quote translates as, “Hail, Caesar, those who are about to die salute you.” The scriptural allusion is from Matthew 23:27, where Jesus excoriates the Pharisees for appearing righteous on the outside but being spiritually dead on the inside.

123 Nísia Carone (MDB-MG), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 51.
Silva, and Tiradentes. Milton Reis proclaimed that he would vote “in the name of the heroism of the people of Espírito Santo, which history records time and again.” How would history remember Congress’s actions? Would the deputies join David, the Spartans, Tiradentes, and their local champions as heroes who defended their principles in the face of adversity? Or would they be reviled for their cowardice? As Unirio Machado prophetically put it, “If we resist, the respect of our contemporaries and of history will be confirmed; if we capitulate, it will be definitively destroyed.”

All these themes – defense of the Constitution, of the prerogatives of Congress, and of liberal democracy and the invocation of honor, heroes, and the witness of history – were components of a political culture that crossed regional and party lines and had its roots in four and a half centuries of rule by a tiny, hereditary political class and 150 years of authoritarian Brazilian liberalism. They were part of a distinct way of looking at the world and the place of the political class within it, an approach to politics, to life itself. When the deputies insisted that this was not really about Moreira Alves, they were absolutely correct. The stakes were far higher. For the deputies, this attempt to subordinate Congress to a military-dominated executive represented a fundamental threat to the way the world was supposed to work. The time had come to draw a line in the sand, to tell the military it could go no further.

124 Yukishigue Tamura (ARENA-SP), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 12 Dec.1968, 9010.
125 Milton Reis (MDB-ES), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 59.
126 Unirio Machado (MDB-RS), ibid., 65.
“History Alone Will Judge Us”: The Closing Arguments and Vote

After two days of debate, Moreira Alves addressed the Chamber before the vote. In a measured speech that his colleagues largely received with silence, he reiterated that he opposed militarism, not the military – a distinction that could give his colleagues a justification to acquit him, even if it was unlikely to sway many in the military. “I deny here and now that I have at any time or in any place insulted the Armed Forces. The military classes […] deserve my respect. Militarism, which attempts to […] compromise their democratic traditions, a criminal deformation that contaminates civilians and military members alike – it is this militarism that we repudiate.”

Yet most of his speech did not focus on clarifying his words; after all, he argued, his words were only a pretext for “the enemies of Congress.” Rather, echoing his written defense, he emphasized the danger the request represented to freedom of expression and congressional prerogatives. “It is not a deputy being judged here; what is

127 The speech has survived in three forms, all of which differ substantially from one another. Until his death in 2009, Moreira Alves maintained a website with a selection of speeches and publications spanning his career as a journalist and politician. There he placed the longest version, probably the original written for the occasion. See “Discurso do Deputado Marcio Moreira Alves, no dia 12 de dezembro de 1968, em Sessão Plenária da Câmara dos Deputados,” at http://www.marciomoreiraalves.com/discursod12.68.htm, accessed 17 Apr. 2011. The second version, submitted for publication in the Diário da Câmara dos Deputados (but only published in 2000), appears in the session’s typed notes and is missing long sections of the original speech. This is probably because Moreira Alves did not read these parts when he actually gave the speech. See Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 87-98. The final form is newspaper reports, which reproduced all or part of the speech. There is also a recording released on CD in 1998 by the Brazilian Senate as part of a series on great Brazilian political speeches, but though the voice is that of Moreira Alves, the high quality of the recording compared to recordings of other Chamber speeches from the period and the absence of background noise indicate that it is a re-enactment. See Congresso Nacional - Senado Federal, Grandes momentos do Parlamento brasileiro (Brasília: Presidência do Senado Federal, Secretaria de Comunicação Social, 1998), http://www2.senado.gov.br/bdsf/item/id/81858
128 Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 96. The typed minutes report, in a handwritten note, indicate “prolonged applause” after Moreira Alves’s claim that he had never insulted the military. Yet the press reported that the Chamber listened in silence. It is possible that a typist or the congressional leadership invented the “prolonged applause” in an attempt to convince eventual military readers that the resistance in the Chamber should not be interpreted as an attack on the military.
129 Ibid.
being judged is an essential prerogative of the legislative branch.”130 That danger would not be lessened if Congress sacrificed him today.

I do not believe that the crises which ever more frequently shake [Brazil] can be removed by the sacrifice of one, two, ten, or all deputies. They transcend Congress. […] I know that the appetite of those who wish ill upon this House is insatiable. Those who think to placate it today with the sacrifice of one legislator will only stimulate its voracity.131

Ultimately, the vote today was a test of Congress’s honor, an opportunity for the deputies to write their legacy for future generations. “The coming generations will not remember the deputy whose right to speak his mind from the rostrum is challenged today,” Moreira Alves reminded them. “But they will know whether the Parliament that he belonged to maintained its prerogative of inviolability or whether it gave it up.”132

The brilliance of Moreira Alves’s speech, written by a journalist and author skilled in tailoring his language to his audience, lay in its reinforcement of the themes that had animated the discourses of his fellow deputies. Although deputies doubtless had other reasons to defend immunity – self-preservation and a desire to “stick it” to the ARENA leadership or the regime chief among them – the repeated references to honor and posterity indicate that Moreira Alves believed he could reach them on a much more fundamental, even visceral level. Hardened as they may have been by opportunism and corruption, the political class still inhabited a world in which appeals to liberal democracy, honor, and the witness of history reverberated strongly. It was in this way of viewing the world that Moreira Alves’s dramatic conclusion was situated.

130 Ibid., 89.
131 Ibid., 90-91, 96.
132 Ibid., 88.
I pray to God that the Chamber will deserve Brazilians’ respect; that in the future we will be able to walk through the streets with our heads held high and look our children and friends in the eye. Finally, I pray to God that the legislative branch will refuse to hand to a small group of extremists the sword of its own beheading. Brazil is watching the decision we will make. But history alone will judge us.  

Following Moreira Alves’s speech, the leaders of both parties made their final appeals. First came Mário Covas, the 38-year-old leader of the MDB. He was a native of Santos, São Paulo’s port city and a hotbed of labor activism due to its large dockworkers’ unions. An engineer by training, he worked first as an engineer for the city, then as the city’s secretary of public works. He was a one-time ally of former São Paulo mayor and short-lived president Jânio Quadros and had run unsuccessfully for mayor of Santos in 1961. In 1962 he was elected federal deputy for the small Social Labor Party (Partido Social Trabalhista – PST), with his base of support coming from the dockworkers’ unions. He had been leader of the MDB in the Chamber since March 1967 and was known as a brilliant orator. While he supported the imaturos in their spats with more established members of the MDB and was by no means a friend of the regime, he also had a streak of pragmatism and was less brazen in his attacks.

His eloquent (if at times almost comically flowery) speech, given impromptu with only a few jotted notes, would be remembered as one of the great speeches in Brazilian political history. He emphasized that the vote would not be a judgment of the carioca deputy, but of Congress’s continued independence. “[T]oday this House is being placed on trial. Having withdrawn to the defendant’s chair, it awaits the verdict that its own

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133 Ibid., 98.
134 Covas – and after his death in 2001, his friends and political allies – would use the speech for over four decades as an example of his courageous opposition to the military dictatorship.
occupants will return.’”135 Only Congress should be able to try one of its members, thus, “if it grants permission [to try Moreira Alves], the legislative branch will be condemning itself for the crime of omission.”136 Since 1945, he continued, dozens of requests to revoke immunity had come before Congress, and the Chamber had not upheld one. In particular, he cited the case of former Rio de Janeiro governor Carlos Lacerda, who as a deputy in 1957 was accused of leaking state secrets but absolved by the Chamber.137

Though there would be risks to standing up for Congress’s prerogatives today, Covas insisted that the preservation of the Chamber’s honor outweighed the risks. “When I die, I would rather it be as a defendant of a crime, but in good faith, instead of as one who has committed the sin of diffidence.”138 He closed with an eloquent affirmation, modeled on the statements of belief contained in the Church’s Nicene Creed, which, like the creed, served to remind his listeners of the fundamental beliefs they shared.139

I believe in the people, anonymous and collective. […] I believe that it is from this amalgam, this fusion of earth and emotions, that not only power emanates, but wisdom itself. And since I believe in them, I cannot doubt their delegates. […] I believe in the democratic regime, which cannot be confused with anarchy, but which can never […] serve as a mask for tyranny. I believe in the Parliament, even with its excesses and weaknesses, which will only disappear if we maintain it free, sovereign, and independent. I believe in liberty, this bond between man and eternity, this indispensable condition that confers upon the creature the image and likeness of its Creator. […] I believe […] in honor, this attribute that cannot be delegated, transferrable only because it is a divine quality. […] I wish to declare my firm belief that today the legislative branch will be absolved. From the height of this rostrum, […] from the loftiness of this assembly, the voices of the Spirit of Law and the Goddess of Justice can be heard in their pathetic appeal,

135 Mário Covas (MDB-SP), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 99.
136 Ibid., 104.
137 Ibid., 105, 100.
138 Ibid., 109.
139 For the comparison of Covas’s conclusion to religious creeds, see Elizabeth Paes dos Santos, “A palavra como arma: Análise do discurso do Deputado Mário Covas em defesa da imunidade parlamentar” (Monograph, Curso de Especialização em Processo Legislativo da Câmara dos Deputados, Centro de Formação, Treinamento e Aperfeiçoamento da Câmara dos Deputados, 2007), 48, 55.
“Do not allow an impossible crime to be transformed into the funeral of democracy, the annihilation of a branch of government, and the mournful hymn of lost liberties.”¹⁴⁰

When the applause subsided, and when Covas’s fellow deputies had finished shaking his hand and slapping him on the back, the turn came for ARENA vice leader Geraldo Freire to make the government’s case.¹⁴¹ For Freire, opponents to the revocation of immunity had missed the point. Democracy, honor, and the independence of Congress were not the issue – the question was just whether the Chamber would grant permission for a deputy to be tried before an impartial STF, whose brilliant legal minds had already concluded that the evidence justified a trial. It was not the Chamber’s job to determine whether Moreira Alves had committed a crime, because it was not a judicial body, but a political one, and as such had to make a political decision, not a legal one.

Freire’s argument was based on equality before the law. “The representative of the people cannot maintain privileges and prerogatives, because what we receive from our voters are responsibilities toward the people. It would be absolutely incredible if we voted laws that all Brazilians were obligated to obey while we considered ourselves demigods […] above good or evil.”¹⁴² Everyone was subject to the law – “deputies, rural laborers, factory workers, college graduates, and the unschooled – because in this Pátria, there are no privileges.”¹⁴³ Parliamentary immunity existed, but with limits, and it could never excuse an “attack on the democratic order,” like Moreira Alves’s call to boycott

¹⁴⁰ Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 1 June 2000, Suplemento, 110-111.
¹⁴¹ In a 2000 interview, Covas recalled mistakenly that this speech was given by ARENA leader Ernani Sátiro. In fact, as state above, Sátiro had taken a medical leave of absence, leaving the task to Freire. See the interview with Covas in AI-5: O dia que não existiu.
¹⁴² Ibid., 113.
¹⁴³ Ibid., 119.
Independence Day. “If there is no abuse in this, I ask Brazilians: What is an abuse of rights? From the time we are children […] we all learn […] that the Pátria must be placed above all. And if we […] boycott the commemoration of our own independence, do we not mutilate at the roots the source of our own nationality?”

It was a massive leap from a call to boycott Independence Day to “denying the authenticity of the very independence of Brazil,” particularly in light of Freire’s own insistence that Congress’s job was not to determine whether Moreira Alves had committed a crime. And it is unlikely that many deputies were convinced by his praise of the impartiality of the stacked STF. At the same time, if Moreira Alves’s defenders could quote historical precedent to support their case, Freire could mobilize precedent to support his. Most notably, following up on Covas’s reference to Lacerda’s case, he pointed out that in 1957 now-MDB deputy Martins Rodrigues, a member of the Constitution and Justice Committee then and now, had called for Lacerda’s prosecution because immunity should not apply for “provocation to [commit a] crime, incitement to disorder and rebellion, the preaching of indiscipline in the armed classes, and the revelation of military plans.” Why did Martins Rodrigues, a long-time PSD leader who had supported the cassação of Lacerda, now claim that immunity was absolute? Could it be that the MDB’s defense of Moreira Alves was not so principled as it claimed?

Freire’s argument had holes, the insistence that Moreira Alves had attacked the democratic order and the trust in the STF foremost among them. He also cited only one legal scholar, an Argentine who was unlikely to impress deputies as much as the litany of

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144 Ibid., 114.
145 Ibid., 118.
Brazilian and European scholars whose opinions the other side had gathered.\textsuperscript{146}

Nonetheless, the speech constituted a shrewd, albeit belated, attempt to shift the terms of the debate – from the legal to the political, from democracy to equality before the law, from Congress’s prerogatives to its responsibilities – and provided justifiable, although not entirely compelling, reasons to vote in favor of the request. Had Freire swayed enough deputies to win the day for the government?

Finally, after hours of debate and months of drama that had captured the undivided attention of Brazil’s elites, the final vote came. Would arenistas follow up their rhetorical courage with an actual vote against the government? Would politicians ignore the specter of an institutional act and the closure of Congress to protect their prerogatives and maintain “democratic” principles? For three hours, the vote and tally proceeded, as each deputy dropped an envelope containing his or her ballot into the box. The most vocal opponents of the request, including Marinho, Covas, Cunha Bueno, and Arruda Câmara, were applauded as they cast their votes. Most of Congress’s female deputies received applause too, probably because in most cases they had been elected to replace their cassado husbands; their fellow politicians were applauding them, and by extension, the absent husbands who they were considered to represent, for having the courage to stand up against more cassações.\textsuperscript{147} Congress’s employees waited too, eager not only to discover the result but also to find out which employee would correctly guess the final count and take home the 700-cruzeiro betting pool.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 117.
\textsuperscript{147} “Rejeição da licença surpreendeu os próprios emedebistas,” Folha de S. Paulo, 13 Dec. 1968, 3.
Not even the votes of MDB deputies could be taken for granted. After all, not everyone was in the MDB because they opposed the regime; some had joined because they had enemies in ARENA, or because a politician to whom they were loyal had insisted. Though they may have usually toed the party line, when the vote was secret, would they risk the continued existence of Congress to stand up to the military? A colleague pulled Covas aside and whispered that he had seen MDB deputy Athië Coury place a “yes” ballot in his envelope. Covas was shocked. While Coury, a fellow citizen of Santos and president of the city’s famed soccer club, may not have been an “exemplary oppositionist,” Covas could not imagine him voting in favor. But the other deputy insisted; he knew what he had seen. Covas approached Coury jokingly, “Come on, you tricky Turk, show me your ballot.” Coury “became pale, refused to open the envelope, complained at the lack of trust, and declared himself offended.” After all, the leader of his party was questioning his honor as a public man before all of Congress. But Covas insisted, “Open it. I want to see.” Coury put on a show, looked Covas squarely in the eye, and delayed opening the envelope. When he finally pulled out the ballot – “No.”

Finally the vote was complete, the ballots counted. By a margin of 216-141, the Chamber rejected the request. The result was met with cheers of “Very good! Very good!” “extremely prolonged applause,” and the spontaneous singing of the national anthem by the deputies and spectators in the gallery. With the chair’s disciplinary bell drowned out by the ebullient deputies, a stone-faced ARENA leadership was forced to

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149 *Turco* is a term formerly applied to Arabic-speaking Syrian-Lebanese immigrants and their descendants, since the original immigrants in the late nineteenth century came with passports from the Ottoman Empire.
stand as the anthem was sung to commemorate their defeat.\textsuperscript{152} Like many other deputies and congressional employees that day, Covas wept openly, and thirty years later he still became emotional when he spoke of that moment. “It was a magical moment, a moment when it was difficult to contain one’s emotions, a very dramatic, beautiful moment, a moment when the Parliament was affirmed.”\textsuperscript{153} Moreira Alves, though, slipped out to a waiting car, preparing to flee the country and stopping only to make a brief statement to reporters, acutely conscious of the weight of the handgun in his pocket.\textsuperscript{154}

![Figure 3: Deputies Celebrate The Rejection of the Request](source: Veja, 18 December 1968, 19)

\textsuperscript{152} Moreira Alves, \textit{A Grain of Mustard Seed: The Awakening of the Brazilian Revolution}, 11.
\textsuperscript{153} “Alegria e tristeza na Camara após a decisão,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 13 Dec. 1968, 5; Interview with Covas in \textit{AI-5: o dia que não existiu}.
\textsuperscript{154} Moreira Alves, \textit{A Grain of Mustard Seed: The Awakening of the Brazilian Revolution}, 25.
“The Funeral of Democracy”: The Aftermath

The result was shocking. No one had dreamed that the Chamber would refuse to hand over an unpopular deputy. On December 10, the *Jornal do Brasil* had predicted that the request would pass by a 190-170 margin.155 “As late as [the] morning [of] December 12,” a telegram from the US embassy noted, “congressional sources and military observers [were] virtually unanimous in expecting [a] government victory in [a] close vote.” The telegram ascribed the regime’s “severe political defeat” to the MDB leadership’s success in steering the debate away from Moreira Alves’s statements and toward constitutional issues; the defection of respected arenistas like Krieger and Marinho; poor government management, including the substitution of most of the arenistas on the Constitution Committee and Gama e Silva’s “crude” interventions; and the cover of defense of a constitution that clearly protected parliamentary immunity. Moreover, in the embassy’s evaluation, the Chamber’s fearless decision could “clothe it with new respectability” among students, the Church, and labor and turn the MDB into an “effective instrument with which to oppose [the] government.”156

All eyes now turned to the military. Would it accept the Chamber’s decision? More hopeful observers pointed out that it was still not too late for a congressional censure of Moreira Alves, or perhaps a new request to revoke immunity under some other legal pretext, either of which would be preferable to “impulsive extra-constitutional [measures] […] [that] would inevitably postpone [the] return to civilian rule and create [a] deep division between [the] present government and [the] country’s major civilian

156 Tel. Brasília 3245, 12 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1906, Pol 15-1 BRAZ.
political leaders.”\footnote{Ibid.} Or perhaps there was a military power struggle occurring, and “moderates” like Costa e Silva would win out. “I want to believe that the President of the Republic, who has repeatedly declared that he does not wish to resort to exceptional measures, will be able to resist the pressure and put an end to this crisis, which […] will only end up benefiting forces that are truly subversive, which is not the case of the Parliament,” the Portuguese ambassador telegraphed home.\footnote{Tel. 600, 13 Dec. 1968, Ministério de Negócios Estrangeiros, Lisbon (MNE), 1968 Outgoing Telegrams, Folder 3.} Yet when one of the ARENA vice-leaders proposed a statement from both parties’ leadership clarifying that the vote did not represent an attack on the Armed Forces or an endorsement of Moreira Alves’s speech, he was overruled by Covas and José Bonifácio, who said, “The Chamber has already decided; the decision’s been made.”\footnote{Gaspari, \textit{A ditadura envergonhada}, 331.} All that remained to do now was wait.

Deputies remained huddled in congressional offices until the early hours of the next morning, waiting for anyone with military contacts to pass on the latest news from Rio de Janeiro, where Costa e Silva had traveled the preceding afternoon.\footnote{“Deputados acompanharam acontecimentos,” \textit{Jornal do Brasil}, 14 Dec. 1968, 2.} The hopes of diplomats notwithstanding, early signs were not encouraging. Costa e Silva and Gama e Silva refused to comment.\footnote{“Costa acha que o que falta é fé em Deus,” \textit{Jornal da Tarde}, 13 Dec. 1968, 7.} The Army, Navy, and Air Force all entered states of alert. Clovis Stenzel, who had predicted for months that the military was planning a new institutional act, was called to a meeting at the Army ministry; he reported that the military command had given Costa e Silva an ultimatum demanding cassações.\footnote{“Militares decidem caminhos da crise,” \textit{Jornal da Tarde}, 13 Dec. 1968, 1.} “The situation is very serious. The revolutionary process of ’64 is repeating itself, but with
greater intensity,” he said. “Our colleagues in the opposition thought we were just trying to frighten them with our warnings. Now they’ll see that we weren’t bluffing.”

On December 13, when Congress held its usual session, the same arenistas who had spoken so forcefully against the revocation of immunity spoke again in a desperate attempt to convince the military to avoid a drastic response. Arruda Câmara warned the government that an attack on one of the branches of government would be a violation of the national security law. For Brito Velho, “If the armed classes violate the Constitution, I want to declare that they will have committed a felony and that the felons will be them.” Meanwhile the six paulista deputies who the day before had issued a statement justifying their rebellion as a defense of the constitution issued a new statement. “We have no reason to expect anything other than noble behavior from the federal government. […] By consulting Congress, the government showed that it recognizes its autonomy, and having recognized it, it needs to respect its sovereignty.”

Yet few members of Congress were paying attention to what was happening in the session, and fewer still were interested in signing statements. Instead, legislators and employees quietly began emptying their accounts in the congressional branch of the Banco do Brasil, probably out of fear that along with a new institutional act, the government might try to freeze politicians’ assets. Joined by reporters, politicians conferenced in their offices and the Chamber’s cafeteria, attempting to find out what was happening in Rio. One rumor said that Costa e Silva was resisting attempts to issue a new

163 “Deputados acompanharam acontecimentos.”
institutional act and was considering a suggestion from the influential head of the First Army, General Sizeno Sarmento, that he declare a state of siege, as the constitution permitted. Gathered in the outer room of Bonifácio’s office with 15 other deputies, Edilson Távora said, “I can accept that there might be resignations, dismissals, a ministerial reform. But not an institutional act. That’s a dictatorship.” Covas and São Paulo MDB deputy Pedroso Horta, however, met privately with Bonifácio and exited looking apprehensive. Yet into the evening Covas tried to remain optimistic, “In this case, I’m like St. Thomas – I’ll only believe in this act if I read it.” Meanwhile Freire went down the street to the Army ministry where he met with the commander for Brasília, who refused to tell him anything more (and may have known nothing more) than to pay attention to the national news agency.

Early in the evening of December 13, news arrived from Rio: the president would sign an institutional act. Shortly after 9:00 Gama e Silva read the text of Institutional Act No. 5 over the radio. AI-5 gave the President the authority to place Congress, state legislative assemblies, and city councils in recess and legislate in their stead; intervene in state and city governments, replacing governors and mayors with appointed interventors; cassar politicians and suspend any citizens’ political rights for up to ten years; forcibly retire public employees; and declare a state of siege without legislative approval. Habeas corpus was suspended for a wide variety of crimes, and acts carried out under AI-5 were not subject to judicial review. A complementary act immediately placed Congress in

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167 “Deputados acompanharam acontecimentos.” In the Gospel of John, the disciple Thomas, who was absent when the resurrected Jesus first appeared to his disciples, doubts the resurrection, saying, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25).

168 “Deputados não acreditavam em Ato.”
indefinite recess. As a telegram from the US embassy put it, AI-5 constituted “a self-issued license authorizing [the] executive to govern without [the] trappings or inconveniences of democracy. It signals [the] bankruptcy of an effort by the Brazilian military to demonstrate that they [are] better able than civilian politicians to move Brazil toward [its] goals.”\textsuperscript{169} This was followed by a statement from the State Department to all American diplomatic posts, “Brazil appears to have stripped itself of any disguise as [a] military dictatorship.”\textsuperscript{170} The tensions that had simmered between the military and the political class for half a decade had finally boiled over into open conflict, and the military would now attempt to rule alone until the political class learned its lesson.

In Congress, deputies who had been holding vigil around battery-powered radios heard Gama e Silva read the new act. MDB deputies urged Bonifácio to hold a session before the text of the complementary act could be delivered. Bonifácio refused. “At this moment, the country goes from the rule of law to the state of fact. […] Obeying the new regime, I declare our mission closed.” An MDB deputy shot back, in a reference to Bonifácio’s illustrious ancestor, “Be less of a Zezinho and more of an Andrada!”\textsuperscript{171} Conscious of the historical significance of the moment, the ARENA leadership posed for a photo before they left. “I wanted to avoid all this, but no one would believe me,” Freire lamented. Some emedebistas, certain they would be cassado, carried file folders filled with copies of speeches they had given and laws they had proposed. Shortly after midnight, everyone was gone. Covas stood alone on the sidewalk, talking to journalists as

\textsuperscript{169} Tel. Rio de Janeiro 14310, 14 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1910, Pol. 23-9 BRAZ.
\textsuperscript{170} Outgoing Telegram 289148, 18 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1900, Pol BRAZ.
\textsuperscript{171} “Parecia uma vitória, era o naufrágio,” Veja, 18 Dec. 1968, 18. Zezinho is a diminutive for Bonifácio’s first name.
he awaited his ride. The guards turned out the lights. Darkness descended over Congress, and an open, unapologetic military dictatorship over Brazil.172

**Conclusions**

In 1968, Brazil witnessed social and political upheaval on a scale seldom before seen in a country whose political and economic elites had always been remarkably successful at keeping unrest in check. Yet in 1968, it was these very elites and their children who were the source of unrest. Rebellious leftist university students, the privileged offspring of the political class, preached “subversion” and threatened order. Instead of restraining their children or being ashamed of their behavior, their politician parents defended them from Congress. And at the end of the year, the politicians who the left so reviled for their timid opposition or outright collaboration added the ultimate insult to injury, refusing to accede to the military’s attempt to stifle their freedom of expression. Politicians’ resistance took a different hue from that of students or revolutionaries. It may have been motivated just as often by self-preservation, political aspirations, and a defense of elite privilege as it was by principled opposition to the regime. Yet non-ideological, non-revolutionary motives for resistance do not lessen its historical significance.

Nonetheless, contemporaries and scholars have minimized politicians’ role in the crisis, arguing that the Moreira Alves speech and congressional rebellion were but an inconsequential pretext for a military “hard-line” to institute the dictatorship it had always wanted. One scholar points out that a version of AI-5 had already been prepared in July, “in response to the growing middle-class support for the student demonstrations and the militancy of workers” and argues that the Moreira Alves case served as but “the

pretext for provoking a major political crisis.” Moreira Alves, who naturally enough did not wish to accept the blame for the radicalization of the regime, maintained this point of view for the rest of his life. “I was the congressman who served as a pretext for the military to grab whatever portions of dictatorial power they had neglected to seize in 1964,” he wrote in 1973, and in 2000 repeated, “From the beginning, the goal was to close Congress and finish off what remained of democracy” Daniel Krieger, the national president of ARENA, interpreted events in much the same way. “The Moreira Alves case was the pretext for the decree of the institutional act, widely desired by the system, which awaited only the obtainment of military unity to suppress the rule of law.” Élio Gaspari emphasizes the tension provoked by the nascent leftist armed struggle in 1968 and favorably quotes the paulista finance minister, Antônio Delfim Neto. “Little Márcio’s speech was utterly unimportant. What was actually being prepared was a dictatorship. Everything was done to arrive at that.”

Even the text of AI-5 can be read this way. “The revolutionary process that is in progress cannot be held back. […] Clearly subversive acts originating from the most distinct political and cultural sectors prove that the legal instruments bestowed upon the Nation […] are serving as a means to combat and destroy it.” Among these threats were

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175 Krieger, 344.
176 Gaspari, *A ditadura envergonhada*, 339. Paulo Egydio Martins, who had been the minister of industry and commerce under Castelo Branco and in 1974 would be appointed governor of São Paulo, took the same perspective in a 2007 oral history. “If you look at that speech, you’ll see that it didn’t contain anything serious or offensive. But it served precisely as a pretext for the hard line. Márcio wasn’t a subversive – he was just a bourgeois. […] There was nothing violent about his speech, so far as I can remember, that would justify what happened. His acts, instead of provoking a greater consciousness about what was happening, were taken as attacks on the Armed Forces, and this united them around the hard line.” Martins and others, *Paulo Egydio conta: depoimento ao CPDOC-FGV*, 371.
vague “subversive processes and revolutionary warfare.” Other than the oblique reference to “political and cultural sectors” seeking to undermine the Revolution, there was no mention of Moreira Alves or the political class.

However, while this perspective correctly recognizes that AI-5 appeared within a wider context of military frustration with social mobilization and revolutionary struggle, it errs in assuming that this negated the importance of the political crisis sparked by the UnB invasion and Moreira Alves’s speeches. Even if the speeches were a pretext – and it is indisputable that civilian and military figures like Gama e Silva, Albuquerque Lima, and military chief-of-staff Jayme Portella de Mello were eager to obtain sweeping new powers for the regime – it was the political class’s refusal to hand over Moreira Alves that brought about a new institutional act. That is, even if elements of the military were planning a dictatorship earlier, only the affront of Congress’s refusal to protect the military’s honor – and more specifically, ARENA’s failure to defend the regime – was considered a sufficient excuse to carry out a “coup within a coup.”

After all, organized labor had made a brief comeback after a successful strike in Minas in April, only to disappear after the repression of a second strike in the São Paulo suburb of Osasco in June. The left’s “revolutionary struggle” had claimed the lives of perhaps half a dozen soldiers and police. Indeed, armed revolutionaries numbered no more than a few hundred, perhaps a few dozen. “Although there were thousands of people capable of agreeing that only arms would defeat the dictatorship, there weren’t even 100 who had a weapon in hand.” Even the student movement, in and of itself, was not a sufficient threat to justify an institutional act. Amidst this unrest, Costa e Silva had

177 Gaspari, A ditadura envergonhada, 306.
steadfastly refused to declare even a state of siege, as the constitution permitted. The act only came when Congress took a stand against the regime’s encroachment on its prerogatives and confirmed the military’s suspicion that their collaborators in the political class were not truly committed to the “Revolution.” Students, workers, and a few armed guerrillas were worrisome to the generals, but in and of themselves they did not represent a fundamental threat to their “Revolution.” Rebellious and ungrateful politicians did.

Jayme Portella, Costa e Silva’s military chief of staff, in his 1979 tome on the Costa e Silva presidency, argued strenuously in favor of the centrality of case for the decree of AI-5. In 90 pages devoted to the crisis, Portella blasted arenistas, who “instead of defending and giving satisfaction [to the Armed Forces] preferred to defend the mandate” of an “irresponsible deputy who was in the service of the international left.”\footnote{178} While Costa e Silva had expected the MDB to defend its own, “he never could have imagined that the party that gave him support in the Chamber would use the secret vote to respect an insult directed at the Armed Forces by a communist deputy.”\footnote{179} In Portella’s telling, AI-5 became necessary when ARENA politicians, supposed allies of the “Revolution,” let less important concepts like constitutionality and parliamentary immunity blind them to the greater importance of preserving the honor of the Armed Forces. Indeed, some arenistas sought to make the President “ever weaker and more submissive to Congress.”\footnote{180} While there are myriad problems with Portella’s version, such as his patently false claim that the original Moreira Alves speeches made national headlines and his desperate attempts to absolve the military of any responsibility for the

\footnote{178} Portella de Mello, 633.\footnote{179} Ibid., 608.\footnote{180} Ibid., 586.
decree of AI-5, his account likely accurately reflects the profound sense of betrayal many military men experienced when their civilian “allies” refused to defend them. Such an affront was not a simply a pretext for military “radicals” to seize dictatorial powers; rather, the defense of an insolent “communist” deputy represented a frontal attack on the “Revolution” itself and an incomprehensible lack of regard for the military’s honor.

The defeat in the Chamber of Deputies was simply the most intolerable event in months of frustrating ones. Army minister Lyra Tavares, in the days after the decree of AI-5, explained that it became necessary as a result of a long list of offenses – subversion, chaos in the streets, attacks on legally constituted authority, damage to private property, terrorist attacks, the propagation of class warfare, the degradation of moral values, and insults to the Armed Forces, as well as intelligence he claimed the government had on a “clandestine, subversive scheme” organized by “specialized technicians, often foreigners,” that had gathered a “large stock of weapons, explosives, and communist propaganda.” The congressional vote, which he called “one of the blackest pages in the history of Brazilian democracy,” made an already tense situation unbearable and demanded a response.181

Similarly, General Ernesto Geisel, at the time a minister on the Supreme Military Court (Supremo Tribunal Militar – STM), argued in a 1993 interview:

In the face of the difficulties created by the students and the politicians, [Costa e Silva] made AI-5 […] Looking objectively at what happened with Márcio, you have to conclude that it was utterly unimportant nonsense. But when you have responsibility and you’re living from one day to the next, you see one thing after another pile up until you reach a breaking point where there must be a reaction.182

182 Interview with Ernesto Geisel in d’Araújo and Castro, Ernesto Geisel, 203, 208.
Along the same lines, General Carlos Alberto da Fontoura, chief of staff for the Third Army in Rio Grande do Sul, commented years later, “The government was being slashed from every side, culminating with the speech of Márcio Moreira Alves, which was highly offensive to the Armed Forces. Highly offensive.”  

And the newsweekly Veja, in an issue that censors removed from newsstands, explained that the student movement, conflicts with the Catholic Church, and leftist “terrorist attacks” had embarrassed military leaders and led them to conclude that it would be necessary the put their “Revolution” back on the right track, “for ten years, if necessary, in order accomplish everything that it did not know or simply did not have the courage to do.” The Moreira Alves case was not the only cause of AI-5, but it was the straw that broke the camel’s back, because it showed that in the midst of such a crisis, the government lacked a solid base of support from even its own allies in the political class.

Moreover, the Moreira Alves case illustrates the uncertain and contingent nature of politics in Brazil under military rule. While it is a given that historical actors make decisions without knowledge of the future (and with but incomplete knowledge of the present), studies that interpret the Moreira Alves speeches as a mere pretext for the imposition of dictatorial rule assume a predetermined conclusion to the drama. That is, no matter what Congress decided, a “radical” faction in the military was going to use the case to carry out a “coup within the coup.” Whether this was true or not (and I argue that it was not), this chapter has illustrated that no one – neither the press, Moreira Alves, Covas, Congress, the military, nor Costa e Silva and his inner circle themselves – knew at

the time how the case would turn out or what kind of reaction it would lead to. Covas pointed this out in 2000, “There’s a temptation to say, ‘There was a speech, there was a reaction.’ […] There was a speech, there was a reaction; but that is not all there was. There were a series of events that led to an episode that did turn out this way, but that could have turned out another way.”

Deputies spent weeks searching for a compromise because they thought there was a compromise to be found; they were willing to risk their careers to oppose the military’s request because they believed they had a reasonable chance of success; they appealed to the military’s sense of honor because they thought such appeals would be convincing. The conclusion of the crisis was always in doubt; for the deputies, there was always a real possibility of a negotiated solution, and when a negotiated solution appeared impossible, there remained a desperate hope that the military might tolerate their rebellion. Whether or not this was true is irrelevant; what matters is that deputies made the choices they did because they thought it was. The key question from the Moreira Alves case is not simply whether it was a “mere pretext,” but whether those involved thought it could turn out differently. The fact that they did, along with the diverse interests, shifting factions, contradictory rumors, and incomplete information, should give us pause before assuming that a shadowy and poorly-defined faction of “hard-line” officers carried out a carefully-orchestrated plot to use an inconsequential congressional speech to impose a pre-prepared AI-5.

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185 Interview with Covas in AI-5: o dia que não existiu.
186 Some scholars have acknowledged the central importance of the congressional revolt. Carlos Fico emphasizes the connection between AI-5 and armed struggle but admits that the intransigence of Congress was the last straw for the military hard-line, already disgusted with Costa e Silva’s vacillations in the face of the crisis. Thomas Skidmore calls the case “a life and death issue for the Costa e Silva government,” and describes the congressional vote as “the most important since 1964.” Similarly, Leslie Bethell and Celso Castro state, “It was not the emergency of armed revolutionary groups that precipitated the military
As these first two chapters have demonstrated, for many politicians, particularly regime allies, first the violent repression of the student movement, with which politicians deeply identified, and then later the request to revoke Moreira Alves’s immunity were the most intolerable in a series of attacks on the political class. For avowed “revolutionaries” like Cunha Bueno, Djalma Marinho, Daniel Krieger, and Abreu Sodré, as well as for oppositionists like Mário Covas, the attacks on their and their friends’ children showed that the military had no respect for their class. The Moreira Alves case confirmed that the military had in mind a level of tutelage of the political system than they saw as both unnecessary and undesirable. Ex-UDN arenistas could approve of and many members of the old PSD, PTB, and smaller parties could at least tolerate the elimination of communist or leftist politicians, the reorganization of the party structure, and the drafting of a new constitution with a more powerful executive, especially when it seemed that the military might permit a civilian successor to Costa e Silva and reinstitute direct gubernatorial elections in 1970. Yet the attempt to try Moreira Alves went too far. It represented the permanent subjugation of Congress to the whims of the military, the “funeral” of the civilian elite-directed system that both parties imagined as “democracy.”

Faced with the loss of what little independence and prestige remained to Congress, 216 deputies risked a new institutional act rather than capitulate.

On the other hand, the Armed Forces, in their own eyes, had been patient with politicians and tolerant of their foibles, and in return, Congress had demonstrated that it

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cared nothing for their honor. Now the military was determined to implement its program to reshape Brazil, its institutions, and its politicians without their input. Politicians were not worthy collaborators; they would require tutelage to teach them to behave properly, however long it took. The next nine months saw a wave of attacks on the political class, as a host of politicians were removed from office, had their political rights suspended, and, in a few cases, were imprisoned. It is to these dark months that chapter 3 will turn.
Chapter 3: “The Political Class Has Learned Nothing”: The Military Punishes the Political Class

On the evening of December 18, 1968, five days after the decree of AI-5, Mário Covas sat at home with his wife Lila when a knock came at the door. Two visibly uneasy federal policemen politely informed him that they had been sent on a “disagreeable task,” showing an arrest warrant signed by the regional military commander. While Lila made coffee, Covas changed clothes. As he recalled in a handwritten prison diary, he ordinarily would have argued that parliamentary immunity precluded his arrest. But in days such as these, “when any timidity has been eliminated,” resistance would be pointless. Besides, many of his colleagues, “estimable and honorable men,” had already been arrested. Whether it came from “honor […] or a little bit of vanity,” the knock at the door came as a “relief.” Being arrested constituted an endorsement of his opposition, a validation of his stand for principle, a vindication of his honor as a public man.

The ten months following the decree of AI-5 were among the darkest the Brazilian political class had ever known. Politicians already frustrated with their marginalization now witnessed the indefinite recess of Congress; the arrest of politicians, newspaper editors, and reporters by the dozens; and the removal from office of over 330 colleagues at the federal, state, and local levels, usually with a ten-year suspension of political rights. It was reminiscent of the Estado Novo of Getúlio Vargas, so reviled by the masterminds of the 1964 coup. Like Vargas, the military sought to make the state political classes subservient to the federal government. Like Vargas, they gave limited power to civilians but retained the right to make all final decisions. And like Vargas, they

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1 Untitled account of imprisonment by Mário Covas, 20-21 Dec.1968, FMC, Box 138, Folder 18. Wesley Soares of the Fundação Mário Covas kindly provided me with a typed transcription.
closed Congress and arrested and purged prominent politicians. Unlike Vargas, however, for whom the Estado Novo had been an ad hoc solution in which he replaced elected enemies with politicians of his choosing, all factions of the military envisioned a profound shift in the very nature of politics. Castelo Branco and Costa e Silva had expected that the 1967 constitution would create the framework for the institutionalization of the “Revolution” and reform of the political class. Yet in the eyes of key military figures, the Moreira Alves case had demonstrated that despite nearly five years of “Revolution,” politicians had learned nothing. The “Revolution” they had refused to accept voluntarily would now be imposed through direct military tutelage. This time the political class would be punished until it learned its lesson.

How long would this new state of affairs last? When would Congress re-open? Would it? Would the political class ever recover its power and prerogatives? As had happened so often since 1964, politicians found themselves forced to conform to a frightening, uncertain world, where the foremost concern was no longer how to recover past privileges, but how to survive given their drastically curtailed influence. Convincing the generals that they had learned their lesson paradoxically became politicians’ only secure route to obtaining the re-opening of Congress. For members of ARENA, a new political situation could also bring promise – if the military did allow political activity to recommence, they would need politicians they could trust, who would never again allow

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anything like the Moreira Alves fiasco to happen. In the MDB, meanwhile, politicians were intent on keeping their heads down and avoiding the ever-present threat of cassação.

Ironically, the military’s conduct under AI-5 would also demonstrate how fully they too were implicated in the approach to politics they claimed to abhor. Although cassações were invariably justified by allegations of corruption or subversion, they were just as often based on a politicians’ simple disagreement with specific policies, or even on something as human as a feud or friendship with another politician. Even though the cassações were often based on grudges or personal vendettas, the military men in power still expected that if they removed the “subversives” and a few of the most blatantly immoral and corrupt, the political class could be salvaged. As Costa e Silva explained privately, “What we’re doing is profitable to the Revolution as an example, not a solution. […] I have a strong sense of the moderation and experience necessary to evaluate what is sufficient to serve as an example. The punishment should never be applied in order to harm individuals, but rather to defend the collectivity.”

“When Any Timidity Has Been Eliminated”: The Immediate Aftermath of AI-5

In the first week after AI-5, a wave of arrests swept up politicians, journalists, and other regime opponents. All indications are that the arrests were uncoordinated, ordered by local military commanders or police officials who swept up any politician they deemed an enemy of the “Revolution.” Regardless, the objective was not mainly to interrogate “subversives,” but to strike fear into the entire political class. After his final speech, Moreira Alves fled to Campinas, where he hid in the home of MDB state deputy

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Francisco Amaral. He then moved to the apartment of federal deputy Pedroso Horta in São Paulo, eventually slipping away to Chile, where his arrival was widely reported in the local press, though he refused to make political statements. He would eventually spend time in the United States, where he spoke to Latin Americanist scholars about the wave of repression sweeping Brazil. Hermano Alves took refuge in the Mexican embassy for three months before fleeing to Mexico, Algeria, France, and eventually England, where he worked for the BBC and as a correspondent for O Estado.

If being forced to leave home, family, and belongings was traumatic for Moreira Alves and his fellow politicians in exile, some politicians who remained in Brazil faced even more outrageous treatment that vividly displayed the disregard in which many in the military held them. In the most shocking example of the regime turning on a former ally, Guanabara’s ex-governor Carlos Lacerda, a right-wing member of the former UDN who had been one of the key planners of the coup, was arrested in Rio de Janeiro, as was former president Juscelino Kubitschek, a widely respected centrist. Their crime had been their participation with the deposed president João Goulart in the short-lived Frente Ampla (Broad Front) that had, between late 1966 and its banning in early 1968, called for the immediate restoration of liberal democracy. Within a few days of the vote, MDB deputies Henrique Henkin, Martins Rodrigues, Paulo Campos, and ARENA deputy José Carlos Guerra were also arrested, and Covas and Gastone Righi were picked up soon.

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5 James N. Green, _We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States_, Radical Perspectives (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 179-182.
7 “Os boatos de prisões e as prisões de ontem,” _Jornal da Tarde_, 14 Dec. 1968, 11.
after. DOPS and local Brasilia police stormed David Lerer’s apartment and beat him before hauling him to army police headquarters, where he was placed in a room next to Covas, with whom he spoke through a hole in the wall between their bathrooms. Hélio Navarro was taken to São Paulo DOPS headquarters to answer questions about anti-regime statements and was eventually tried, convicted, and served 21 months in prison.

Not only politicians were targeted; several journalists and editors – themselves closely tied to the political class – who had criticized the regime were also detained. José Sete Câmara, former governor of Guanabara, mayor of Brasília, and ambassador to the United Nations and current director of the Jornal do Brasil newspaper was briefly held. Osvaldo Pereira, a former communist (later turned ardent anti-communist) who was now the director of the oppositionist carioca paper Correio da Manhã, was arrested at his office by DOPS agents who kicked the door down and fired their machine guns in the air. Hélio Fernandes, the director of Lacerda’s Tribuna da Imprensa newspaper, who had already had his political rights suspended under AI-1, was also arrested.

The ignominy of arrest notwithstanding, it was precisely politicians’, lawyers’, and journalists’ class status and connections that could take the sharp edge off the repression. Jornal do Brasil executive Manoel do Nascimento Brito escaped arrest when he was tipped off by a military friend who spirited him away from his office before DOPS arrived to arrest him. Even at the height of the repression, sympathetic officers

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9 Untitled account of imprisonment by Mário Covas.
11 Tel. Rio de Janeiro 14379, 17 Dec. 1968, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (NARA), RG 59, Box 1901, Pol 2 BRAZ.
12 “Os boatos de prisões e as prisões de ontem.”
13 Tel. Rio de Janeiro 14379.
looked out for civilian friends, either because they liked or respected them, or perhaps because they were uncomfortable with the assault unleashed against them.

The prominent 75-year-old lawyer Heráclito Sobral Pinto, who had opposed the regime from the beginning and defended its foes in legal proceedings, was arrested by the Army in Goiânia on December 14. Officers there varyingly told him that he was being held for defending communists or for praising a Kubitschek appointee on the STF. The next day, he was taken to the barracks of the Army police in Brasília, where he spent his first night in an apartment reserved for officers and received a stream of visitors. On December 16, he was moved to the Army police prison, where he, O Estado correspondent Carlos Castello Branco and another journalist, and four deputies were all placed in unlocked cells and invited to dine with the officers in their private restaurant. In response to an officer’s claim that AI-5 aimed for the establishment of “Brazilian-style democracy,” he was said to have retorted, “I’ve heard of Brazilian-style turkey, but not Brazilian-style solutions. Democracy is universal, without adjectives.”

Many arrested politicians had similar experiences. Covas admitted that he had been “flattered” by the treatment he received from the arresting officers. On the way to prison, they stopped for him to buy cigarettes, and in the car they chatted about his political career, with one of the officers praising his behavior in Congress. When he arrived at the same Army police prison from which Sobral Pinto had been released the night before, the commander, who he had met when visiting the four deputies arrested

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14 John W. F. Dulles, Resisting Brazil’s Military Regime: An Account of the Battles of Sobral Pinto, 1st ed. (Austin, Tx.: University of Texas Press, 2007), 145-146.
earlier, greeted him with a shrug that seemed to say, “Ah, what can I do? You know my opinion of you.” During his week in prison he was held either alone or in a room with Lerer. Like Sobral Pinto, he took his meals with officers, and his wife was allowed to bring him books, a chessboard, and newspapers.\(^{16}\) This was a far cry from the treatment lower class Brazilians who ran afoul of the law received; despite their disdain for the political class, the military did not submit them to the torture or prolonged prison time reserved for leftist guerrillas or the poor.

Still, no matter how well they were treated, arrested politicians and their fellow legislators must have been infuriated as they watched colleagues forced to hide in embassies and apartments, former presidents and governors being arrested, aged lawyers being hauled in for questioning, and respected journalists having their doors kicked in by machine gun-wielding soldiers. A few months before it had been their children facing arrest. Now, the regime’s repression had been turned on them. Parliamentary immunity was being ignored, and class privilege could provide only partial protection. This was not how honorable, educated, cultured Brazilians were supposed to be treated. As Covas lamented in his handwritten 14-page prison diary, “The principal characteristic of this new coup was to attack honest men [\textit{homens de bem}]. Neither subversion nor corruption can any longer serve as an excuse. [Now they] simply [want] to get rid of men who are inclined to speak. Especially if they possess moral authority.”\(^{17}\)

After five days at Army police headquarters, Covas was finally questioned. The remarkable 30-question interrogation only survived because he was provided with an 11-

\(^{16}\) Untitled account of imprisonment by Mário Covas.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
page typed transcript. While there is no indication that Covas suffered any physical mistreatment, the questions – or, rather, accusations – must have been deeply offensive to someone who considered himself an honest man and homem público. The officer(s) accused him of having “notorious” ties to communists (and, by implication, being one himself), seeking to rehabilitate cassado politicians, inciting the violent overthrow of the government, and supporting students’ attempts to launch a “revolutionary war.” In even more brazen attacks on his honor, they accused him of buying votes in his last electoral campaign, seeking to create “artificial crises” for his own political profit, and committing acts of ideological inconsistency.¹⁸ Throughout, the tone was accusatory and condescending. His questioners made mocking references to his intelligence:

Since you are such an intelligent man, with great mental agility, you couldn’t ignore that the lamentable events at the University of Brasília […] were not isolated events. They were the result of causes that had long been agitating, demoralizing, and disturbing that university. […] As leader of the MDB, […] why didn’t you direct those you led to examine the pre-existing causes that generated that situation, instead of getting stuck on analyzing one episode?¹⁹

They asked him how, through his involvement in the Frente Ampla, he could disgrace his office by supporting “enemies of the Revolution” like Goulart and Lacerda, not to mention his long association with cassado ex-president Jânio Quadros. “You seek to politically resurrect [him] through any means necessary […] Doesn’t it appear to you that your attitude […] is incompatible with the conduct that should be maintained by a parliamentarian whose duty it is to watch over the law and not disrespect it?”²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ Ibid.
Finally, they claimed that *Jornal do Brasil* political columnist Carlos Castello Branco, “with whom you maintain good relations,” had told them that Covas was a socialist and, that, when asked if he would trust him with the “implantation of an authentic democracy in Brazil,” Castello Branco remained silent. They also queried him about imaturo deputies like Moreira Alves, Hermano Alves, Lerer, and Navarro. (He responded that he only cared to respond to questions about his own positions.) Finally, they asked him to reveal who in the military had promised him that the Armed Forces would accept the Chamber’s decision in the Moreira Alves case.\(^{21}\)

The persecution of politicians at the hands of the military brought to the fore the social ties that bound them together, including arenistas who lent support to their arrested colleagues – a courageous gesture, since being seen with or expressing support for someone out of favor with the regime could put one’s own career in jeopardy. During Covas’s days in prison, he received three notes signed by a total of twelve fellow MDB deputies; Rio de Janeiro deputy Adolfo de Oliveira included two sets of playing cards to help him pass the time.\(^{22}\) Meanwhile fellow politicians, including arenistas like Alagoas senator Teotônio Vilela, rushed to his apartment so that Lila would not have to be alone.\(^{23}\) Even the regime’s closest allies sometimes helped. When Covas was arrested again in 1969, this time at home in Santos, Lila, terrified that he would be held incommunicado, frantically called everyone she could think of, including a minister in the federal government, to try to discover where he was being held. In the end, it was Paulo Maluf, the newly appointed mayor of São Paulo and a personal friend of Costa e Silva, who

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
\(^{22}\) Untitled account of imprisonment by Mário Covas.
\(^{23}\) Covas and Molina, 99.
discovered Covas’s whereabouts from military contacts and passed the information to Lila, on the condition that she not reveal who had told her.24

“The Resumption of the Revolution”: The Military and Politicians Respond to AI-5

Tales of arrests, interrogations, and beatings undoubtedly terrified the political class, particularly the most likely targets of repression – members of the opposition, allies of Kubitschek or Lacerda, or former supporters of the Frente Ampla. Yet public statements from key military and regime figures were no less awful, because they blamed the political class as a whole – but especially ARENA – for the regime’s assumption of dictatorial powers. Moreover, they made it clear that the military would not return power to politicians until they had learned their lesson – if then. These statements were not mere rhetorical flourishes designed to intimidate politicians, because comments made behind closed doors, where none but the top military brass and their closest civilian collaborators in the cabinet could hear, also blamed politicians for the crisis.

On the afternoon of December 13, as Costa e Silva prepared to sign AI-5, he called the National Security Council (Conselho de Segurança Nacional – CSN) to advise him on the proposal. The CSN was made up of the president, vice president, a secretary general, 17 cabinet ministers, the head of the SNI, and the chiefs of staff of the Armed Forces, Army, Navy, and Air Force. While most of the cabinet ministers were civilians (though several of the civilians had military backgrounds), only eight had ever held elected office. The remaining members of the CSN held little sympathy for the politicians they now resolved to punish through an institutional act.

24 Ibid., 106.
Costa e Silva opened the two-hour meeting. At no point did he mention students, leftist guerrillas, or labor unions. Rather, the institutional act was framed as the direct result of the Moreira Alves vote, which, although “apparently insignificant,” had revealed a “lack of political support for the government.” “The government,” he complained, “counted on the comprehension of the public men of the country, of those who have as much responsibility as we do for the maintenance of peace, order, and public tranquility. […] We counted on them clearly understanding that they could not collaborate with an aggression toward another area [i.e., the military], also responsible for the Revolution.”

The Chamber’s vote was not a mere statement of solidarity with Moreira Alves, nor did it manifest discontent against imagined military “hostility” toward the “political area.” On the contrary, Costa e Silva explained, he had displayed extraordinary patience with politicians. He had explained that without harmony between the “political area” and the “military area,” the country would be carried to “material, moral, and political disaggregation.” But they had repaid him with an act of “provocation,” proving that they aimed to block the “evolutionary process of the Revolution.”

25 “Recording of the 43rd Session of the CSN”, 13 Dec. 1968. Available online at http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/treinamento/hotsites/ai5/reuniao/audioReuniao/audioReuniao.mp3. See also “Ata da 43a sessão do Conselho de Segurança Nacional,” 13 Dec. 1968, ANB, 1-3. Available online at http://www.an.gov.br/sian/inicial.asp The audio was lost for 15 years before the former secretary of Ernesto Geisel, the fourth military president (1974-1979), found a cassette copy in a box in the garage of General Golbery do Couto e Silva, Geisel’s chief of civilian staff. He gave it to Folha de S. Paulo journalist Élio Gaspari, who shared copies with other researchers. (The copies were lost, damaged, or mysteriously recorded over so many times that a legend developed that the recording of the fateful session was cursed.) Finally, in 2008, the Folha digitized the recording as part of an outstanding interactive website commemorating the 40th anniversary of the act. See Chico Felitti, “Fita com registro da reunião que editou o ato está envolvido em sumiços, rompimentos e morte,” Folha de S. Paulo, 12 Dec. 2008. Available online at http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/treinamento/novoemfolha46/ult10100u478757.shtml
When Costa e Silva had finished speaking, he passed the microphone around the table so that each member of the CSN could express his opinion. Vice president Pedro Aleixo spoke first. A lawyer and former state and federal deputy from Minas Gerais who had briefly served as education minister under Castelo Branco, Aleixo expressed his opposition to the act in a hesitant, almost pleading tone. In the Moreira Alves case, Aleixo explained, it had been unrealistic to ask deputies to make a “political” decision to support the government while ignoring the case’s glaring legal flaws. It would have been better, he argued, to search for another way to punish him. “The choice to send the case to the Supreme Court, from the legal point of view, does not seem to me to have been the most advisable one.” Perhaps Moreira Alves had committed slander or defamation; if so, the Chamber could have considered expelling him for violating parliamentary decorum.

Although the proposed act claimed in its first article to preserve the constitution, Aleixo went on, “I have arrived that the sincere conclusion that what it does least is preserve the Constitution.” In the act, “there remains […] absolutely nothing that […] characterizes a democratic regime.” The 1967 constitution was supposed to have consolidated the “Revolution,” so “any institutional act […] that modifies the current constitution is actually a revolutionary act.” Such a drastic measure should only be taken with the utmost caution. Why not start with what the constitution did allow – a temporary

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26 If you are unable to play the clip of Costa e Silva, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2jjCg6iLKNlduQXNHUnJ0cDA/edit?usp=sharing
state of siege? “Respecting, as I always must, the opposing opinion, understanding […] all the high reasons of state that inspire you and the elaborators of this document, I, very humbly, very modestly declare that if we have to take a step like this […] I would start precisely with a state of siege.” If that proved unable to muzzle Congress, if the country “continued being the victim of these attempts at subversion that are out in the street all the time,” the entire nation would understand the need for a new act. But that time had not yet come. “I state this with the greatest respect, but certain that I am fulfilling a duty to myself, a duty to you […], a duty to the Council, and a duty to Brazil.”28

Media File 5: Clip of Aleixo Speaking to the CSN, 13 Dec. 1968
Source: Recording of the 43rd Session of the CSN29

The ministers of the Navy and Army scoffed at Aleixo’s proposal. Navy minister Augusto Rademaker retorted, “We don’t have to debate this question juridically, legally, or constitutionally because the things that happened in Congress were not just words or offenses against a person; they were offenses against an institution.” The Armed Forces had patiently attempted to resolve the problem through legal means, not repression, and what had it gotten them? “What needs to be done now is, in fact, a repression in order to end these situations that could carry the country not to a crisis, but to a chaos from which we won’t be able to escape.”30 Army minister Lyra Tavares proclaimed his respect for Aleixo but pointedly stated, “If he had the responsibility to maintain this nation in order, he wouldn’t get so stuck on extremely respectable texts of law.” While the country was

28 Recording of the 43rd Session of the CSN; “Ata da 43a sessão do Conselho de Segurança Nacional,” 4-6.
29 If you are unable to play the clip of Aleixo, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKSmFpWmRTbXJiWEU/edit?usp=sharing.
once again degenerating into subversion and chaos, deputies like Moreira Alves were inciting the people against the Armed Forces. “The Army will not have the conditions to preserve national security when deputies who refuse to even let themselves be judged attack it.” The Moreira Alves case was merely the latest in a string of “[the] most numerous and gravest episodes of crises.” The military, with its supposed profound respect for democracy, had waited patiently, “convinced […] that there was no way there would not be a solution.” Yet the Chamber had refused to acknowledge the attack on the military’s honor or purge subversion from its own ranks.  

Media File 6: Clip of Rademaker Speaking to the CSN, 13 Dec. 1968
Source: Recording of the 43rd Session of the CSN

Media File 7: Clip of Tavares Speaking to the CSN, 13 Dec. 1968
Source: Recording of the 43rd Session of the CSN

Some civilian members of the CSN, particularly technocrats with no electoral experience who cared little for legal niceties, adopted the position of Rademaker and Tavares. Although a São Paulo construction contractor told the US consul that finance minister Delfim Neto was opposed to the act and had been merely summoned to sign it, in the meeting itself, Delfim Neto argued, “I believe that the Revolution, very early on, put itself in a straitjacket that impeded it from realizing its objectives. […] By institutionalizing itself so early, it made possible all kinds of contestation, which

31 Recording of the 43rd Session of the CSN; “Ata da 43a sessão do Conselho de Segurança Nacional,” 7.
32 If you are unable to play the clip of Rademaker, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKSUlkdo5CU2VscFU/edit?usp=sharing.
33 If you are unable to play the clip of Tavares, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKN0tITGdUYUJYVk/edit?usp=sharing.
culminated in the episode that we just witnessed.” He explained that he was in “full agreement” with AI-5; indeed, he stated, “It doesn’t go far enough,” and argued that they should modify the act to grant Costa e Silva the authority to decree constitutional amendments to accelerate the country’s development. At the time, Delfim was a 40-year old economist serving in the federal government for the first time; though he had little political experience, he was enormously ambitious and had reason to curry favor with Costa e Silva. And the ability to impose economic policy without congressional interference represented a once in a lifetime opportunity to make a name for himself.

Other members of the CSN, particularly those with a background in electoral politics, were far more reluctant. Foreign minister José de Magalhães Pinto, who as governor of Minas Gerais had led the 1964 conspiracy against Goulart in his state, admitted, “With this Act, we are instituting a dictatorship,” but insisted, “I think there is still time to do something to avoid it.” While he agreed that an institutional act was required, he suggested that the act as written might be too broad and urged members of the CSN with legal training to meet privately to re-examine it. In the end, however, he endorsed the text. “It is a terrible situation for all of us. When I took the responsibility to incite the movement [of 1964], I didn’t feel as uneasy as I do now; however, I must say that I give all my solidarity […] to the Revolution because […] I do not want to see it lost.” For a “liberal” like Magalhães Pinto, who had supported the coup as a noble quest to save democracy from an aspiring dictator, approving the establishment of a dictatorship must have been a wrenching experience. Less than a week later, he told the

\[35\] Recording of the 43rd Session of the CSN; “Ata da 43a sessão do Conselho de Segurança Nacional,” 9-10.
\[36\] Recording of the 43rd Session of the CSN; “Ata da 43a sessão do Conselho de Segurança Nacional,” 8-9.
Portuguese ambassador that he had experienced a “dilemma […] between his democratic convictions and the necessity of impeding the disaggregation of the Revolution, ultimately deciding in favor of the latter by supporting the institutional act. He did not regret it because the danger Brazil was running was incalculable.”

37 Instituting a dictatorship was preferable to the descent of Brazil into “anarchy.”

Media File 8: Clip of Magalhães Pinto Speaking to the CSN, 13 Dec. 1968
Source: Recording of the 43rd Session of the CSN

Agriculture minister Ivo Arzua, former mayor of Curitiba, began his CSN speech by offering flowery praises to the Armed Forces. He recognized that they had been offended “as a class – a glorious class that has been lending the most outstanding services to the Brazilian nation.” Still, he asked, would it not be better to take the opportunity to start all over? What Brazil needed was a new constitution altogether, one that, unlike the last one, would only be adopted after ample consultation of the Brazilian people. Brazil needed a multi-party system again – after all, the “heterogeneity” and “lack of philosophical substance” of the two parties had led directly to the Moreira Alves crisis. He thus proposed the dissolution of Congress and convocation of a constitutional convention, to be followed by new elections. 39 Arzua was not suggesting that the “Revolution” become more repressive. Rather, he thought that if an institutional act was necessary, it should return the country to a more liberal system, not a less liberal one.

38 If you are unable to play the clip of Magalhães Pinto, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKETY0x4a3FNMVA0ZG8/edit?usp=sharing.
Labor minister Jarbas Passarinho expressed similar unease. “I know that you loathe, as do I, and, I believe, all the members of this council, moving on the path toward pure and simple dictatorship, but it clearly appears that this is what is before us.” Still, he argued, the act was necessary. “But to hell with every scruple of conscience. […] What matters now isn’t that democracy be defined just by the text of a constitution. What matters is that we have the historic courage to recover the [revolutionary] process.”

Strikingly, Passarinho, a colonel who had entered politics after 1964 as appointed governor of his home state of Pará, expressed more unease with the act than Delfim, a technocrat with no particular attachment to democratic forms. As with Delfim, however, an intermediary claimed to the US consul in Belém that Passarinho had personally opposed AI-5 but went along with the president and military.

Media File 9: Clip of Passarinho Speaking to the CSN, 13 Dec. 1968
Source: Recording of the 43rd Session of the CSN

Rondon Pacheco, the president’s chief of civilian staff, acknowledged that the constitution was flawed, since it required a simple majority to try a legislator for an attack on the democratic order but a two-thirds majority for all other punishments. In light of the inadequacies of the constitution and the military ministers’ testimony that the country’s internal security was in immediate jeopardy, the five-time Minas Gerais federal deputy and personal friend of both Aleixo and Magalhães Pinto supported the act. Yet even his endorsement contained a qualification. Why not place a time limit, perhaps of one year,

41 Tel. Belém 387, 23 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1900, Pol BRAZ.
42 If you are unable to play the clip of Passarinho, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2jiCg6iLKME5ZMkV1Q2ZIV28/edit?usp=sharing.
on AI-5 and the congressional recess? Would not this be time enough to “subdue subversion and revolutionary war”?\(^{43}\)

After all the other members of the council had spoken, Costa e Silva called his justice minister. In a meeting that morning with Costa e Silva, the military ministers, the head of the SNI, and Pacheco, Gama e Silva had suggested a far more draconian act, causing Tavares to protest, “Not like this Gama. This way, you’ll make a mess of the whole house.”\(^{44}\) It was so excessive that Costa e Silva reputedly told a fellow general later, “If you had read that first one, you would have fallen to the floor. It was absurd. It would have closed Congress, made changes to the judicial branch, along with several other ferocious Nazi measures.”\(^{45}\) Gama e Silva then presented a second draft, which was then presented to the CSN that afternoon as AI-5. When Costa e Silva asked him to explain to the CSN the reasoning behind the act, he stated:

The current constitution does not correspond to revolutionary needs. The subversion that arose in various sectors has now reached Congress. I cannot understand the behavior of the Chamber of Deputies, and in particular the party that should have supported the government, that wanted to call itself the “party of the Revolution,” as anything other than an authentic act of subversion […]. The Revolution was made precisely […] to impede subversion and ensure the democratic order. If this order is at risk, [we must] seek help from suitable revolutionary instruments in order to restore true, authentic democracy.\(^{46}\)

He rejected out of hand Aleixo’s call for a state of siege. AI-5 was “truly a measure of national salvation.” It was not dictatorial, because the man to whom it gave new powers was Costa e Silva, who “due to his past, due to his attitudes, due to his deliberation, due

\(^{43}\) Recording of the 43\(^{rd}\) Session of the CSN; “Ata da 43\(a\) sessão do Conselho de Segurança Nacional,” 22-24.
\(^{44}\) Portella de Mello, 651.
\(^{45}\) Mourão Filho and Silva, 450.
\(^{46}\) Recording of the 43\(^{rd}\) Session of the CSN; “Ata da 43\(a\) sessão do Conselho de Segurança Nacional,” 25.
to his equilibrium, and due to his patriotism” would never allow himself to act as a
dictator. He refuted Pacheco’s call for a time limit for the act, for it had been a mistake to
place an expiration date on the previous institutional acts. “The Revolution limited itself,
and the consequence is the self destruction that people want to provoke within it now.”

The unpublished minutes and secret recording of this CSN meeting revealed two
key points. First, AI-5 was envisioned primarily as a response to the behavior of
Congress, not a response to the student movement or nascent guerrilla struggle. Second,
for both military and civilian members of the council, commitment to democratic
procedure lasted only until democracy proved inconvenient. Costa e Silva, Delfim Neto,
Gama e Silva, and the active duty military members of the CSN had little stake in even
the preservation of the constitution they had themselves established. With the exception
of Gama e Silva, they did possess a certain rhetorical attachment to the language of
liberal democracy – indeed, this is why Tavares rejected the justice minister’s draconian
first draft. As Costa e Silva confessed, signing the act did “real violence to my
principles.” Yet theirs was a commitment to an authoritarian “democracy” defined by
security and public order, not blind loyalty to constitutions and legal texts. Their version
of “democracy” was even more limited than the elitist democracy propounded by many
federal deputies in the congressional debates over Moreira Alves. Career politicians like

48 If you are unable to play the clip of Gama e Silva, you may download the file at:
https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKUVcxRnNNVItRUE/edit?usp=sharing.
Aleixo, Magalhães Pinto, and Pacheco certainly did have real misgivings because AI-5 did fly in the face of the conception of democracy that they felt honor-bound as public men to preserve. These misgivings, however, were not enough to convince them to challenge the military members of the council, who had even less compunction about discarding what remained of democracy. Even Aleixo’s opposition was qualified by his admission that if the constitutional route of a state of siege proved ineffective, he would endorse a departure from legality. In the end, every member of the CSN, including Aleixo, signed AI-5. By signing the act, they placed a fig leaf of civilian endorsement over the military’s blatant disregard for its own constitution.

These two points made in private – that the political class was to blame for the new act and that liberal “democracy” needed to be redefined – were reinforced publicly over the next weeks by a variety of military and regime figures. On the night of December 13, as he prepared to read AI-5 over the air, Gama e Silva explained that while the “months of agitation,” with their objectives of “overthrowing the Revolution,” had caused concern, a new institutional act was required only when it spread to Congress. “The revolutionary war and its acts of subversion kept growing more and more until they reached the very national parliament through the behavior of members of the party who had the responsibility to defend […] the Revolution […], thus creating this climate of disquietude.” As he had explained to the CSN hours before, the problem was not students, guerrillas, or even Moreira Alves, but rather ARENA, which had collectively refused to support the military and its “Revolution” in their hour of need.

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Politicians immediately reacted to the indication that AI-5 was directed at them.
The next day, 21 ARENA senators (including São Paulo’s Carvalho Pinto), led by Daniel Krieger, signed a carefully worded telegram decrying the act. “Since it is impossible to use the parliamentary lectern [...] we manifest to you our disagreement with the solution adopted by the executive branch through AI-5. [...] We are certain that only the juridical and social values of the rule of law ensure the stability and development of Brazil.” The act represented a “political regression with unpredictable consequences,” and by warning Costa e Silva of the great responsibility he had assumed in taking on such sweeping powers, the senators were “fulfilling a duty that cannot be set aside, imposed upon us by the popular representation with which we are invested.” Senators were in the best position to oppose the act; after all, other than Krieger, who had taken a public stand against the prosecution of Moreira Alves, they had nothing to do with the problem. The references to duty and the votes that had brought them to Congress were a reminder that they too were men of honor who represented the interests of the Brazilian people.

Costa e Silva’s response two days later was deeply worrisome. In a terse, almost bitter response that was not published in the press, the president reminded them:

I understand your disagreement, but I should remind you that it was the lack of political party support [...] that led me to take the decision consolidated in AI-5. [...] I preached to my colleagues; I appealed to friends and respectable politicians; I almost begged for the support of my party in preserving the evolutionary process of the Revolution. [...] This evolutionary process was disturbed by the lack of understanding of those who did not, perhaps, sincerely desire the rule of law. The revolutionary evolutionary process is thus suspended due to a lack of political support, due to the true hostility of the party that should have been the most interested in the prevalence of “juridical and social values,” which would only be truly valid without the demoralization and discrediting of the Armed Forces.\(^{32}\)

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\(^{31}\) Krieger, 342.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 343.
The “revolutionary evolutionary process” referred to the regime’s intended evolution from arbitrary acts of force to legalized institutionalization, a process the constitution of 1967 was supposed to have consolidated. In Costa e Silva’s thinking, politicians had proven than they were not ready for this institutionalization; they had demonstrated that they had not truly accepted that the “Revolution” had transformed politics, that their behavior could never be the same as before. As a result, Brazil would return to a “revolutionary process,” setting aside legality until the country was ready for it again.

That same day, the president publicly offered this explanation at a graduation ceremony for the Army School of Command and Staff. While the speech was given to a military audience, its publication was permitted in the heavily censored press, indicating that the military wanted this message to be disseminated. In Costa e Silva’s telling, those “defeated by [the Revolution of] March [1964]” (probably a reference to Goulart and the Frente Ampla) were on a desperate crusade to “regain the illegitimate positions they had enjoyed.” Consequently, they had put all their energies into an attempt to defame the “Revolution” and divide the military. “They warned the country about an inexistent militarism and blamed the military for the nation’s problems. They offended you, and when you become offended, they claimed you were pressuring the other branches of government.” In this version, Kubitschek, Lacerda, Goulart, and imaturos like Moreira Alves had all been part of a fantastical plot to overthrow the “Revolution.”

Yet as Costa e Silva stated, “The Revolution is irreversible,” and “whenever it is indispensable, like it is now, we will carry out new revolutions within the Revolution!”
Politicians, particularly those in ARENA, had failed to recognize this, choosing to defend their personal prestige rather than support the “Revolution.”

The entire nation understood that the military could not accept […] being dishonored with impunity as a class by an enormous insult that would receive the cowardly protection of immunity, which was never intended for such objectives. [The military] gave proof of its tolerance and democratic spirit, and instead of wrongly using the weapons the people entrusted to them, they sought the recourse granted by law. But unfortunately they did not receive the understanding or support of many deputies in the majority party. […] For this reason, the government was obliged to intervene and take strong measures that could reactivate the Revolution. This is why the new institutional act was approved.53

Yet as Costa e Silva argued eleven days later, two weeks after AI-5, politicians’ rebellion was inseparable from the crisis provoked by armed “terrorism” and the infiltration of subversives in the student movement and Church.

The government […] sought political support and saw itself betrayed by the lack of patriotism of more than a few. It was too much. In the face of a revolutionary war […]; terrorist attacks; exploitation of the just longings and purity of the youth; infiltration in diverse sectors of the Nation, including those devoted to spiritual values; corrosion of political support; attempts to penetrate the Armed Forces – it was indispensable that we recover the revolutionary process.54

The most notable – and, for politicians, ominous – aspect of Costa e Silva’s two public speeches and private telegram was their ambiguity. “Reactivating the Revolution” and “recovering the revolutionary process” were vague formulations that hinted at an improvisational approach. If Costa e Silva hesitated to specify what this “reactivation” and “recovery” would look like, it was probably because he was under pressure from military factions to come down hard on the political class and did not yet know how far the punishment would go or how long it would last. All options were still on the table. Might Congress and state legislatures be closed permanently? Might the military decide

that the political class was unsalvageable, that the time had come to attempt not simply
the reform of politics, or a recess of them, but the very end of politics?

Hints of the pressure Costa e Silva might have been under came in the form of
occasional pronouncement of high-ranking officers. The interior minister, General
Afonso de Albuquerque Lima, reportedly stated on television that he did not regret what
was happening to the political class, since it had done nothing to move Brazil toward its
destiny. The harshest indictment came from General Henrique de Assunção Cardoso,
the First Army chief of staff, six weeks after the closure of Congress, in a remarkable
speech at a command transfer ceremony, a speech that merits being quoted at length.

Almost five years escaped without the political class taking advantage of the
opportunity March 31 offered them [...]. At first they were remissive, and later
they made themselves accomplices of the open enemies of the Revolution. […] [They]
persevered in sullying the already precarious reputation of the legislative branch,
particularly with reference to the abuse of their prerogatives and the ostentatious
and scandalous enjoyment of innumerable privileges and advantages.

Civilian leaders were never so far removed from reality; they never showed
themselves more incapable; they never betrayed so shamelessly the most basic
principles of the fight against corruption and subversion.

December 13 marked, however, the resumption of the Revolution. […] [T]he
political class has forgotten nothing and learned nothing. The traitorous vote of
the Chamber of Deputies was not an alienation or a mistake! It was a pure and
simple attempt to return to the past, a tacit revocation of the Revolution […].

The comments from Albuquerque Lima and Cardoso were even more
disconcerting to politicians because they targeted not merely those who had been
cassado, “subversives,” or renegade arenistas, but the entire political class; they drew on

55 Tel. Rio de Janeiro 107, 6 Jan. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1900, Pol. 15-1 BRAZ.
broad disgust with politicians common across Brazilian society. For a significant swathe of the Armed Forces, the Moreira Alves case provided the final piece of evidence that proved what they had long suspected: despite four years of “Revolution” to rid them of their faults, the political class was more interested in protecting its perks than in the good of the nation. Their petty, shortsighted, self-interested, and finally blatantly subversive behavior had slowed Brazil on its road to development and modernization for too long. The time had come, the military imagined, to put them in their place once and for all.

This opinion was not just a tool of intimidation directed at politicians. The same attitude was manifested privately in São Paulo nearly ten months later, in October, by officers attending a birthday party for an Air Force officer. The invitees included a US consular officer; a few judges, lawyers, and businessmen; and Air Force and Army officers (all identified by the diplomat as members of the “hard line”). In a far-reaching conversation about politics, several invitees, including one of the judges, agreed that the Army, Navy, and Air Force were “the first lady of the nation” – a curious feminization of the military, but one that accurately reflected their understanding of the close support the military should provide the executive branch. Although by this time, over 300 politicians had been cassado, they believed that in order to continue the “goals of the Revolution of 1964,” still more cassações were necessary, along with the closure of all state legislative assemblies and municipal councils, until a new law governing political parties could be drafted. In their ideal scenario, all prospective candidates would have to be “approved by a board or court designed for the purpose of judging the fitness of candidates.” The idea that politicians needed to be vetted for subversion or corruption was nothing new – the regional electoral courts were already required to investigate candidates’ criminal
background and discover whether they had caught the eye of DOPS. These officers, however, apparently believed that the electoral justice system and DOPS had failed to weed out corrupt or subversive candidates and should be superseded or replaced. In the evaluation of the consular officer, their political ideology was based on two principles: First, “the current crop of Brazilian politicians was unworthy of trust.” Second, “the responsibility for setting things right in Brazil rested with the Armed Forces.”

Still, it is significant that even these “radical” officers, businessmen, and judges did not advocate the permanent closure of Congress or other legislatures; in spite of everything, they believed that civilian politicians were needed to rule Brazil (under military tutelage) and that if the “bad apples” could be eliminated, the rest of might be salvaged.

There were only rare signs that not everyone in the military agreed that such long lasting, harsh measures were necessary. Since many military leftists or Goulart loyalists had already been purged in 1964, there were few left who would express disapproval, and any remaining officer who disagreed would make any criticism indirectly, if at all. When he introduced Costa e Silva at the December 16 speech in which the president blamed ARENA for AI-5, General Reinaldo Melo de Almeida praised “the firmness of your democratic vocation and convictions against arbitrariness and violence […], the depth of your religious feeling, and the immense generosity of your heart.” When the “Revolution” had been challenged by “the rebellion of those who did not have the sensibility to comprehend their first duty of total support to the project of national recuperation, in an omen of [further] rebellions and the destruction of his political base,” Costa e Silva “had the supreme courage” to decree AI-5. When he spoke of a “rebellion”

57 São Paulo A-123, 1 Oct. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1906, Pol 15-1 BRAZ.
and “the destruction of the political base,” he was referring to the Moreira Alves case as a harbinger of future insubordination from the political class. Yet amidst his praise, Melo de Almeida suggested that the departure from democracy should be brief.

The people and the soldiers, profoundly democratic, place their full trust in you, knowing that your extreme act [of] reopening the revolutionary process [...] will have the power and duration of a bolt of lightning. We trust that [...] very soon we will be able to find the good paths of the life of democratic fullness.\textsuperscript{58}

He ended by acknowledging Costa e Silva as “a great chief of democracy, which must be maintained in its fullness.”\textsuperscript{59} Amidst the tortured grammatical constructions and insipid flattery, there was a clear message – AI-5 represented a necessary but troubling departure from Brazil’s liberal traditions, and the “Revolution” would ideally move beyond it soon. After all, bolts of lightning are destructive, but they are also over very quickly.

In private, some officers opposed AI-5 more openly. In an early January meeting with the chief of the US Navy section in Brazil, Admiral Levy Reis, third in command in the Navy, proclaimed his personal opposition to AI-5, which he called “unnecessary,” “unduly harsh,” and an “overreaction.” He blamed the act on the Army, which he claimed had never supported democracy like the Navy. Although the US official called the conversation “frank and straightforward,” he had begun with an explanation of why the US had reacted so negatively to AI-5. Reis had to know that the US was reviewing aid to Brazil in light of the act, and his attempt to blame the Army while exculpating the Navy and professing his own opposition may have represented an attempt to save aid for the Navy. After all, he stated that it was too late to go back and that much good could come

of AI-5, and he emphasized that “under no circumstances should the current situation be permitted to result in any deterioration in relationships between our two Navies.”

Similarly, in a meeting with the US ambassador, General Golbery do Couto e Silva, the chief architect and head of the National Security Service (SNI) under Castelo Branco (who had never gotten along well with Costa e Silva and was currently director of the Brazilian branch of the Dow Chemical Corporation), stated (in the paraphrase of the ambassador) that AI-5 was “totally unnecessary,” “destroyed existing institutions,” and “damaged Brazil’s international reputation.” He argued that the Moreira Alves affair had been blown out of proportion by “hard line Machiavellis” who had used it as a pretext to achieve their goal of “push[ing] the negative aspects of a revolution, such as suspension of political rights, removal of officials from office and confiscation of property.” He attributed AI-5 to a combination of pressure on Costa e Silva from a “hard line” group and a group of misguided but sincere generals who believed that a Castro-style Communist insurgency threatened Brazilian democracy. Like Reis, Golbery, the Brazilian head of an American multinational, had reasons to exaggerate his opposition to the act, but regardless of their personal feelings, their statements intriguingly suggest a lack of unanimity in the Armed Forces about the necessity and reach of AI-5.

In the face of such discouraging public military comments, politicians were at a loss as to how they might attempt to minimize the looming threat. What was certain was that even if Congress were reopened, new purges were on the horizon. Their responses had to take this into account, for cassação would be devastating not only politically, but

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60 Airgram Rio de Janeiro A-15, 8 Jan. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1901, Pol 2 BRAZ.
61 Airgram Rio de Janeiro A-8, 3 Jan. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1910, Pol 23-9 BRAZ.
also financially and socially. For an arenista, particularly one who had voted against the government in the Moreira Alves case, was it safest to vocally and enthusiastically praise AI-5? Or was it wiser to lie low, avoid notice, and wait for the storm to blow over? For an emedebista, was cassação certain enough that one should blast the regime publicly so as to go out in a final blaze of glory? Or might silence enable one to escape?

Politicians’ responses thus ran the gamut from forceful condemnation to fawning adulation. It was only a courageous few who opted for the former route. In addition to helping draft the December 14 telegram criticizing the act, on January 5 Krieger took the bold and risky step of submitting to Costa e Silva his resignation as Senate majority leader and president of ARENA, explaining that he had made this decision in November as a result of his disagreement over the Moreira Alves case. Indeed, in the coming months, Krieger’s name was brought up in rumors about who might be cassado. Minas Gerais senator Milton Campos, an early supporter of the coup and Castelo Branco’s justice minister, issued a statement that surprisingly escaped the press censors: “With this act, we now live under a state of fact, which has substituted the rule of law. […] I only have words to lament what has occurred and to express my inconformity.”

The MDB could have been more vocal, since its more outspoken members and the remaining Goulart allies in Congress could be nearly certain they would be cassado anyway. Yet it was not. Federal deputy Jorge Cury urged the collective resignation of all MDB legislators, and Ivette Vargas suggested that the party’s national directorate meet to debate the proposed resignation. Other opposition politicians called for the party to

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63 Tel. Rio de Janeiro 3086, 25 Apr. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-4 BRAZ.
dissolve itself. Yet in the end, nothing came of their proposals, and the most the MDB did, after a week, was issue a statement arguing that Brazil’s “liberal traditions are disesteemed by the immoderation of arbitrary [actions], which are also incompatible with the institutional and historical destiny of the Armed Forces.” Most MDB politicians chose to “wait and see with [a] passive acceptance of [a] situation in which [there is] no role for [the] opposition.” If, as many politicians were convinced, there was a behind-the-scenes power struggle between military factions, with “radicals” pushing for more repressive measures against the political class and “moderates” urging calm, it was prudent to keep quiet and hope the so-called “moderates” won.

The attitudes of Krieger and Campos notwithstanding, most ARENA politicians chose to cheer the act – at least in public. The press reported that phone calls and telegrams of support for the president were flooding into Brasília from politicians across the country. Most notably, the governors of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Guanabara, Paraíba, and Rio Grande do Sul called Costa e Silva personally to “applaud the decision of the government and define it as courageous and necessary to contain the agitation that was trying to demoralize the revolution of 1964 and impede the country’s progress.” Ten other governors sent telegrams to express their approval. They had good reason to do so; after all, the 1965 elections of the governors of Guanabara and Minas Gerais, both

67 Tel. Brasilia 3280, 21 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-2 BRAZ.
68 Airgram São Paulo A-7, 10 Jan. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1908, Pol 18 BRAZ.
70 “Presidente continua recebendo mensagens de solidariedade,” Folha de S. Paulo, 16 Dec. 1968, 4. The quotation is not the words of the governors themselves or the Folha; rather, it is the text of the press release issued to the Folha by the National Press Agency, a mouthpiece of the regime and a not-entirely-trustworthy source of information.
allies of Juscelino Kubistchek, had been the spark that led to AI-2, and both governors had to be concerned that they were targets for cassação after the new act.\textsuperscript{71} Abreu Sodré had at times run afoul of the generals, and there were whispers that he could be cassado as well.\textsuperscript{72} Yet even after AI-5, he maintained dreams of being Costa e Silva’s successor, dreams that would certainly come to naught if he delayed in endorsing the new act.\textsuperscript{73} Finally, governors’ bitterest state rivals were often senators and prominent federal deputies; support for AI-5 could be an effective way to draw a contrast between one’s own support for the “Revolution” and the less reliable support of rivals in Congress.

Some legislators were thus quick to express their support, perhaps attempting to outdo the governors. On December 26, ARENA senators sent a new telegram responding to Costa e Silva’s answer to the December 14 telegram engineered by Krieger. Signed by 34 of the 42 ARENA senators, the new telegram expressed confidence in the intentions of Costa e Silva and his desire to re-establish good relations between the executive and legislative branches.\textsuperscript{74} They assured the president and military that the Senate was not opposed to the “resumption of the Revolution,” but rather was eager to “contribute to its continuity.”\textsuperscript{75} This second telegram was spearheaded by Piauí senator Petrônio Portella and Rio Grande do Norte senator Dinarte Mariz, while Krieger and Senate president Gilberto Marinho, along with Campos and São Paulo’s Carvalho Pinto, refused to sign. Thirteen senators signed both telegrams, since it was possible to be opposed to AI-5

\textsuperscript{71} Airgram Belo Horizonte 1, 2 Jan. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1900, Pol BRAZ 18.
\textsuperscript{72} Tel. São Paulo 2721, 17 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol BRAZ 23-9.
\textsuperscript{73} Tel. State Dept. 15567, 31 Jan. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1903, Pol. 7 BRAZ.
\textsuperscript{75} “Senadores da Arena solidarios com Costa pela ediçao do Ato No. 5,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 27 Dec. 1968, 3. The quote is from the \textit{Folha’s} paraphrase, not the telegram.
while supporting Costa e Silva against rumored “radical” officers who might be pressuring him to adopt more repressive measures. Still, the US ambassador derisively wrote of the double signatories, “Most of them stand for absolutely nothing and are notable only for their well developed instinct to survive.” Indeed, it was rumored that some in the military wanted the 13 double signatories to be cassado, not so much because they opposed AI-5, which was to be expected from politicians, but because their willingness to sign both documents seemed to be a symptom of the vacillation and lack of principle that the military was seeking to eradicate from the political class.76

In addition, 84 paulista state deputies sent a telegram of their own expressing their confidence that Costa e Silva would carry out “the energetic but patriotic execution of the revolutionary measures, which will impose order, respect, and peace.”77 Alípio de Carvalho, a reserve brigadier general who had been elected federal deputy for ARENA in 1966, praised AI-5 for “stopping the process of disintegration that was once again taking over Brazil” and pledged his support for the “Revolution’s” “great task of cleansing and restoration.”78 As he read the papers in prison, Covas fumed:

It is such a totality of announcements saying the same thing that you start to get the impression that someone agrees with this. Alípios, Zezinhos, Geraldos, and other less cited scoundrels, how arrogantly they prepare themselves, assiduously

76 Airgram 1271, 31 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-2 BRAZ.
77 “Quem luta contra a corrupção?” Jornal da Tarde, 24 Dec. 1968, 3. Jornal da Tarde slipped past the censors sarcastic comments about many of the signatories, particularly the notoriously corrupt leader of ARENA in the legislative assembly, “the chief of the fight against corruption in São Paulo, the ex-adhemarista Arnaldo Cerdeira.” The paper also singled out state deputy João Mendonça Falcão, the president of the São Paulo Football Federation who was widely suspected of corruption, as “the one who leads the fight against corruption in paulista sports,” along with former emedebistas who had migrated to ARENA after the 1966 elections, who “some time ago became convinced of the superiority of the revolutionary ideal.”
attempting to discover the will of those in power. And how quickly the camarilla of governors expresses its solidarity in order to hold onto their jobs.79

While publicly the manifestations of support far outweighed expressions of opposition, the reactions of Krieger, his fellow signatories, and the MDB more accurately reflected the views of politicians overall, who behind the scenes were stunned. American diplomats who spoke regularly with them described their mood as “shock and depression,” “hopelessness,” “deep despair,” “apprehension,” “cynicism,” “uncertain[ty] and fearful[ness],” “gloom and tension,” and “dismay and pessimism,” all informed by “self-preservation and financial self-interest,” and the conviction “that military men are bent upon destroying rather than punishing or reforming the ‘political class.’”80 Most politicians remained quiet in public, since no list of cassações had yet been released, and anyone might be a target. If the military was considering a politician for cassação, any criticism, however mild, might tip the balance.

In ARENA, despite the public support, there was also private grumbling. As the Moreira Alves case had demonstrated, many arenistas were as avid than the MDB in their support of their prerogatives as elected representatives of the people. Indeed, they had even more cause for anger, since some of them had helped bring about the “Revolution,” served the government faithfully (in their view) since 1964, and for their trouble had

79 Untitled account of imprisonment by Mário Covas. “Alipios” refers to the above-cited Alípio de Carvalho, “Bonifácios” refers to the enthusiastically pro-regime president of the Chamber of Deputies, and “Geraldos” refers to the ARENA vice-leader who had spearheaded the attempt to convince deputies to vote for the prosecution of Moreira Alves.

80 For “shock and depression” and “hopelessness,” see Tel. Brasília 3254, 14 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-2 BRAZ. For “deep despair,” see Airgram Belo Horizonte 1, 2 Jan. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1900, Pol BRAZ 18. For “apprehension,” “cynicism,” and “uncertain and fearful,” see Airgram São Paulo 7, 10 Jan. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Pol 18 BRAZ. For “gloom and tension,” and “that military men…” see Airgram São Paulo 23, 14 Feb. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1908, Pol 17 BRAZ. For “dismay and pessimism” and “self-preservation and financial self-interest,” see Tel. Brasília 3280, 21 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-2 BRAZ.
Congress closed and their paychecks suspended. Despite his enthusiastic public praise, Alípio de Carvalho confided to a US diplomat that he suspected that the government had meant to close Congress all along and that he would never have voted with the government on the Moreira Alves case if he had known this would happen. He praised the “idealism and honesty of [his] former colleagues, [but] lamented [the] hopeless situation to which they had led [the] country,” and said it would be hard to remain in ARENA.81 In public, Carvalho, a career military man who had only recently entered politics, toed the party line. Yet in a private conversation, he showed a different side, one that looked more like a politician than a general. Like Passarinho, who had left active duty to become a governor, it took Carvalho fewer than two years to shift loyalties.82

**The Hammer Falls: Cassações and the Punishment of the Political Class**

On December 30, two and a half weeks after the closure of Congress, the first of what would become twelve lists of cassações appeared. Politicians were not only removed from office; in most cases, their right to run for office, join political parties, make public statements about politics, or even vote were suspended for ten years as well. Although cassações, usually carried out by the electoral justice system, were an accepted way to rid the Brazilian state of troublesome politicians, the suspension of political rights, with its frontal attack on freedom of expression and association, was an innovation of the military dictatorship. Overall, December 1968 to October 1969 witnessed the removal of

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81 Tel. Brasília 3254, 14 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-2 BRAZ. Despite his professed despair, Carvalho remained a federal deputy in the government-allied party until 1983.

82 Other arelistas also spoke with US officials. João Carlos Meirelles, ARENA’s leader in the São Paulo city council (who had originally belonged to the MDB), visited the American consulate to beg for a “firm position in favor of democracy” in hopes that it would restrain the military. Meirelles, who was often accused of being a leftist, feared he might be targeted for cassação, making his request all the more urgent. Tel. São Paulo 2738, 19 Dec. 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1910, Pol 23-9 BRAZ.
335 current or former senators, federal and state deputies, mayors, and municipal councilors. This represented, in only ten months, 57.6% of the approximately 582 politicians who were cassado during the 21-year period of military rule.\textsuperscript{83}

The repression was targeted at the industrialized and politically volatile states of the South and Southeast, above all São Paulo, Guanabara, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, and Minas Gerais. The northeastern state of Pernambuco, a hotbed of union and leftist mobilization, was also hit hard, and no state escaped unscathed, but of the 335 politicians affected, 175 (52.2\%) came from the five large states of the South and Southeast, with the remaining 47.8\% spread among the other 17 states. While it is unlikely that politicians in these states were more corrupt than anywhere else in Brazil (indeed, the nine Northeastern states, notorious for the level of corruption in local politics, had only 90 politicians removed between them, with only two of those coming from the local level), they were the center of political opposition to the regime, particularly in Congress. Above all, this was true of São Paulo, where the cassações removed nearly half of the state’s federal deputies.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{83} Statistics on cassações are drawn from Paulo Adolfo Martins de Oliveira, \textit{Atos Institucionais: sanções políticas} (Brasília: Câmara dos Deputados, Centro de Documentação e Informação, 2000). Oliveira, secretary-general of the Chamber of Deputies during the military regime, painstakingly pored over the \textit{Diário Oficial} every day, clipping out the notice every time the regime used its powers under AI-1, AI-2, or AI-5 to remove politicians from office, suspend citizens’ political rights, or fire public employees. By the time the cassações finally ended in 1977, he had sent over 4,800 names to the library of the Chamber of Deputies. The Chamber published the complete list in 2000. Each entry includes the victim’s name, profession, sanction applied, and date of publication in the \textit{Diário Oficial}. In nearly all cases, politicians are listed according to the office they held. In a few cases, however, they are listed according to their regular profession – lawyer, soldier, journalist, etc. Since it would be impractical to go through over 4,800 names and attempt to discover whether each ever held political office, I have limited myself to those whose profession is listed as current or former president, governor, senator, federal deputy, state deputy, mayor, and city councilor, as well as suplentes (that is, candidates who did not receive enough votes to be elected but could become legislators if a legislator in their party died or stepped down) and a few politicians listed under other professions, for a total of 584 between April 10, 1964 and June 30, 1977.

\textsuperscript{84} For a summary of the 1968-1969 cassações by state, see Appendix A.
The first list, however, contained only 13 names. The imaturos were hit hard, as Moreira Alves, Hermano Alves, David Lerer, and eight other outspoken deputies were expelled from Congress their political rights suspended. Lacerda, the right-wing former governor of Guanabara, had his political rights suspended too. Lacerda’s cassação was the clearest example of how the regime had alienated its allies. Lacerda had longstanding presidential aspirations; when Costa e Silva was chosen to succeed Castelo Branco, he broke definitively with the regime. His rejection of the “Revolution” due to self-interest was one of the most painful betrayals the regime suffered from a civilian ally, and it is unsurprising that the military responded by suspending his political rights.85

The process had only begun. While Costa e Silva emphasized at the first CSN meeting that “We are not talking about an actual court,” the proceedings would in theory be based on evidence meticulously gathered by the SNI.86 Yet despite the pretension of due process, the proceedings were a fraud. The SNI was indeed building dossiers, but “evidence” consisted largely of comments that were even more innocuous than the Moreira Alves speeches, and the accused had no right to defense. Like the words “Revolution” and “democracy,” the concept of due process was redefined by the military to fit the needs of a regime threatened, they insisted, by “subversion” on every side. Portella had argued that Congress, in the Moreira Alves case, had let itself be sidetracked by legal minutia when what really mattered was the honor of the Armed Forces. In the same way, members of the military demanding cassações believed that legal standards of evidence only distracted from the manifestly more important concern of national security.

85 Lacerda, Carlos Lacerda e os anos sessenta: oposição.
What Costa e Silva actually needed time for was not so much gathering evidence, but negotiations within the military and security services, as well as between officers and allied politicians; the first 13 were simply the names everyone could agree upon, as well as the first for whom the SNI had managed to put together dossiers. Over the next ten months, new lists appeared about once a month. Opposition to the request to try Moreira Alves was not enough to condemn anyone by itself. Although half of ARENA federal deputies had refused to support the government in the Moreira Alves, only 7.7% of them were cassado, while 33.8% of MDB deputies met the same fate. It was other factors that increased the likelihood of cassação. These included belonging to the imaturo faction of the MDB, membership in the since-banned Frente Ampla, or alleged communist sympathies. Notorious corruption, moral failures, or simply personal enmity with a powerful general or fellow politician could also be damning, but they were often ignored if the politician in question was unquestioningly obedient.

Above all, however, the cassações targeted not simply “subversive” or “corrupt” politicians, but rather ones who had vocally criticized the regime or voted against it in key legislative votes. Of the ARENA deputies who most frequently voted against the government, 42.9% were purged, while only 0.5% of those who most frequently voted with the government were removed; in the MDB, 45% the most consistent opponents of the regime were cassado, while none of the least combative of the party’s deputies met

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87 Gláucio Ary Dillon Soares, "As políticas de cassações," Dados 21, no. (1977): 82. Writing in 1977, Soares did not have access to the CSN minutes, which would only be declassified decades later. Instead, he utilized a creative analysis that revealed statistical correlations between votes against the regime and eventual cassação. The minutes largely validate his argument, though they reveal perhaps a stronger role for personal vendettas than Soares expected.
the same fate.\textsuperscript{88} In the end, cassações were used primarily to rid the regime of rebellious politicians.\textsuperscript{89} As Costa e Silva stated in reference to one deputy, who he called “counter-revolutionary,” “He’s been systematically against the government, and this is a bad example. If we should or want – and I still don’t know if we do – to rebuild the political structure of the country, we need to eliminate these elements. This rebuilding will not be possible if they remain among us, circulating the same way [as always].”\textsuperscript{90}

Initially the lists focused on federal deputies and a few notoriously anti-regime senators. Later, the purges were widened to include select state deputies, mayors, and municipal councilors. With input from military leaders, Gama e Silva would create a preliminary list of targets, with a dossier on each. The dossier contained information the security and information services had cobbled together from a variety of sources. First came legislative speeches, drawn from the \textit{Diário do Congresso Nacional}, then newspaper columns or interviews, and finally information gathered from the regime’s various intelligence-gathering services, including statements at rallies and meetings with other politicians who were enemies of the regime or had themselves been cassado.

Gama e Silva would then decide which names to forward to Costa e Silva, who would read the dossiers and decide who he felt deserved no penalty, who deserved to lose their elected office, and who deserved cassação plus suspension of political rights for ten years. He then would submit the final list to the CSN. Usually the CSN ratified Costa e Silva’s decisions. A few times, however, they convinced him to remove a politician from

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.: 81.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.: 78-82.

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the list altogether. Other times they debated lightening the penalty (cassação without suspension of political rights), and still other times they persuaded Costa e Silva to increase the penalty (suspension of political rights when he had proposed only cassação.)

Yet the process was never straightforward, and personal vendettas and rivalries could weigh as heavily as supposed subversion or corruption; in fact, subversion or corruption at times served as a convenient excuse to get rid of a political enemy. For example, in the first post-AI-5 meeting of the CSN on December 30, labor minister Passarinho protested against the inclusion of the paulista MDB deputy José Lurtz Sabiá, arguing that while he was hotheaded and prone to making violent criticisms of government ministers, that did not justify his cassação, a penalty that should be reserved for the truly subversive or corrupt. Moreover, Passarinho pointed out that Sabiá had defended private capitalist investment in Brazil in Congress – hardly something one would expect of a “subversive” socialist. Some of Sabiá’s most vicious attacks had been directed at Gama e Silva, and a cassação could cast doubt on what AI-5’s true purpose was: to purge subversion and corruption, or to settle old scores?91

A few months before, Gama e Silva, who was widely known for his vindictiveness, had confided to Krieger, then still president of ARENA, that he was considering prosecuting Sabiá, among other deputies, for slandering him from the floor of Congress.92 Now, however, Gama e Silva asserted that “problems of a personal nature were not taken into consideration,” but that Sabiá “did not show interest in preserving the Revolution […]. We aren’t just talking about agitation, subversion, or corruption, since the

92 Krieger, 327.
Revolution seeks the implantation of an authentic democracy in the country. This deputy […] is completely incompatible with the democratic regime that [the Revolution] wants to establish in Brazil.”\textsuperscript{93} The health minister, who had also been a target of Sabiá’s attacks, added that he needed to be removed because “he absolutely does not have the qualities to represent the Brazilian people,” due to “his lack of decorum and personal dignity in attacking indiscriminately someone he doesn’t even know.”\textsuperscript{94} In other words, personal attacks (or any anti-regime statement) would be recast as “anti-revolutionary” rhetoric to justify removal. As Costa e Silva put it in the CSN’s next meeting, on January 16, “We are going to cassar everyone who is against the Revolution […] Every time a deputy attacks the regime, when he speaks on behalf of regime change in this country, […] of a return to the past, he turns himself into an enemy of the Revolution.”\textsuperscript{95}

This became even clearer as succeeding lists were released. The January 16 list contained names that were neither blatantly corrupt nor anti-revolutionary, including the six São Paulo arenistas who had signed manifestos explaining their decision to vote against the government and expressing their confidence that the regime would accept Congress’s decision. Costa e Silva asserted that the manifestos had merely been the latest in a series of events proving their disloyalty. Harry Normanton, who got his start in politics as president of the São Paulo railroad workers’ union, would probably have been cassado anyway, since he was “known to be a card-carrying communist, who we now

\textsuperscript{93} “Ata da 44a sessão do Conselho de Segurança Nacional,” 29.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
have the chance to eliminate from politics.” The same probably applied to Marcos Kertzmann. “He’s been disloyal to ARENA,” Costa e Silva griped. “Always against, always against…. He’s a nice young man.” He belonged to the “rebel group” of ARENA, “having disobeyed party instructions in many votes important for the government.” He had begun working with unions, “revealing himself to be an opportunist and a demagogue.” He had given an long series of speeches expressing disagreement with the regime in strongly critical terms, defended student demonstrators, called for amnesty for politicians cassado by AI-1 and AI-2, and called for the return of direct presidential elections. Finally, he had participated in a party at a Brasília hotel on December 12 celebrating the refusal to grant permission to try Moreira Alves.97

In the case of Yukishigue Tamura, Costa e Silva complained that the deputy had tried to give him a watch in order to convince him to appoint him ambassador to Japan, or at least take him along on a state visit.98 Roberto Cardoso Alves was guilty of such offenses against national security as defending students and striking workers, having pro-Cuba sentiments, and admitting that he had only entered ARENA so he could support his long-time ally, senator Carlos Carvalho Pinto.99 Israel Novaes had, among other sins, argued against the government’s electoral reforms, called for investigations of torture, belonged to an organization expressing sympathy for Cuba, and collaborated with the student movement. “He’s been disloyal to his party; he’s against everything,” Costa e Silva grumbled. When Aleixo pressed Costa e Silva to specify what behavior had been so

96 Ibid., 2.
97 Ibid., 31-33.
98 Ibid., 125-126.
99 Ibid., 128-132.
objectionable, the president retorted, “His behavior has been against the Revolution.” Yet after Passarinho admitted that Novaes had written the preface for his forthcoming book and half-jokingly expressed worry that having a preface written by a cassado politician could provoke the information services to open a file on him, Costa e Silva simply removed him from office without suspending his political rights.100

As for the old pessedista (PSD member) Antônio Cunha Bueno, his offenses included criticizing changes to electoral law, criticizing indirect elections for mayors of national security zones, expressing his disagreement with cassações, calling for a special congressional commission to investigate accusations that “hard-line” factions of the government were behind a series of terrorist attacks, and becoming intoxicated at official functions during foreign visits. There were also vague accusations of “peddling influence for political-electoral goals” and corruption, but the other deputy so accused in the same report from Army intelligence was not cassado.101 In the end, four of the six were only removed from office, and Normanton and Kertzmann had their political rights suspended for ten years. The “Revolution” was turning on its own supporters, politicians who supported it at first but grew disillusioned when they realized that the military intended a far more sweeping reform of the political system than they found necessary or desirable.

Yet the cassação that generated the most intense debate was not that of a regime ally, but that of an avowed opponent – Mário Covas. “He is a young man who I know personally, to whom I’ve taken a liking, but who has gone too far in his political

100 Ibid., 74-76. Cunha Bueno’s biographer suspected that his cassação was at least in part the result of a vendetta by state ARENA president Arnaldo Cerdeira, a devoted ally of the regime, who had held a grudge against Cunha Bueno ever since he had supported the cassação of Cerdeira’s political mentor, Adhemar de Barros, in 1966. Carneiro, 199, n. 28.
behavior,” Costa e Silva said, proposing that he be removed from office, but without a suspension of his political rights. \(^{102}\) Aleixo argued that even this was too harsh, reminding Costa e Silva that as leader of the MDB in the Chamber of Deputies, Covas was obligated to take a combative position. How could the leader of the opposition fail to attack the government? “If a measure of this nature is taken against the leader of the opposition party, we will almost be establishing a criterion that no one will be able to exercise a leadership position, since one day or another he will end up incurring sanctions like this.”\(^ {103}\) Once again Aleixo sought to lend a lawyer’s and politician’s perspective to a CSN dominated by high-ranking military officers and civilian technocrats. And, as they frequently did, the officers and technocrats dismissed Aleixo’s legal arguments.

Gama e Silva and Delfim Neto, both paulista ministers whose stood to profit if the up-and-coming Covas were removed from state politics, argued strenuously in favor of a ten-year suspension of political rights. Delfim admitted that Covas was a socialist, not a communist, but argued that his “very active participation” in the “socialist movement in São Paulo” was what had gotten him elected leader of the MDB to begin with.\(^ {104}\) Gama e Silva went further, arguing that Covas was guilty of “communist activity in the Santos region,” including “activity in unions, activity in the port zone, activity in rallies, preaching the overthrow of the government. […] His statements against the regime, his actions against the Revolution, are as frank, loyal, and sincere as it is possible for them to be.” Consequently, in his original recommendation, Gama e Silva had urged suspension of political rights. He made a point of stating that he did not make decisions alone about

\(^{102}\) Ibid., 103.
\(^{103}\) Ibid., 103-104.
\(^{104}\) Ibid., 104.
whom to include on the list; rather, he received outside recommendations, particularly from the military. This served as a clear hint to the other members of the council – and indeed, to Costa e Silva himself – that his position had military backing.\textsuperscript{105}

Despite his personal liking for Covas, Costa e Silva professed to have been surprised by some of the “radical” behaviors that appeared in his dossier. These included not only harshly critical congressional speeches and statements to the press, which could be excused as a requirement for the leader of the opposition, but also signing a manifesto in favor of the legalization of the banned Brazilian Communist Party (Partido Comunista Brasileiro – PCB); receiving support from the PCB in the 1966 elections; having vague “proven political-ideological ties” to a socialist organization founded in 1940 by members of the PCB; serving as an “intellectual mentor” for strikes; signing a manifesto expressing support for Dom Hélder Câmara, the progressive Catholic bishop of Recife who was a leading proponent of liberation theology; subscribing to communist magazines; a supposed trip to Russia and Eastern Europe at the invitation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party; support for the Frente Ampla; appearing at UnB with other legislators to oppose the police invasion; friendships with Quadros and exiled leftist Leonel Brizola; and continuing support for Goulart.\textsuperscript{106}

The entreaties of Gama e Silva and Delfim Neto notwithstanding, the president still wished to decree only the removal of Covas from office. “He is a man who can still be recovered for national politics,” he argued, adding “He hasn’t behaved like an agitator.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 104-105.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 105-108.
He calls himself more socialist than communist.” Yet at that point, the Navy minister pointed out that with a simple cassação, Covas would be able to run again in 1974. (The law governing eligibility to hold office stated that anyone who was cassado, even without suspension of political rights, would be unable to run for office for two years, which would prevent Covas from running in 1970.) 1974 was the same year that the politicians whose political rights had been suspended in 1964 – most notably Brizola, Kubitschek, Quadros, and Goulart – would be eligible to run for office. More fundamentally, however, this time it was necessary to come down hard on communists and “disturbers of order” because AI-1 and AI-2 had not gone far enough. Once and for all, it was necessary to get rid of anyone who might stand in the way of the “Revolution.” “I think it’s preferable to err through excess by eliminating these people, by tightening the net instead of loosening it. […] We have to tighten the net, because any elements that we spare now will be a threat tomorrow, and we’ll have the same problems we faced in 1968.”

The minister of mines and energy, José Costa Cavalcanti, who had become a federal deputy and minister after a 25-year military career, agreed – Covas should have his political rights suspended. The Army minister added, “These men whose behavior is explained on these index cards aren’t going to go away from the national political scene.” The continued presence of politicians like Covas would hamper the “implantation of Brazilian democracy, free from disorder and strikes.” Finally, the chief of staff of the

107 Ibid., 108.
109 Ibid., 110-111.
Armed Forces added, “If we conserve the possibility for this man to be a leader in the Santos region and in São Paulo, he will be highly pernicious for the Revolution.”

Facing the pressure of the military members of the CSN, Costa e Silva agreed to a ten-year suspension of political rights. Yet even as he removed him from politics for a decade, the president qualified that he saw Covas as “intelligent, well spoken, and appearing to be sincere in his convictions.” The paulista deputy had come to visit him three times before his election as president, supposedly resisting Costa e Silva’s entreaties to win him to the “Revolution” by arguing (in Costa e Silva’s paraphrase), “I know you’re trying to convert me, but I can’t come over to your side because I need my constituency to be re-elected, and my constituency isn’t on your side.”

It was probably due to the fact that he knew him so well, Costa e Silva admitted, that he felt such reluctance. Indeed, Covas was highly accomplished at not allowing party or ideological commitments to alienate him from his political opponents, a quality that would serve him well 30 years later as governor of São Paulo. As former industry and commerce secretary Paulo Egydio Martins recalled years later, when he was in Castelo Branco’s cabinet and Covas was an MDB vice-leader in the Chamber of Deputies, they would have lunch together in Brasília every couple of weeks, causing quite a commotion among the regime’s intelligence services. Attention to building cordial relationships immune to political disagreement nearly saved Covas from having his political rights suspended.

Cassação on occasion was targeted at a politician against whom serious accusations of corruption or moral failure existed. One SNI report on a federal deputy

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110 Ibid., 111.
111 Ibid., 111.
from Alagoas, accused of multiple homicides, stated, “The fact that he has fled the justice system, shielded by his parliamentary immunities, contradicts the moralizing spirit of the Revolution.” Of this deputy, Costa e Silva asked, “The question we should be answering is the following: Is this man […] worthy of belonging to Congress?” as he pronounced his cassação.113 Another deputy, from Minas, was accused of seducing no fewer than five women and girls, some as young as 14, with promises of marriage or financial benefits, abandoning them, and then bribing the families to drop charges. He was also accused of killing the brother of a victim, who attempted to kill him for destroying his sister’s honor. Although Aleixo pointed out that “he is as revolutionary as it is possible to imagine,” this was not able to save him in the face of accusations of serious moral failings.114

These examples – Lurtz Sabiá, the signatories of the ARENA manifestos in the Moreira Alves case, Covas, and the allegedly violent and immoral deputies – illustrate how AI-5 was applied. Cassação was based on a conjuncture of factors. While so-called subversion or corruption was often important, it became more dangerous if one had upset a member of the military or CSN, if one’s removal could further the political aspirations of a member of the CSN or of politician who had their ear, or, above all, if one had voted systematically and publicly against the government. On occasion, corruption or moral failings could be so severe that even support for the “Revolution” could not save a politician. Still, regime figures were aware that justifications for cassação were most often tenuous. A Costa e Silva aide told a US diplomat that Covas was cassado for accepting money from a tax-evading tobacco company to make congressional speeches

114 Ibid., 50-51.
on its behalf. The embassy promptly reviewed congressional records and found no speeches by Covas on the company’s behalf, and they correctly concluded that his cassação was due to “political considerations.” And, though the diplomats could not have known it, no mention of corruption was made in the CSN meeting.

As the regime neared the end of its housecleaning of Congress in February, the time arrived for the second phase of its punishment of the political class, which would focus on state legislatures, municipal councils, and civil servants. The first step in this new stage took place at the end of the February 7 CSN meeting, when Costa e Silva announced the indefinite recess of the legislative assemblies of Guanabara, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Sergipe. According to data gathered by the CSN, the legislatures had committed a variety of financial sins, mostly related to calling excessive extraordinary sessions, for which they received salary bonuses. The legislative assembly of Pernambuco was accused of calling 70 such sessions in 66 hours. As Costa e Silva remarked with evident satisfaction, the withholding of state deputies’ salaries during the recesses would more than make up for all the extra money they had paid themselves from their state treasuries; perhaps this would serve as a warning to the remaining 17 legislatures, “so that they can behave better.”

With this new phase, the process for nominating politicians for cassação shifted slightly. For federal legislators, there had been a wealth of “evidence” of wrongdoing. But there was not always as much information available about state deputies, mayors, and municipal councilors, and at times evidence from local sources was required. Local

115 Airgram Brasilia A-10, 13 March 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-2 BRAZ.
117 Ibid., 137, 134.
military commanders and members of the SNI, who were not well-versed in local politics and thus relied on input from local politicians, prepared dossiers on “corrupt” or “subversive” politicians for review by “higher echelons” (presumably military commanders and Gama e Silva). Yet since the process often began with recommendations from (rival) local politicians, this method facilitated what US State Department intelligence notes called “the presence of personal vendettas.”

“The capricious nature of the system and the ‘built-in’ prejudice against the regime’s opponents of whatever stripe is gradually resulting in the removal of political life of all but the most pliable members of the political opposition,” one memo concluded.

As the US analysis implied, the cassação of independent-minded and principled politicians resulted in the rise to prominence of sycophants and toadies, which would eventually create its own problems for the regime. While the military wanted the political class to learn from its mistakes and voluntarily collaborate with the “Revolution” for the development of the nation, the vast majority of the political class had little interest in accepting any more military tutelage than they had to tolerate. When they supported the regime – or, in the case of the more “pliable” emedebistas, did not actively oppose it – it was not because they had truly changed in the way the military envisioned; it was because they were eager to align themselves with (or not anger) whoever was in power. If the only politicians remaining were “yes men,” how could the military be sure of their loyalty in the long term, especially when their loyalty had to be induced under threat? In

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118 Intelligence Note 351, George C. Denney Jr. to the Secretary of State, 7 May 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1900.
119 Intelligence Note 381, Thomas L. Hughes to the Acting Secretary, 15 May 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1900.
120 Intelligence Note 351.
addition to loyalty, sincerity and honesty were two of the characteristics that the generals claimed to most value in civilian politicians, yet the type of regime they set up in 1969 drove most sincere and honest politicians into the opposition.

The influence of local rivalries was made clear in the cassação of the mayor-elect of Covas’s hometown of Santos, the African-descended Esmeraldo Tarquínio. Voted state deputy of the year by journalists in 1968 for his conscientious representation of working class people, there was not a whisper of corruption against him, and he was no more “subversive” than any other emedebista, or even many arenistas. Yet a general had never forgiven him for a few speeches he gave that were critical of the government, and he had been photographed by DOPS at a student march; the US consulate in São Paulo had also heard that the white Santos political elite could not countenance the idea of an Afro-Brazilian mayor and had lobbied forcefully for his cassação.121

None of these reasons appear explicitly in the CSN minutes. The evidence indicates however, that the North American’s sources were correct. For example, Tarquínio’s file contained all the usual offenses, including expressing sympathy for Fidel Castro, inciting strikes, associating with politicians who had already been or would later be cassado, receiving electoral support from communists, and praising leftist protest music. Tarquínio was also singled out for having once accused the Army of being a racist institution. A terse statement from the São Paulo DOPS summarized the intelligence services’ view of him: “Communist. Anti-revolutionary.”122 His dossier prompted Costa e Silva to exclaim, “These are men who should have been cassado a long time ago, but

121 Tel. Rio de Janeiro 1964, 14 March 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-4 BRAZ.
despite having been spared, they continue falling back into the same faults and behaviors.” But the file contained no actual evidence of his communism, and “anti-revolutionary” could be applied to many politicians who escaped. Before Costa e Silva pronounced sentence, Army minister Lyra Tavares interjected that he had recently been in Santos, where Tarquínio’s “aggressions” against the Armed Forces had led the Army garrison there to request his removal.123 It is not difficult to imagine, in keeping with the rumors the US consulate heard, that Santos politicians who resented Tarquínio’s outsider status as a working-class Afro-Brazilian might have brought his “anti-Revolutionary” and “aggressive” comments to the attention of friends in the local garrison.124

São Paulo MDB state deputy Marcondes Pereira also fell victim to personal enmity, for accusing the mayor of his hometown of São José dos Campos of corruption. To the US embassy, it appeared likely that his cassação was in retaliation for those accusations, made possible by the mayor’s friendship with local military officials.125 This evaluation was correct. While Pereira’s SNI dossier contained charges of corruption, participation in the Frente Ampla, and inciting workers to strike, it also contained a report sent to the SNI from the Second Army in São Paulo “for purposes of AI-5,” accusing him, with no corroborating evidence, of “uniting himself to communist and corrupt elements in order to mobilize public opinion against the [legally] constituted government,” “inciting the animosity of the people against the Armed Forces,” and “practicing acts of corruption.” Finally, he had attended meetings with “civilian and military elements known to be communists and agitators, some of whom were cassado by

123 Ibid., 138.
125 Ibid.
the Revolution.” His attendance provoked “a sense of ill-being among the democrats of this city, who sense in this a failure of the Revolution in this important municipality.”

Undoubtedly the concerned democrats were none other than the mayor, who saw in AI-5 an opportunity to be rid of his nemesis once and for all.

Something similar happened on April 29, when the fifth list revoked the political rights of 174 people, including nine MDB and six ARENA state deputies from São Paulo. Although several faced undocumented claims of being “corrupt and a corruptor,” they were by no means the most notoriously corrupt legislators. However, two were closely tied to Abreu Sodré. One, João Mendonça Falcão, was his chosen leader of ARENA in the legislative assembly, and the other was a close personal friend; rumor had it that the governor broke down in tears at news of their removal. To make matters worse, Costa e Silva’s had refused to even consult Abreu Sodré, the governor of Brazil’s wealthiest, most powerful state, about the selection of a new mayor for São Paulo. (His choice to replace Faria Lima had been a little known family friend, Lebanese-Brazilian businessman Paulo Maluf.) As a result, some political observers in São Paulo interpreted the new purges as an attempt to embarrass Abreu Sodré into resigning. Ultimately, as the stories of Tarquínio, Pereira, and Abreu Sodré’s allies indicate, petty personal rivalries or the desire to put a more prominent ally in his place could make a target of a politician who may not ordinarily have been targeted.

126 “Ata da 47a sessão do Conselho de Segurança Nacional,” 142.
127 Tel. São Paulo 376, 1 May 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-4 BRAZ.
128 Tel. São Paulo 398, 6 May 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-4 BRAZ. For Abreu Sodré’s account of Maluf’s selection as mayor, which corroborates the US consulate’s claim that he was not consulted, see Sodré, 181-182. Costa e Silva faced criticism within the military for his choice for mayor, which was interpreted as the type of cronyism the “Revolution” was meant to eliminate. See Tel. Rio de Janeiro 3086, 25 April 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-4 BRAZ.
“You Become a Leper”: The Lived Experience of Cassação

If for the regime cassação was a way to purify the political class while ridding itself of troublesome opponents, it looked very different for the politicians it targeted. Cassação entailed far more than removal from office and inability to run in elections or vote. Moreira Alves, Hermano Alves, Lerer, and others of the regime’s most vocal critics fled for up to a decade of exile in places like Chile, Peru, France, Algeria, and Portuguese Africa. Yet even those who remained in Brazil and were not charged with anything faced serious personal, social, professional, and financial repercussions. For many, politics had been their life; the prospect of a life without politics, of a career that had, for some, spanned decades suddenly and arbitrarily ending was personally traumatic. “Politics [were] the only stimulus that completely mobilized [Cunha Bueno’s] personality,” his biographer wrote. “To place himself outside of it, even for just a time, and above all having been punished by the very system he helped establish, shook him to the marrow.”129 As Lila Covas remembered, “I tried many ways to cheer [Mário] up. However, he became very embittered without politics. He grew ever more withdrawn.”130

One of the few bright spots during a depressing time was the solidarity of friends and colleagues. Cunha Bueno, a laywer and four-term federal deputy from São Paulo, kept until his death letters of support that he received from friends and voters. Juracy Magalhães, the illustrious former general, federal deputy, senator, and governor of Bahia who had served as justice minister and foreign minister under Castelo Branco, wrote, “I

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129 Carneiro, 165. Thought it did not come up in the CSN meeting that decided his cassação, Cunha Bueno believed that he had been condemned by a newspaper photograph that showed him applauding after the vote denying permission to try Moreira Alves. As friends remarked years later, the experience had taught him from then on to applaud with his hands behind his back. Carneiro, 161, 198 n. 19.
130 Covas and Molina, 112.
know your character, and I know that you will not be tormented by the punishment you have received. Such are the vicissitudes of those who serve the people. The country’s civilian leadership has practically been massacred, but, like the phoenix of legend, democracy always rises from its own ashes.”131 He even received a letter from General Olympio Mourão Filho, a leading military architect of the coup who later had differences with Castelo Branco and Costa e Silva over how authoritarian the regime should become.

“I still have not recovered from the astonishment your cassação caused me. It is a shame that our country is in this type of situation, without full [legal] rights for even those who signed onto your decapitation. Tomorrow they may be victims of the same guillotine.”132

Covas received a handwritten note from Bahia MDB deputy João Borges: “The inner peace which is surely inundating your soul will grant you a state of grace as recompense for this maelstrom of injustices. I am watching you from afar with admiration and esteem.”133 Still, friends had to be careful, lest their gestures of support attract the attention of the SNI and make them a target, as did former politicians, since they knew the difficulties they could cause for colleagues if they did not withdraw completely from political life. As Covas recalled later, “When someone is cassado, it ends up creating a bit of embarrassment, it makes you police yourself a lot, because you always think that if you go to a meeting of politicians who are still militating, it looks like you are refusing to ‘leave this world.’”134

132 Carneiro, 169.
134 Interview with Covas in Melhem and Russo, Dr. Ulysses, o homem que pensou o Brasil: 39 depoimentos sobre a trajetória do Sr. Diretas, 277.
Consequently, cassação signified not just a forced withdrawal from politics, but also social limbo. Invitations to cocktail parties with other politicians, dinners at upscale Brasilia restaurants, and calls from foreign diplomats were all curtailed, if they did not cease altogether. Lila Covas remembered, “Many people who had called themselves our friends distanced themselves from us. I remember well people who used to cross the street because they were afraid to greet anyone in my family. Many would dissemble and pretend they didn’t know us.”

Amaury Müller, who was cassado seven years later, recalled, “It was without a doubt the most traumatic experience of my life. […] Back then a politician who had been cassado was a sort of leper, from whom many people fled or kept a safe distance.”

The shunning extended not only to personal relationships; cassação also ruined public reputations cultivated over decades. The municipality of Adamantina, to avoid the appearance of honoring a disgraced politician, added insult to the injury of Cunha Bueno’s cassação when it renamed the avenue bearing his name.

Without their old salary and generous stipends and benefits, politicians who had been cassado were forced to seek other means of support. For some, this meant they could simply return to their old professions. The day after his cassação, Cunha Bueno took out an ad in major newspapers, thanking readers for their support and alerting them that he was re-opening his law practice after a 22-year hiatus. Henrique Henkin went home to Rio Grande do Sul and re-opened his law office in Porto Alegre. After being released from prison in 1970, Navarro began working as a lawyer for political prisoners.

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135 Covas and Molina, 111.
136 Interview with Müller in Nader, 74.
137 Carneiro, 167.
138 Ibid., 165.
a profession in which he was joined in 1972 by Gastone Righi, a fellow lawyer by trade
who had spent three years at the University of São Paulo earning graduate degrees in
economic, financial, and commercial law.¹³⁹

Yet it was not always so easy, particularly for politicians who had not been
wealthy before entering politics, because cassação also entailed informal blacklisting.
Esmeraldo Tarquínio, the former mayor-elect of Santos, tried to return to his law practice
but discovered that few prospective clients wished to be represented by someone on the
bad side of the regime. He then found a job in broadcasting, but the offer was withdrawn
after military officials informed the station that it would be inappropriate for a cassado
politician to appear on radio or TV. Former São Paulo deputy Ewaldo de Almeida Pinto,
a former broadcast announcer, found an under-the-table job as a scriptwriter at a radio
station, but whenever anyone called asking for him, the station denied that anyone by that
name worked there. After being released from his brief imprisonment in December,
before eventually fleeing the country, Lerer accepted a scholarship offer abroad but when
he tried to leave Brazil, he was detained at the airport and his passport confiscated. He
had been a civil servant before becoming a deputy, but upon being cassado he was fired
and lost his retirement benefits. He then sought to return to his profession as a doctor but
found that employers were afraid to hire someone who had been cassado. He eventually
found a job in a São Paulo hospital via a three-way arrangement with the hospital and

¹³⁹ “Henrique Henkin,” “Hélio Navarro,” and “Gastone Righi Cuocci,” DHBB. Available at
another doctor; Lerer did all the work of the other doctor (who had a second position at another hospital) and received a portion of his salary, without appearing on the payroll.\footnote{Airgram São Paulo A-98, 9 May 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1903, Pol 12 BRAZ.}

Even if one was lucky enough to gain employment, cassação complicated life in dozens of other ways. Covas was shocked to discover that he would no longer be allowed to have a checking account at the state-run Banco do Brasil. To get a loan for business activity, it became necessary to turn to personal friendships, even if they were political opponents. When he wanted to invest in a working-class housing project in São Vicente, he approached his boyhood friend Paulo Egydio, former minister of industry and commerce under Castelo Branco. Although Egydio, a businessman and engineer who was currently working as president of a real estate credit bank, had been a key paulista collaborator of the coup, he granted the loan, even serving as the guarantor.\footnote{Martins and others, \textit{Paulo Egydio conta: depoimento ao CPDOC-FGV}, 375-376.} To make matters worse, with money tight, Covas’s wife had to let their maid go and take their children out of private school, and she began to make and sell clothes to bring in extra income.\footnote{Covas and Molina, 97, 101-103.} Together, these sorts of problems served to further isolate cassado politicians, who, unless they came from independently wealthy families, might find themselves deprived of some of the perks that went with their former status.

 Nonetheless, even as they attempted to return to the private sector, some members of the political class discovered that they were unable to stay away from politics. While suspension of political rights did prevent a politician from voting, joining a party, or

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running for office, it prevented his or her family members from doing none of those things. As a result, several politicians immediately set about getting a spouse or son elected to replace them. Sereno Chaise, the former mayor of Porto Alegre who had his political rights suspended barely a month after the coup in 1964, was replaced in politics by his wife Terezinha, who was elected federal deputy in 1966. Even before he was cassado by AI-2 in 1966, but perhaps sensing that he might be a target, Armindo Doutel de Andrade, a vice-leader of the PTB in the Chamber, asked his wife Lígia to run for federal deputy; she was elected only a month after his cassação. Employing an identical strategy, Belo Horizonte mayor Jorge Carone Filho recruited his wife Nísia to run for federal deputy prior to his own cassação. All three women were cassada in late 1969 in the wake of AI-5, among the last victims of the wave of repression against the political class. While the generals clearly hesitated to eliminate someone from politics simply because of family ties, their conviction that female deputies were merely their husbands’ mouthpieces won out. Indeed, the minutes of the CSN meetings that removed them from office provided little evidence of “subversion,” none of corruption, and scant examples of anti-regime statements (the most dramatic is the 11-line dossier of Maria Lucia Melo de Araújo), but they did invariably highlight the men to whom they were married.143

Regardless, electing one’s wife was no longer an option after 1969, when, three days after the removal of the last wife of a cassado politician, the regime decreed modifications to electoral law that made the spouse of anyone punished by an

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institutional act ineligible to run for office. Yet eternally stubborn and enterprising politicians quickly realized that the new law said nothing about their children, and they immediately turned to getting their sons elected. This was a natural next step, since membership in the political class was often, although not exclusively, hereditary.

Politicians frequently dreamed that upon retirement a son would replace them, much as they had replaced their own male relatives; thus, this strategy simply meant that the son’s political career would begin earlier than expected. In 1966 Jorge and Nísia Carone did not have any sons old enough to take Jorge’s place; by 1972, however, after his mother had been cassada, their son Jorge Orlando was 23 years old and ran successfully for city councilor in Belo Horizonte; in 1974 he was elected to the Minas legislative assembly. His younger brother Antônio was elected to the council in 1976. After Cunha Bueno was cassado, his son Antônio Henrique was promptly elected to the state legislature in 1970 and to the federal Chamber in 1974. Aloysio Alves, a former ARENA deputy from Rio Grande do Norte, had his son replace him in 1970 – as a candidate for the MDB. The sons of cassado politicians never faced the scrutiny that wives did, and there does not appear to have been any discussion of making them ineligible for office. This may have been because the regime employed cassações far less frequently after 1969, and most sons were elected from 1970 forward. However, it is also possible that the military assumed that sons were capable of independent political action, while wives were not.

“Zeal for the Collective Interest”: Reshaping the Political Class through Reforms

Though sporadic cassações would continue until October, by the end of May, 259 of the 335 politicians (77.3%) who were eventually cassado in 1969 had been removed. At this point, the “reactivation of the Revolution” shifted from exception to normalization. This had not always been a foregone conclusion. Passarinho recalled later that there was military pressure to close Congress permanently, “because the act, above all, was a punishment applied to Congress.” Gama e Silva, in an effort to further cow politicians, claimed in a February meeting with the ARENA leadership that he had pressed Costa e Silva to dissolve Congress and cassar all its members. Senator Filinto Müller told an American diplomat that Delfim Neto and planning minister Hélio Beltrão concurred with Gama e Silva, since they found it easier to carry out their functions without congressional interference. The president, supported by other members of the cabinet, had rejected this idea. Yet much remained uncertain. As Costa e Silva mentioned in the March CSN meeting, “Of course we’ll have political re-opening […], but when, how, and where, I still don’t know. We can’t do anything precipitately. Reopening depends on various provisions, including reforms.” As the overtly coercive punishment of the political class wound down, the time arrived for these reforms. As Costa e Silva reportedly told Passarinho, “I’ve had it with AI-5, I’ve had it with political cassações. I’m going to re-open Congress.” Yet when Congress was re-opened, it would only be under a drastically revised constitution establishing lasting military tutelage, as

145 Rego, 93.
147 Tel. Brasília 92, 26 Feb. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol 15-2 BRAZ.
evidenced by what Costa e Silva told Passarinho next. “I’ll proclaim the constitution that Pedro Aleixo is preparing with a group of jurists.”149 The Spanish ambassador correctly summarized, “What the government and Revolution hope […] is that along with the legal and constitutional reforms, ARENA reforms its mentality. And its leaders believe that after everything that has happened […], politicians will have grasped the true national reality, which they will not be permitted to contest at any moment.”150

The first major reform came in late May, when Costa e Silva decreed a complementary act ordering national party directorates to commence party reorganization. Previously, local, state, and national party directorates had been organized from the top down; that is, prominent national politicians would maneuver to get their allies placed on state directorates, whose members would in turn attempt to influence municipal directorates. The new act reversed the process, ordering reorganization from the bottom up, in which the parties would recruit members at the local level, who would in turn elect a municipal directorate. The municipal directorates would elect delegates to attend a state convention to select a state party directorate, with the process repeating itself at the federal level. The hope may have been that the new procedures would facilitate the “renovation” of political ranks, with leaders with a base of local support undermining entrenched politicians in party leadership posts at the state and national levels. Or perhaps it was to reconstitute the parties with politicians who owed their position to the military, thereby replacing entrenched, independent-minded political leaders. A provision of the act that required parties to begin by holding local conventions

149 Rego, 99.
150 Despacho 299, 22 April 1969, MAE 11.178/111.
in at least a quarter of municipalities in 12 states presented difficulties for the MDB, an already small party with tenuous local bases of support that had was being decimated by cassações. Costa e Silva, concerned that the collapse of the legal opposition would lead to a one-party state, instructed Gama e Silva to meet with MDB president Oscar Passos to discuss changes to the requirements that would enable the MDB to survive. Costa e Silva and the military were cognizant of the need to have a formal opposition, even if only for show, to combat charges of dictatorship from abroad.

By then, chastened ARENA leaders were pleased that the government was paying any attention to them, since for months they had been lobbying for the re-establishment of dialogue with the military. What this meant was that they wished to hear what they must do to convince the military that this time they could be faithful allies. At a June meeting of the national directorate, senator Dinarte Mariz praised the Armed Forces for “fulfilling their duty to maintain peace, without which it is not possible to promote development, thus ensuring the [continued] validity of the democratic regime.” Deputy Virgílio Távora’s praised the president for “guaranteeing [the survival of] the institutions and maintaining internal security, which were threatened by every sort of perturbation. The country […] has understood the necessity of the exceptional measures […] in order to return the country to the rule of law without all the contestations that threatened peace and stability.” Significantly, Távora interpreted the act as a response to generic “perturbations,” while forgetting that the chief “perturbation” had come from ARENA.

151 Tel. Brasília 256, 15 June 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1903, Pol 12 BRAZ.
153 Ibid.
While ARENA was prepared to do nearly anything the generals wanted to earn its way into their good graces, publicly admitting blame for AI-5 was further than they would go.

Costa e Silva responded positively, leading to greater hopefulness. Party reorganization proceeded as planned, though some arenistas complained, typically for politicians, that the government they supported failed to pressure local politicians to join ARENA; what was the use of supporting the regime if the government failed to return the favor? The MDB managed to form enough directorates to survive, but its future was uncertain in a climate in which politicians feared any sort of opposition. Who wanted to join a party that would have no opportunity to win power for the foreseeable future, if ever, and possibly lose one’s political rights along the way? Still, Passos confided to a US diplomat that at least now the party was more united than ever; whatever the flaws of the method, at least the cassações had eliminated the headache of the radical imaturos.

At the same time, Costa e Silva, with input from Aleixo, Gama e Silva, legal advisors, members of the CSN, and the Supreme Court, began drafting revisions to the constitution that would incorporate many of the provisions of the institutional acts. This measure was to be accompanied by a host of new reforms designed to facilitate the moralization and control of the political class. Strict fidelity laws would forbid deputies from going against their party when leadership decided that a vote was of vital interest – another layer of security to prevent a repeat of the Moreira Alves vote. The end of paid extraordinary sessions in legislative bodies would reduce corruption. Significant reductions in the size of the Senate, Chamber of Deputies, and state legislatures would

154 Tel. Brasilia 284, 10 July 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1903, Pol 12 BRAZ.
155 Airgram Brasilia A-32, 17 July 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1903, Pol 12 BRAZ.
reduce costs and require a higher threshold of votes in order to be elected. In addition, Institutional Act No. 7 (Ato Institucional No. 7 – AI-7), decreed in February, capped state deputies’ salaries at two thirds that of federal deputies, limited state legislatures to eight paid extra sessions (a favorite way for politicians to provide themselves with supplements to their salaries) per month, imposed restrictions on deputies’ living allowances, and eliminated salaries for municipal councilors in cities with less than 300,000 residents.

By the end of August, the reforms were complete, and Costa e Silva prepared to re-open Congress to approve them on September 7, Brazil’s independence day.156 The punishment of the political class had come to a close, and politicians, firmly under military tutelage, could once again offer their collaboration to the “Revolution.” But on August 29, an unexpected development derailed Costa e Silva’s plans and definitively changed the course of the military regime. Costa e Silva suffered a debilitating stroke that left him bedridden. Constitutionally, Aleixo should have assumed the presidency until Costa e Silva recovered and, if he did not recover, become president. Yet in perhaps the most drastic departure the regime would ever make from even its own idiosyncratic claims to legality, the ministers of the Army, Navy, and Air Force unilaterally issued Institutional Act no. 12, declaring that until Costa e Silva recovered, they would govern as a junta. Considering the military’s current attitude toward civilian politicians and Aleixo’s opposition to AI-5 and specific cassações, it was impossible for the military ministers to accept him. In the new Brazil, where traditional politicians were to be

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156 Tel. Brasília 304, 24 July 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol. 15-4 BRAZ; Tel. Brasília 327, 12 Aug. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol. 15-4 BRAZ; Tel. Brasília 347, 20 Aug. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1907, Pol. 15-4 BRAZ.
subordinated to the military and its civilian technocrats, it was unthinkable that a career politician, even a highly regarded one, could ascend to the presidency. 157

The decree of AI-12 marked an even more grotesque break with legality than AI-5. AI-5 had superseded a constitution that politicians’ “subversion” had supposedly revealed as inadequate. AI-12 simply ignored the constitution altogether. As Costa e Silva’s health deteriorated, politicians watched nervously, hoping that if the military selected a new general-president, at least Congress might be reconvened to “elect” him. Rio Grande do Sul deputy Brito Velho, one of the most vocal arenistas opposed to the request to prosecute Moreira Alves, decided that he was willing to wait no longer, and on September 13, nine months to the day after the decree of AI-5, he resigned from the Chamber with a dramatic statement. “Nine months is the longest a human being can wait for anything. Anything more belongs to the field of zoology.” 158

Freed from Costa e Silva’s insistence that relative tolerance should govern the political punishments meted out, the junta reopened the process of cassações. Costa e Silva had not called a meeting of the CSN since July 1, when 6 state deputies and 36 local politicians had been removed, but now the junta called six meetings in seven weeks, at which an additional 34 politicians, ranging from senators to city councilors, were removed from office and their political rights suspended for ten years. Meanwhile, the junta began polling the Army generals, who would in turn poll their subordinate officers, to select a new president. In October, they settled on Emílio Garrastazu Médici, the head

157 For exhaustive accounts of Costa e Silva’s illness and the bypassing of Aleixo, see Carlos Chagas, 113 dias de angústia: impedimento e morte de um presidente, 2nd ed. (Porto Alegre: L&PM Editores, 1979); Portella de Mello, 803-861.
of the SNI under Costa e Silva, and, to the relief of many observers, someone known as a “moderate,” in contrast to the other likely candidate, interior minister Albuquerque Lima, who was known as an extreme nationalist who some feared might Brazil more toward the Peruvian model of a left-leaning populist military regime.\footnote{Nota Informativa no. 106, 8 Oct. 1969, MAE, 11.181/19.}

In a characteristic nod to legality – rather out of place after preventing Aleixo from assuming the presidency and selecting a new president unilaterally – the junta reconvened Congress to “elect” Médici to a full five-year term, not simply fulfill the remainder of Costa e Silva’s term.\footnote{The MDB attended the Congressional session that “elected” Médici but abstained from voting. This decision was taken over the protests of several members of the national directorate, including São Paulo deputy Franco Montoro, who argued that the party should boycott the session altogether. Kinzo, 123.} Yet in yet another act of disregard for democratic norms, the junta decreed its own set of constitutional changes, incorporated into the 1967 constitution as Amendment 1. In addition to implementing many of the reforms Costa e Silva had planned, like party fidelity, limiting pay for state deputies, and eliminating it for most municipal councilors, the amendment decreed sweeping changes designed to solidify the executive’s power over the political class. The troublesome article 34, which the Chamber had used to justify its rejection of the request to try Moreira Alves, was completely rewritten. Now, legislators would be inviolable in the exercise of their mandate – unless they committed the crimes of slander, calumny, or defamation or violated the national security law. Other articles suffered similarly drastic modifications. As under the 1967 constitution, they could not be imprisoned unless they were caught in commission of a crime – but whereas the old constitution had only included offenses for which there was no bail, the new one allowed imprisonment if they were caught
committing any crime, or if they “disturbed public order.” If they did commit crimes, they could be tried before the STF without the permission of their legislature. While the previous text had decreed removal from Congress for “behavior incompatible with parliamentary decorum” and for failing to attend half of the Senate’s or Chamber’s sessions, the new text added “behavior that offends the existing institutions” and required legislators to attend two thirds of sessions.

What would happen to the political class with Médici at the helm, with a draconian new constitution at his disposal? Certainly there could be no hope of a quick return to even the less dictatorial regime prior to the decree of AI-5. But even within the constraints of a yet-again reduced role for the country’s self-styled “directing classes,” politics would continue. Amendment 1 had established that the governors in 1970 would be chosen by the ARENA-dominated state legislatures; prominent arenistas thus could begin jockeying to gain the military’s favor. And elections for the Chamber of Deputies, two thirds of the Senate, and the state legislative assemblies were still scheduled for 1970. How much, however, would politicians have to truly change? With weapons like AI-5 and party fidelity laws, the military could force them to change behavior, but would politicians accept the permanent military tutelage implied by a “reform of mentality”?

Médici professed hope that they would be able to change. In a meeting with US ambassador Charles Elbrick, he made the enormously significant revelation that he felt Congress “had ‘learned its lesson’ […] and was profiting from [its] experience” under AI-5.161 In his first public speech, just before his October 15 “election,” he made the conciliatory gesture of admitting that Brazil “lives under a regime that we cannot

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161 Tel. Brasília 515, 3 Dec. 1969, NARA, RG 59, Box 1906, Pol 15-1 BRAZ.
consider to be fully democratic,” but hoped that by the end of his term he would “leave democracy definitively installed in our country.” For the new president democracy would not include the return of “the institutions that took us to the crisis of 1964.” It could not tolerate “extremists who demand the destruction of institutions,” but neither would it accept “the appeal of oligarchies who recommend their inalterable maintenance.” While he wanted “free dialogue” with “free universities, parties, unions, press, and churches,” above all this meant that they must be free from subversion. What was so ironic was that Médici was blind to (or at least ignored) the fact that it was the military that had demanded the destruction of institutions, and that if civil society was to be free of outside influences, this should mean that it would be free of military interference.

Finally, in his October 25 inaugural address, the new president elaborated his vision for the political class:

I believe that political parties have value […] when the dynamic of ideas prevails over the smallness of personal interests. And I feel that I should urge the party of the Revolution not only to support this government, but also to be a true school of national politics, in harmony with revolutionary thought. And I expect the opposition will honor us by fulfilling its role, pointing out errors, accepting it when we get things right, indicating paths [to be followed], acting as a check, and also making its own school of democracy, dignity, and respect.

In February 1970, when he gave his first interview, Médici made it clear that the road back to meaningful participation would not be easy for the political class. Even the format of the interview betrayed a profound lack of confidence in democratic procedure and a consuming desire to control the flow of information. His advisors selected 15 questions out of approximately 100 submitted by journalists, and Médici read written

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responses to each on a pre-recorded television broadcast. Interspersed among inquiries about inflation, foreign trade, and sports, Médici responded to four questions about the duration of AI-5, the return of full democracy, the upcoming gubernatorial elections, and the role of the political opposition. The new president reiterated his hope that he could leave Brazil fully democratic upon leaving office. Yet he emphasized that the repeal of AI-5 depended not only on the regime, but also on “the collaboration of all Brazilians, of every class and from every corner,” but especially the political class:

The perfection of the democratic regime […] demands first and foremost a profound change in mentality on the part of those who directly or indirectly influence the political process. […] Unless zeal for the collective interest begins to prevail over the machinations of individuals or groups, the vices that perverted political-administrative habits and took the country to the brink of economic, social, and political catastrophe will persist in our democratic structure.164

Médici claimed that he accepted that the opposition could someday win power but emphasized, “What will by no means be tolerated, in any hypothesis, is that the battle between parties be carried out with the purpose of subverting the regime, nor that the opposition try to win power in order to re-establish the situation that threatened to throw the country into […] chaos when, happily for the nation, the victorious movement of March 31, 1964 broke out.”165 His aggressive comment left no room for doubt: the military would hold a tight rein until it felt confident that the political class had abandoned self-interest and dreams of a return to the past. For ARENA, this meant unquestioning acceptance of the regime’s dictates. For the MDB, it meant “constructive” opposition that would respectfully point out mistakes and offer suggestions, while

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165 Ibid.
avoiding the “subversion” of 1968. If the country was “pacified” by the end of his term, his son claimed later, Médici planned to hand power over to a civilian successor.166

Conclusions

As 1969 drew to a close, the political class had collectively experienced its most trying crisis since Vargas imposed his Estado Novo in 1937. A year before, in the Moreira Alves vote, the Chamber of Deputies had gambled in an attempt to reassert the political class’s independence from a military-dominated executive. That gamble had failed spectacularly. Politicians had been imprisoned and forced into exile. Over 300 had been banished from political life for a decade, their personal and professional lives thrown into disarray. Congress had spent ten months in recess, and several state legislatures remained closed. And when Costa e Silva fell ill, the military had ignored its own rules, shoving aside the civilian vice president in favor of yet another general chosen by the Armed Forces. Although in public most politicians coped with the new situation by supporting the regime or simply remaining quiet, 1969 was a pivotal year in the evolution of the political class’s disillusionment with military rule.

Throughout the year, virtually every message from the military, no matter who the president was, indicated that the Armed Forces were united in their belief that “the political class has learned nothing” and would now require military tutelage to force them to put aside “the machinations of individuals or groups” in favor of “zeal for the

166 Médici, d’Araújo, and Soares, 31. Roberto Médici, son of the former president, gave an extensive oral history interview about his late father in 1993. The pacification his father mentioned referred to the defeat of leftist guerrillas, not the pacification of the political class. Since the interview was given after Brazil’s democratization with the military regime in disrepute, it is possible that Roberto wished to improve the memory of his father by portraying him as the president who wanted to end the regime. However, since elsewhere in the interview he expresses no reservations about defending unpopular actions, including torture, his claim that his father recognized the exceptional nature of the regime and wished to return power to a civilian – presumably one who could be trusted to continue the revolutionary program – is credible.
collective interest.” The implementation of a sweeping military-engineered project to not only defeat “subversion” and remake Brazil’s economy and administrative structure, but also re-educate and discipline the political class, had begun. This was not intended as a temporary solution, after which politics as normal would resume. Rather, Costa e Silva, Médici, and officers from across the “moderate” and “hard-line” spectrum envisioned a dramatic transformation of politics that would convince politicians if possible, but force them if necessary, to set aside self-interested behavior and work together, under the tutelage of the military, for the development of the nation. In this new world, Congress would exist solely to carry out the will of the “Revolution.” As federal deputy Clovis Stenzel (ARENA-RS), perhaps Congress’s most zealous defender of the regime, put it in September, “Congress cannot [simply] exist in harmony with the Revolution. Either it will join the Revolution, and there will be a Congress, or it won’t, and there won’t be a Congress. […] It is appropriate for ARENA […] to defend the government, and for the MDB only to contest the vulnerable points in the government’s behavior.”167

At the time, with military regimes in control of much of Latin America, it appeared legitimate to people like leading military officers, Gama e Silva, and Delfim Neto to question whether liberal democracy was adequate to meet the challenges of national security. Perhaps liberal democracy really did need to be redefined, incorporated into a bureaucratic state where a centralized, authoritarian executive would be empowered to cut through political wrangling and bureaucratic red tape to ensure security and development. Even if this solution ran counter to the mundane interests of the political class, perhaps it was the wave of the future. Who could be certain at the end of

1969 that this new state of affairs would not be permanent? As senator Milton Campos pointed out after Congress re-opened, anyone who had read the Italian political scientists Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto knew that it was natural for a new political class – in this case the military and technocrats – to replace old leaders, in an endless “circulation of elites.” Although Campos worried that such “circulation” as a result of force instead of elections was “eroding democracy,” the phenomenon itself was inevitable.168 Perhaps the old political class was obsolete, to be replaced by a military dominated technocracy.

Yet the military project contained a fundamental contradiction: while mistrusting politicians and seeking to marginalize them, it refused to completely push them aside. Despite the cassações and the subordination of the political class to military tutelage, the military had been shaped by a century and a half of adherence to Brazilian elites’ liberal discourse. Sharing a characteristically Brazilian aversion to burning bridges, the military was unwilling to rule without at least the semblance of the “democratic” legitimacy provided by elected civilian politicians. Hence, even in the darkest hours after AI-5, there was never any serious high level consideration of closing Congress permanently; even a group of avowedly “hard-line” officers speaking freely at a private party, probably over beer or whiskey, took for granted that legislatures, elections, and civilian politicians would all endure. In this regard, the vast majority of the Brazilian military was markedly different from its contemporaries in Argentina or Chile, who, at the height of the power rejected the institutions of liberal democracy as such, even as a means of legitimating

their rule. By refusing to govern without civilian political elites, the Brazilian military’s actions kept alive their hopes that they might someday regain their power and privileges.

Over the next five years, the generals would nearly convince themselves that the political class had learned its lesson and that the enlightened, pliant ruling elites of which they dreamed were beginning to emerge, lending a democratic façade to military rule by participating in elections, voting on bills, and doing exactly as they were told. Although a few young politicians would opt for a more militant posture against the regime, despite the threat of cassação, the response of their more cautious colleagues would be to wait out the dictatorial storm by playing the political game as always.
Chapter 4: “Sheltered Under the Tree, Waiting for the Storm to Pass”: The Everyday Practice of Politics Under Dictatorial Rule

On September 22, 1973, São Paulo deputy Ulysses Guimarães, national president of the MDB, stood at the rostrum in the Senate in Brasília. The party convention had just nominated him as its “anti-candidate” to run for president against General Ernesto Geisel, the regime’s chosen candidate, in the January 1974 electoral college vote, where ARENA would enjoy a massive advantage. Gazing over the heads of the assembled delegates to look directly at the camera that was supposed to transmit his words across Brazil, Guimarães gave a grandiloquent acceptance speech filled with nautical imagery and allusions to Portuguese poetry and Greek mythology that would have impressed university-educated politicians but been incomprehensible for most working class Brazilians. At its crescendo, he declared, ‘‘‘It is necessary to navigate. It is not necessary to live.’ Stationed today in the crow’s nest, I hope to God that soon I will be able to shout to the Brazilian people, ‘Good news, my Captain! Land in sight!’ Without shadow, without fear, without nightmares, the pure and blessed land of liberty is in sight!’”¹

Guimarães was telling the delegates of his party that what drove the MDB was the desire to make a principled gesture of resistance. And in the audience, there was a new generation of deputies dubbed autênticos (authentics) who agreed with him; no matter the risks, in the face of a dictatorial regime that ignored civil liberties and devalued democratic institutions, the opposition should fearlessly stand up to tyranny. Yet the vast majority of those assembled were motivated less by a desire to take a stand than by a powerful will to survive. As an older and experienced MDB leader, Minas Gerais deputy

Tancredo Neves, warned the Bahian autêntico Francisco Pinto, “Son, don’t put your chest on the tip of the bayonet! Let’s just stay sheltered under the tree and wait for the storm to pass. It will pass, just like all the other storms. Afterwards, we’ll return to the fight.”

Despite Neves’s optimism that tomorrow would bring new possibilities, in the climate provoked by AI-5 and the Médici presidency, it looked as though this storm might not pass for a very long time, if ever. Congress, when the generals bothered to consult it, became a mere rubber stamp for the regime’s policies. Leftist university students, in some cases the children of politicians, had been driven into exile or opted for armed resistance, and the military was marshaling all its firepower to annihilate the “subversive” threat.

Meanwhile, under the guidance of paulista finance minister Delfim Neto, the economy grew at an annual clip of nearly 11% between 1969 and 1974, and the “Brazilian miracle” generated an approval rating of over 80% for Médici in São Paulo, whose political and economic elites benefited more than those of any other state from the regime’s focus on industrialization. In this climate of repression coupled with widespread public acceptance of the regime, there was little politicians could do about their marginalization; rather than recovering their old prerogatives, the immediate goal for most became survival, sustained by hope that this dictatorial storm would pass.

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2 Interview with Pinto in Nader, 168.
3 In 1985, only months after the fall of the military regime, the Catholic archdiocese of São Paulo published an explosive report. Modeled on Nunca Máx, the report of Argentina’s National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP), Brasil: nunca mais utilized 695 trial records containing the names of 7,367 defendants to document state-sponsored torture of the regime’s foes. Significantly, the report revealed that 38.9% of defendants were under the age of 25, and 55.7% had university degrees, in a country in which about 1% of the population would ever attend university. Paulo Evaristo Arns, Brasil: nunca mais, 3rd ed. (Petrópolis, Brazil: Editora Vozes, 1985), 85-86.
While politicians from both parties were united by their continued resentment of military tutelage, remaining “sheltered under the tree” was not the only option. The anticandidacy of Guimarães was a manifestation of the desire of young autênticos like Pinto to adopt a more confrontational posture toward the regime. Yet there was a third path, adopted by Orestes Quércia, the driven young MDB mayor of Campinas, that would prove most effective. Quércia eschewed forceful denunciations of the regime’s dictatorial nature in favor of the painstaking construction of a party machine at the local and state level, as he sought to win elections through emphasizing the day-to-day issues that mattered most to voters. That is, rather than simply waiting for the storm to pass, he was determined to build a name for himself with voters, no matter the constraints. With legislative elections looming in 1970 and municipal elections in 1972, there were campaigns to be planned, alliances to be built. There were party leadership posts to win, privileges (however limited) to be enjoyed, and funds to be procured for one’s municipality. There were friends who required help and enemies to win over or thwart.

These three very different forms of coping with dictatorial rule demonstrate that even at the darkest moment of the regime, the military’s attempts to intimidate the political class faced limitations. Even though the overwhelming majority of Brazilian politicians were not necessarily principled opponents of authoritarian military rule, they still continued to subtly push back against military tutelage in search of what opportunities there were to improve their own lot. This is far from the armed resistance of the revolutionary left or the courageous opposition of the progressive Catholic Church that have captured scholars’ imaginations. Yet while they pretended to accept the permanence of their subservience to the military, politicians never truly reconciled
themselves to it. Although politicians’ apparent acquiescence was a key factor in the
generals’ decision to loosen their repressive grip in 1974, most simply waited quietly or
positioned themselves for a hoped-for eventual return to political normality.

After Médici took office in October 1969, despite his assurances that he required
the participation of the political class and parties, fear paralyzed most politicians and
convinced them to exercise extreme caution. Few powers remained to legislative bodies
beyond offering timid criticisms, which, due to censorship, would seldom appear in the
papers. As the British ambassador explained, the Senate and Chamber had been
reopened, “but with the privileges and perquisites of their individual members so limited
and with their collective powers so curtailed that elections to the two bodies no longer
offered its former attractions and their deliberations exercised small influence on the
conduct of affairs.”

Scholars described “a compliant façade of a Congress, shorn of any
independent powers” and highlighted the “institutionally democratic façade and the
domesticated semi-opposition,” fostered by an “artificial and unrepresentative party
system” that failed to “[impose] any serious restrictions upon executive power.”

The generals’ confidence that their reforms of politics and institutions were
working was enhanced by the 1970 legislative elections, which brought a resounding
victory for ARENA. For the MDB, however, the elections were a disaster. In the climate
of intimidation provoked by the cassações, in 14 of 22 states the MDB was able to recruit

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6 For “compliant façade of a Congress,” see Skidmore, “Politics and Economic Policy Making in
Authoritarian Brazil, 1937-71,” 16. For “institutionally democratic façade,” see Philippe C. Schmitter, "The
"Portugalization" of Brazil?," in Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Future, ed. Alfred Stepan
(New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1973), 211.
fewer candidates for federal and state deputy than the number of seats open. Most voters opposed to the regime were suspicious of an opposition party that was practically indistinguishable from the government party and abstained from the election by spoiling their ballots or leaving them blank. So many voters took this route that nationwide the number of blank and spoiled ballots outnumbered the votes for the MDB, which won only 90 out of 310 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In the Senate, the results were even worse; the MDB won six out of 44 Senate races, leaving it with only seven members among the 66 senators, and party president Oscar Passos failed to win re-election.

Finally, ARENA continued to control the legislative assemblies in every state, with the exception of Guanabara (comprised of the city of Rio de Janeiro). Only less disastrous vote totals in major cities, particularly in the industrialized Southeast and South, gave the MDB any hope for the future. Nevertheless, this did nothing to help the party in the municipal elections of 1972, when ARENA won 90% of the mayorships.

“*It Is Not Necessary to Live*: The Rise of the MDB Autênticos and the Anti-Candidacy of Ulysses Guimarães

Out of the 90 MDB federal deputies elected in 1970, 20 to 30 deputies, most serving their first terms, would soon distinguish themselves through their more overtly confrontational posture toward the regime. Most were in their 30s or early 40s and ranged

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7 Kinzo, 127-128, 251 n. 42. In Bahia the MDB was able to find only five candidates for the state’s 22 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Jenks, 187; Nader, 162.

8 One of the six victories was in São Paulo, where federal deputy and former Goulart labor minister Franco Montoro won one of the two open seats. Montoro was elected with the open support of many ARENA politicians. Montoro’s old allies from the PDC who had joined ARENA in 1966 provided crucial support, and they were joined by other arenistas who preferred Montoro to the second ARENA candidate, Hilário Torloni, an ally of the hated Adhemar de Barros. Even the outgoing governor Abreu Sodré, whose vice-governor Torloni had been, supported Montoro. The widespread ARENA support for Montoro illustrates the insignificance of the new party labels compared with continued identifications with the old parties, as well as the unthreatening nature of a perceived “moderate” Montoro candidacy to pro-regime politicians. See Melhem, *Política de botinas amarelas: O MDB-PMDB paulista de 1965 a 1988*, 114-115.

from social democrats to socialists. Several were elected with the discreet support of the banned PCB, which, unlike other leftist groups, rejected the armed struggle and remained involved in electoral politics.\textsuperscript{10} In Brasília, often without their families, living in hotels, they were drawn together by their belief that the cautious approach of the “moderate” MDB leadership did little more than legitimate a dictatorial regime. In conversations over coffee or meals in hotel restaurants, or as they wrote their speeches in the typing room in Congress (most deputies still lacked offices a decade after the construction of Brasília), they discovered which of their colleagues shared their convictions and began to seek out other deputies to join the informal group.\textsuperscript{11} New deputies like Francisco Pinto, Pernambuco’s Fernando Lyra and Marcos Freire, Guanabara’s Lysâneas Maciel, São Paulo’s José de Freitas Nobre, and Paraná’s José Alencar Furtado found common ground with veterans like Maranhão’s Domingo de Freitas Diniz and São Paulo’s José Santilli Sobrinho, the unlucky deputy beaten by the police during the 1968 UnB invasion.

The new group dubbed themselves (or was dubbed by the press) the autênticos, in contrast to so-called moderados, like new party president Guimarães, who had controlled the party since its left was cassado and who, in the autênticos’ view, were too timid in their opposition. They reserved the most indignation for so-called adesistas\textsuperscript{12} like

\textsuperscript{10} Interviews with Fernando Lyra, Francisco Pinto in Nader, 114, 162. Nader’s collection of oral history interviews with 17 of the 18 autênticos who were still alive in 1994, despite her perplexing decision to omit the interview questions, is an invaluable source for the group’s relations with the rest of the MDB, political culture in Brasília in the early 1970s, politics under Médici, and the construction of political memory.

\textsuperscript{11} Interviews with Eloy Lenzi, Fernando Cunha, Francisco Amaral, Francisco Pinto, Lysâneas Maciel, and Santilli Sobrinho in Ibid., 81, 101-102, 131, 167-168, 285, 357-358.

\textsuperscript{12} Adesismo does not have a direct translation into English. It is derived from the verb aderir, which means “to adhere” or “to stick” and is used, usually in a derogatory manner, to describe the behavior of politicians who adapt to any new situation, joining themselves to whatever faction or party is in power. Within the MDB, a charge of adesismo constituted a serious attack on a politician’s oppositionist credentials, though true adesistas were unlikely to be fazed by the criticism.
Guanabara MDB governor Antônio Chagas Freitas, a newspaper magnate, former Adhemar de Barros ally, and supporter of the 1964 coup, who after AI-5 had built an MDB machine in Rio de Janeiro that collaborated with the regime. Considering the regime’s marginalization of the political class, disregard for civil liberties, and violence against the left, what did these angry young deputies have to lose? In their minds, something, *anything*, had to be done to show the world that despite economic success, the Brazilian dictatorship did not enjoy unanimous support. Since the 1969 constitutional amendment had abolished immunity, they knew that they could – indeed, probably would – be cassado. Yet they continued to attack the regime nonetheless.

The conflict between autênticos and moderates, with adesistas sometimes thwarting both, would become the key internal conflict within the MDB until the end of the decade. Their “moderate” colleagues were annoyed; as Passos had admitted in 1969, the bright spot of the cassações for the MDB had been the elimination of the headaches created by the imaturos. Now the party had to face a new crop of imaturos under a new name, deputies whose confrontational style might be taken as a provocation by the military and used to justify another hardening of the regime, like in 1968. In their minds, the autênticos jeopardized all the party’s work to ensure its members’ survival, merely to make a futile political point. Still, perhaps because of the greater risk autênticos ran, the term “authentic” reflected a grudging respect that the condescending “immature” had not.

13 The MDB in Guanabara had been particularly hard hit by AI-5, which had removed a third of its federal deputies there. Into the vacuum stepped Chagas Freitas. By 1970, his faction controlled the state party directorate, and he convinced the regime to allow him to be indirectly elected governor by the MDB-controlled state legislature in 1970. As a result of *chaguista* control, the MDB in Guanabara (which the regime fused with the surrounding state of Rio de Janeiro in 1974) provided even less meaningful opposition than elsewhere – a trend that continued until Chagas Freitas lost control of the state in 1982. For discussions of politics in Guanabara and Rio de Janeiro under the regime, see Eli Diniz, *Voto e máquina política: patronagem e clientelismo no Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1982); Sarmento, ed.
Important as the autêntico-moderado divide would prove to be, ideology was not the only source of conflict. After all, members of both factions were dissatisfied with indirect elections, troubled by torture, uneasy with excessive foreign control over the economy, and, on some level, uncomfortable with Brazil’s glaring social inequalities. Indeed, even most ARENA politicians would not have contested these positions privately. And the conflict revolved not only around the appropriate strategy for combating the regime, but also struggles for party leadership positions, as the upstart deputies were eager to gain access to key posts.14 Moreover, as Guimarães recognized, the conflict may have been due to the age difference between hotheaded autênticos and seasoned moderates, a situation that reminded him of the conflicts within the PSD when he was young, full of fresh ideas and eager to challenge authority. As he pointed out to his biographer two decades later, he had always resented the autênticos’ attempts to label him a “moderate.” He was intent on proving for the history books that the autênticos did not have a monopoly on courage, that his moderation had not arisen from cowardice.

If anyone were to compare the ideas of a 28- or 30-year-old autêntico with my ideas at the same time […] , they would see that many times I said more authentic things than the autênticos did. Many times I was capable of going further and, consequently, committing rasher acts than they did. In spite of all my moderation, I made frontal, substantial attacks on the military regime.15

Despite these conflicts, the MDB found issues around which it could rally. One of the most important of these was the “anti-candidacy” of 1973, an event that many of the autênticos would later remember as the high point of their careers and the one that transformed Guimarães into a nationally known figure. The MDB had abstained from the

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14 Kinzo, 133-136.
15 Gutemberg, 100-101.
1966 and 1969 presidential “elections” that chose Costa e Silva and Médici, and with barely a fifth of the 503 seats in the electoral college, there was no point nominating a candidate for the 1974 vote either. Yet after Médici announced Ernesto Geisel as his successor, the autênticos seized on the idea that the MDB should nominate its own candidate to take advantage of the free television time provided candidates to publicize the party’s criticisms of the regime. The autênticos, despite their reputation for “radical” opposition, originally sought a nationalist general disenchanted with the regime’s friendliness to foreign investment in the Brazilian economy. When no willing general could be found, they courted the venerable journalist, lawyer, and former governor of Pernambuco, Alexandre Barbosa Lima Sobrinho. They envisioned a candidacy that would conduct a national campaign to denounce indirect elections, but if the courts did not allow TV access, they urged the party to abandon the candidacy.

The idea was also attractive to the party leadership, who saw an opportunity to oppose the regime within the rules it had established. Earlier that year, the party’s secretary general, the notoriously conciliatory Pernambuco deputy Thales Ramalho, had discussed the idea with his close friend Luís Maranhão, a member of the central

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16 The electoral college was made up of the 310 members of the Chamber of Deputies, 66 members of the Senate, and 127 representatives from the state legislative assemblies. The MDB thus had only 101 votes in the electoral college – 87 deputies, seven senators, and seven representatives of the legislative assembly of Guanabara, the only state where the party had a majority in the state assembly. Ibid., 115. See also “503 no Colégio Eleitoral,” Folha de S. Paulo, 15 Jan. 1974, 3.
17 Kinzo, 138.
18 Interviews with Fernando Lyra and Francisco Pinto in Nader, 119-120, 175. One of the military names considered may have been Geisel himself, prior to his nomination by the military. Gutemberg, 125. According to one account, the autênticos also considered running one of their own, either Pernambuco deputy Marcos Freire or Guanabara deputy Lysâneas Maciel. Marieta de Moraes Ferreira, Dora Rocha, and Américo Freire (orgs.), Vozes da oposição (Rio de Janeiro: Graffinle Editora, 2001), 39.
19 Interviews with Alencar Furtado, Fernando Lyra, Francisco Pinto, Freitas Diniz, Lysâneas Maciel, Marcondes Gadelha, and Santilli Sobrinho in Nader, 51-52, 120, 175, 202-203, 298, 310, 361.
committee of the PCB who was responsible for the banned party’s political contacts.\textsuperscript{20} By early September, Guimarães had warmed to the idea, and during a night drinking whiskey with friends, an idea came to him: he would run himself, not as a candidate, but as an “anti-candidate” who would denounce the absurdity of the “election.”\textsuperscript{21} The September MDB convention ratified the “anti-candidacy,” with Barbosa Lima as the running mate.\textsuperscript{22} However, at the insistence of the autênticos, the party agreed to hold another convention to re-evaluate the anti-candidacy, should any significant developments during the campaign (i.e., the denial of free TV time) necessitate it.

In a fiery convention speech, Guimarães surprised the autênticos by seeming to agree with their desire for a more vigorous opposition:

It is not a candidate who will travel across the country. It is an anti-candidate, to denounce an anti-election, imposed by an anti-constitution that provides shelter to AI-5, submits the legislative and judicial branches to the executive branch, makes possible imprisonment without habeas corpus, violates the privacy of homes and businesses through eavesdropping, and renders inaudible dissent as it deafens the nation by censoring the press, radio, television, theater, and cinema.\textsuperscript{23}

The de facto denunciation of the military regime as a dictatorship from the “moderate” Guimarães thrilled the autênticos. Remembering the speech years later, Pinto recalled,\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{20} Gaspari, \textit{A ditadura derrotada}, 241.
\textsuperscript{21} As Guimarães put it in an interview with the alternative weekly \textit{Pasquim}, “It came to me with the help of a certain ethylic bath. You see, alcohol isn’t so bad.” Gutemberg, 126.
\textsuperscript{22} In the intervening decades, there have been numerous versions about how Guimarães became the MDB’s candidate. In Nader’s oral history interviews, several former autênticos insist that Guimarães stole their idea and imposed himself as the candidate over Barbosa Lima. One of Guimarães’s biographers, Luiz Gutemberg, on the other hand, claims that Guimarães accepted only when his name was brought up spontaneously during a party meeting. Regardless, Guimarães made more sense, Gutemberg argues, since Barbosa Lima, without an elected position, would not have had even the limited immunity from prosecution that a federal deputy would enjoy to criticize the regime during the campaign. Ibid., 127. Despite their skepticism, the autênticos quickly warmed to Guimarães. Remembering his fiery acceptance speech at the party’s September nominating convention, Francisco Pinto recalled, “On the day of convention, yes, Ulysses appears at a true oppositionist. He gave an excellent speech … And we applauded! It was the first time I applauded Ulysses.” And as Alencar Furtado, admitted later, Guimarães, as national president of the MDB, was the most natural candidate. Nader, 175.
\textsuperscript{23} Gaspari, \textit{A ditadura derrotada}, 242; Gutemberg, 122.
“On the day of convention, yes, Ulysses appears at a true oppositionist. He gave an excellent speech … And we applauded! It was the first time I applauded Ulysses.”

The anti-candidacy launched the thin, bald, almost ascetic-looking 57-year-old Guimarães to national prominence. A 1938 graduate of the São Paulo Law School, he had been a federal deputy since 1950. Prior to the abolition of the old political parties, he had belonged to the centrist PSD and shared the party’s penchant for conciliation and taking both sides of an issue. Although he had been Goulart’s minister of industry and commerce from 1961-1962, in 1964 he joined the pro-coup forces in Congress in electing Castelo Branco and authored a proposal that would have allowed suspensions of political rights to last fifteen years instead of ten. Despite joining the MDB when it was founded, by 1968 he was rumored to be considering a switch to ARENA in exchange for a cabinet position in the Abreu Sodré administration. In the Moreira Alves affair, he served on the Constitution and Justice Committee and gave a measured defense of constitutional immunity in a speech a few days before the final vote, but overall did not play a conspicuous role. He had never received high vote totals in elections, was more interested in maneuverings within Congress than in contact with voters, and had limited involvement in local paulista politics, where, in a state where it was vital to establish a following among local politicians, his personal following was almost non-existent. Overall, he was known as nothing more than another elitist, accommodating liberal, indistinguishable from any other politician. In the evaluation of a British diplomat who

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24 Nader, 51.
26 Scartezini, 44.
27 Airgram Brasília A-281, 24 May 1968, NARA, RG 59, Box 1903, Pol. 12 BRAZ.
28 Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 6 Dec. 1968, Suplemento, 14-16.
spoke privately with him in mid-1973, “The democracy to which Guimarães wishes to return is very much qualified by being a democracy adapted to the stage of development of the Brazilian people; […] meaning no democracy at all, but Government in the hands of ‘those best fitted to exercise it.’”

Yet when MDB president Oscar Passos was voted out in 1970, Guimarães, the party’s highest-ranking vice president, was thrust into the presidency. Beginning with the anti-candidacy, Guimarães, once reviled by some as a man who refused to stand up for his own beliefs, began to shift his posture toward the regime. Orestes Quércia, the former mayor of Campinas who worked closely with Guimarães until the latter’s death in 1992, recalled, “Until [the anti-candidacy] he was considered an appeaser, a people pleaser, moderate, in the style of the old PSD, someone who says ‘yes’ to everyone.”

Even the autênticos, who found his conciliatory nature maddening, admitted that the anti-candidacy ushered in a new era for him. Francisco Pinto remembered, “That was when a new Ulysses was born, affirmative and incisive.” Or in the words of journalist Élio

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29 George Hall to Sir David Hunt, 12 June 1973, BNA, FCO 7/2407.  
30 Interview with Quércia in Célia Soibelmann Melhem and Sonia Morgenstern Russo, Dr. Ulysses, o homem que pensou o Brasil. 39 depoimentos sobre a trajetória do Sr. Diretas (São Paulo: Premio, 2004), 326. The expression I have translated “people pleaser” is vaca de presépio. It literally means “Nativity scene cow” and is used pejoratively to refer to someone who says yes to everyone.  
31 Interview with Pinto in Nader, 175. Marcondes Gadelha, an autêntico from Paraíba, put it similarly. “Already at that time, [Ulysses] – even though the moderates maintained a prudent distance from us – was seeking an approximation with the autêntico group, and confident in our struggle, he sought to align his position ever more closely with ours. From that time forward, Ulysses really became more incisive in his positions.” Interview with Gadelha in Nader, 311. Luiz Henrique Silveira, a state deputy in Santa Catarina at the time, put it slightly differently, arguing that the anti-candidacy was the culmination of a slow transformation, “But already back then, even though he had more affinity for and a longer companionship with moderate leaders, over time Dr. Ulysses absorbed the theses of the autêntico group and slowly migrated to them, until the moment in which we launched him as anti-candidate.” Interview with Silveira in Melhem and Russo, Dr. Ulysses, o homem que pensou o Brasil. 39 depoimentos sobre a trajetória do Sr. Diretas, 232. See also the interview with Fernando Cunha in Nader, 98.
Gaspari in 2003, “That paulista who had barely gotten any votes and presided over a party without a past or a present ended up discovering the future.”

Yet the anti-candidacy’s potential to influence public opinion through a symbolic gesture of resistance was thwarted – first, because the campaign was restricted to a limited audience; second, because the expanded press coverage it brought the party was of dubious significance; and third, because it turned out that Guimarães had no intention of dramatically exiting the race as the autênticos expected. Although Guimarães carried out his “anti-campaign” as though it were a real one, with rallies in 14 of Brazil’s 22 states, the rallies were almost never held in public; rather, they were held indoors for select invitees. In São Paulo, the rally was held in the state legislature for an audience of politicians from the interior. Federal deputy Dias Menezes argued in a speech that the anti-candidacy showed that the MDB represented “an opposition that demands, within the Constitution, law and order, conditions to serve the public good through examining public problems […] and attempting to propose better solutions, hoping that in the future it will have the conditions to compete in free, direct elections.”

When the MDB planned its closing rally in Guanabara, secretary general Thales Ramalho spent weeks calling the state party president to schedule the rally in the Tiradentes Palace, seat of the legislative assembly, but the president, an ally of the adesista governor Chagas Freitas, ignored his calls. When they arrived, Guimarães and Barbosa Lima found the palace closed, with military police on the steps. Santana was nowhere to be found – depending on who one talked to, he was in Buenos Aires, the restroom, or accompanying his still-unwed

33 Gutemberg, 133-134.
daughter on her honeymoon. Guimarães instead held an impromptu parade to the docks and retreated by ferry to Niterói, capital of the surrounding state of Rio de Janeiro.\textsuperscript{35}

However, the stated purpose of the campaign was not to travel from city to city, holding rallies for select party activists; rather, it was to gain national exposure for the party through television time, which the electoral code guaranteed free of charge for all elections. However, on November 20 the Supreme Electoral Court (Tribunal Supremo Eleitoral – TSE) ruled, by a surprisingly close 4-3 vote, that the guarantee of free TV time applied only to direct elections, despite the fact that the law made no distinction.\textsuperscript{36} It was an open secret that the court had succumbed to pressure from the regime, which had no interest in allowing the MDB to disseminate its message to the masses.

Finally, although the campaign did receive extensive newspaper coverage – one of Guimarães’s biographers asserts that coverage of the MDB grew 3,500\% during the campaign – this did little to help the MDB.\textsuperscript{37} In the first place, stories were still under censorship.\textsuperscript{38} And newspaper readership in Brazil had always been low; in Brazil in 1972, papers printed only 37 copies per 1,000 people, while US papers in the same year published 297.\textsuperscript{39} A 1970 poll revealed that 45\% of people in the D class (that is, the lowest income group) in the city of São Paulo reported reading no newspaper at all; in the interior of the state, the number rose to 84\%.\textsuperscript{40} After nearly two months of campaigning, the party’s rallies had failed to attract popular attention, the goal of using modern mass

\textsuperscript{35} “A antiderrota,” *Veja*, 16 Jan. 1974, 20; Gutemberg, 133-134.
\textsuperscript{36} “4 a 3: TSE entende que radio e TV só em diretas,” *Folha de S. Paulo*, 21 Nov. 1973, 3.
\textsuperscript{37} Gutemberg, 133-134.
\textsuperscript{38} Interview with Barbosa Lima Sobrinho in Melhem and Russo, *Dr. Ulysses, o homem que pensou o Brasil. 39 depoimentos sobre a trajetória do Sr. Diretas*, 50.
\textsuperscript{40} “Pesquisa sobre leituras de jornais, Estado de São Paulo, outubro 1970,” AEL, IBOPE, PE 116/08, 4.
media to spread the party’s message in advance of the next year’s legislative elections had been defeated, and newspaper coverage was of dubious usefulness. As a telegram from the British ambassador put it, “Ulysses Guimarães […] never succeeded in establishing his credibility as the representative of an effective Opposition. […] They failed effectively to put their policies before the people.”

In the wake of the TSE decision, the party called a new convention, for November 28, to determine whether to continue. The autênticos supported a withdrawal from the race, but as a minority within the party (only about a third of the party’s now 87 federal deputies), they knew they did not have the votes to approve it. Consequently, they agreed to vote for the maintenance of the anti-candidacy for the time being, but it appears that Guimarães may have quietly promised the autênticos behind the scenes also that he would quit the race just before the election. In order to hold Guimarães to his promise, the autênticos resorted to blackmail, threatening to embarrass the party by boycotting the election if he dared present his candidacy at the electoral college.

Regardless, from Guimarães’s likely perspective, the anti-candidacy was still going well. He and his running mate Barbosa Lima were receiving enthusiastic receptions from state and local MDB leaders (even if ordinary people never saw the rallies); moreover, the formerly forgotten party was attracting unprecedented press attention (even

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41 Ambassador Derek Dodson to FCO, 21 Jan. 1974, BNA, FCO 7-2583.
43 Tel. Brasília 8236, 4 Dec. 1973, NARA-CP, RG 59 [retrieved from Access to Archival Databases, http://aad.archives.gov, 12 May 2010]. A December 12 report from the British embassy agreed that a last-minute withdrawal was still on the table. “It is nevertheless still quite possible that having secured whatever publicity they can during the electoral period, [the MDB] will at the last minute withdraw their candidates on the grounds that they have been denied a fair chance.” (D. S. Cape to FCO, 12 Dec. 1973, BNA, FCO 7/2407.)

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if few people were reading the reports). Who knew what positive ramifications this might have for the elections the next year?\(^{44}\) Furthermore, it is probable that Guimarães, president of a moribund opposition party and never particularly popular electorally, rather enjoyed traveling the country, being enthusiastically welcomed by local party militants, speaking to packed auditoriums, and being hounded by reporters for interviews. As Quércia explained, “With the anti-candidacy, Dr. Ulysses projected himself onto the national political scene.”\(^{45}\) It was a level of attention he had never before received.\(^{46}\) A US diplomat who had spoken with a reporter close to Barbosa Lima wrote that the vice presidential candidate “is immensely flattered by the attention he draws when he appears in public, is enjoying himself hugely, and will campaign under any circumstance.”\(^{47}\)

As the vote approached, the autênticos expected that Guimarães would exit the campaign in protest of the sham election – “denounce and renounce,” as one put it – perhaps as late as immediately after giving his speech before the vote.\(^{48}\) Yet a few days before the election, Guimarães double-crossed them, announcing that he had decided he would not withdraw.\(^{49}\) In justification, Guimarães and the party leadership would cite the possibility that a last-minute withdrawal might be more insolence than the military would tolerate. As he recalled to one of his biographers, “All the possible weight of protest and


\(^{45}\) Melhem and Russo, *Dr. Ulysses, o homem que pensou o Brasil: 39 depoimentos sobre a trajetória do Sr. Diretas*, 326.

\(^{46}\) Interview with Maciel in Ferreira, Rocha, and Freire (orgs.), *Vozes da oposição*, 40.


\(^{48}\) Interview with Maciel in Nader, 288.

\(^{49}\) Interview with Furtado in Ibid., 51-52.
denunciation was eloquently expressed in the anti-candidacy. I wasn’t going to induce the party into and much less lend myself to infantile, sterile gestures. No.”

The autênticos were infuriated. From the beginning, the party leadership had attempted to marginalize them from the campaign; Guimarães had repeatedly failed to give them credit for coming up with the idea of the anti-candidacy, and after the autênticos were not invited to many campaign events, the group was forced to announce its intent to hold a parallel campaign on Guimarães’s behalf. Now in addition to trying to keep them out of the public eye, Guimarães was going to participate in the sham election. In their eyes, the anti-candidacy was to have been a denunciatory moral witness to the regime’s mockery of democracy. Two decades later, Alencar Furtado still remembered the episode with bitterness, “[Ulysses] could have arrived in that chamber like a giant, but he arrived like a dwarf. The anti-candidate turned into a candidate, betraying himself, providing a service to the dictatorship in an election with predetermined results, making a farce look decent.” Santilli Sobrinho argued, “By participating in the contest in the electoral college, Ulysses gave the impression abroad that the dictatorship wasn’t so bad, wasn’t so dictatorial, since it even let the opposition contend for the presidency.” Indeed Senator Petrônio Portella, ARENA president, fed

50 Gutemberg, 134.
52 Interview with Alencar Furtado in Nader, 52. Similarly, Freitas Diniz lamented, “Ulysses, disregarding what had been agreed upon, did not renounce [his candidacy] and accepted the votes. I believe this was an irreparable blemish that stained his biography.” Interview with Freitas Diniz in Nader, 203. See also interviews with Fernando Cunha, Fernando Lyra, Francisco Pinto, Getúlio Dias, Marcondes Gadelha, Nadyr Rossetti, and Paes de Andrade in Nader, 98-99, 120, 175-176, 231, 310-311, 333, 343-344.
53 Interview with Santilli Sobrinho in Nader, 362. However, as early as September 12, ten days before the first MDB convention, Guimarães had stated in an interview with Veja, when asked if he would quit the race in protest if the TSE denied television time, “Personally, I think that when you become a candidate,
this impression by praising the MDB for “giving a valid contribution to the strengthening of democracy in Brazil.” Like the MDB leadership, he worried that a “confrontational posture” from the opposition might “damage the effort that is being made on behalf of political-institutional normality.”

On the morning of January 15 the electoral college gathered in the Chamber of Deputies to “elect” the next president. The autênticos, still fuming from Guimarães’s betrayal, had spent the last few days planning a dramatic act of defiance. Though they wanted to express their protest during the “election,” the Senate rules of order adopted for the electoral college contained no provision for a statement from an unofficial party faction – the only speeches were reserved for the presidents of each party (Guimarães and Portella) in the lead-up to the final vote. However, the rules did permit procedural questions. As a result, the autênticos reached an agreement with the congressional leadership; prior to the speeches by Guimarães and Portella, they would be permitted to voice their objections to the election, disguised as a procedural question.

When the time came for the procedural question, Alencar Furtado took the floor. Under the pretext of arguing that the rules of the Chamber of Deputies (which could allow statements from other members of Congress and not just the party presidents) and not the Senate should apply to the electoral college, he blasted the regime.

In this country, the right to a free press is usurped by prior censorship. The right of minorities to be represented in this electoral college is usurped, thus banishing the principle of proportional representation. In this country […] even individual

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[legal] guarantees are usurped by the laws of exception. [...] In this country, even the right of access to radio and television is usurped by a tiebreaking vote.55

Paulo Torres, president of the Senate, interrupted to demand that Furtado state his procedural question. Furtado ignored him, continued his impassioned speech, and argued that Torres was usurping his right to freely express his opinions. When he finished, Torres ruled that his request was baseless and chastised him for using a procedural question to make a political argument. Yet as the British ambassador, who was observing the proceedings from the gallery, noted, Torres had made no serious attempt to interrupt Furtado; it was clear that the procedural question was the product of a prior agreement to keep the autênticos from making a scene during the “election.”56

Guimarães read his half-hour speech in his methodical yet majestic style. Though his sonorous delivery, his voice rising to crescendos and falling to dramatic pauses, sounds almost comically pompous to the modern ear, oratorical skill is, after all, dependent on culture and language. For Guimarães, schooled in oratory during his years in law school, with a quarter century of experience giving congressional speeches, this was how one should deliver a historically important speech, with a style that reinforced the gravity of the moment, both in the present and for posterity, and impressed its listeners and readers alike with its erudition and poise. He cited the courage of Brazilian heroes of the past, who had defended the ideals of the pâtria, and insisted that today the weapon of the people was the vote, of which they had been deprived in this election.

Like the far-walking and mestizo boots of the guerrillas who expelled [the Dutch] from the Pernambucan recôncavo; the leather hats, and, although destitute of swords and blunderbusses, the hands of the Acreans and the Northerners; the

55 Derek Dodson to Alec Douglas, 21 January 1974, BNA, FCO 7/2583.
Farroupilhan ideals hued by the ponchos and lent voice by the gallop of the horses, the vote is the weapon of this same people to guarantee its destiny as end, and not means, of the State; as sharer in the dividends of development, not its disinherited creator; as [an act of] self-defense as well, raising on our borders the barrier of impenetrability against capital that has no Pátria, which criminally persists in colonizing a Pátria that has no capital.57


The focus of his speech was the regime’s abandonment of liberal democracy. To applause, he intoned, “A people capable of working, of paying taxes, of having and educating children, of dying on battlefields, is also capable of voting. […] When the vote is taken away from the people, the people are expelled from the center to the periphery of history. […] The [only ways to] protest become agitation and strikes labeled as subversion.” He admitted his “profound bitterness” as he noted the absence of illustrious cassado politicians and called for their amnesty. He lamented the loss of the legislative branch’s power and called for the re-establishment of parliamentary immunity. A vote for him today, he argued, was not a vote for him personally, but for the revocation of AI-5, the restoration of habeas corpus and the independence of the judiciary, the elimination of torture, the end of censorship, and the repeal of decrees limiting student political mobilization. While socioeconomic issues were relegated to the margins, he did lament,
almost as an afterthought, the government’s manipulation of inflation figures, “which
nourishes the divinization of the government in direct proportion to its starving of
workers, civil servants, retirees, and pensioners.”

Next, ARENA president Petrônio Portella gave a confrontational speech that
turned the tables by arguing that ARENA, not the MDB, was the defender of democracy.
After all, his party held a majority in the electoral college precisely because they had won
elections in 1966 and 1970; “[Our] votes […] come from the people, of whom we are
faithful interpreters, and express in all their eloquence the strength of representative
democracy.” In attacking indirect elections, the MDB was offering not a defense of
democracy, but an attack on it, evidence that the party was made up of sore losers. “In the
minority, with the pretension of being the holders of truth, they place themselves in
opposition to the weight of our numbers, electing themselves tutelary guides of the
Nation, the exclusive defenders of democratic principles.” After all, “A party whose
number of representatives diminishes in every election, who proclaims the goal of some
day achieving a third of the seats in Congress, does not have the political structure to
elect the president of the Republic.” ARENA would win today because the people had
opted for ARENA, for a party that was not locked into rigid, idealistic conceptions of
democracy but realized that democracy had to evolve with the times. In a final jab, he
mocked Guimarães’s already-famous speech at the MDB convention in September. For
Portella, Guimarães’s call for his party to focus on the “navigation” of its struggle over
self-preservation betrayed a fundamental lack of vision; what was necessary was not to
navigate aimlessly, but to move forward with purpose, to create a lasting legacy.

59 Ibid.
We watch with admiration the great adventures of the old sailors. Without a compass or instrument of protection, they lent lessons of courage as they faced the formidable sea. It was the determinism of a calling triumphing over life itself. “It is necessary to navigate. It is not necessary to live.” We, however, prefer to remain faithful to our duty. It demands from us intelligence, foresight, courage. There is no place in it for adventure. Glory lies in formulating, conceiving, creating. […] “It is not necessary to live. It is necessary to create.”

When the applause for Portella had subsided, the time came for the state-by-state roll call vote. As each elector was called, he shouted his vote from the Chamber floor. Yet when the turn came for the first autêntico, Freitas Diniz, he stepped up to a microphone, where he could be sure he would be heard and recorded, and announced, “I refuse to vote, according to the terms of the declaration I signed that was delivered to the board.” When Torres announced his vote as an abstention, Freitas Diniz protested that rather than abstaining, he was refusing to participate. “I refuse to vote.” As each autêntico voted, he made a similar statement, in most cases in front of a microphone, omitted from the minutes but preserved in the recording. “I refuse to vote in an election without the people.” “I refuse to vote in an anti-election…” “I refuse to vote, and I return my vote to the Brazilian people, the ones who are glaringly absent from this spurious process.” “I refuse to vote, in accordance with my party platform.” “I belong to an electoral college,

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61 If you are unable to play the clip of Portella’s speech, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2jjCg6iLKQlmaGNTN09FSEk/edit.
not one that ratifies without appeal. I thus refuse to vote."\textsuperscript{62} It was the most dramatic moment of congressional defiance since the Moreira Alves vote in 1968.


As the list of autênticos refusing to vote grew, other members of the MDB felt the need to answer their defiance. After listening to 15 autênticos, including three fellow paulistas, refuse to vote for him, Guimarães stated, when called upon, “By the determination of the national convention – Ulysses Guimarães.”\textsuperscript{64} Just as Portella had accused the MDB of lacking democratic spirit for refusing to accept its minority position, Guimarães was calling the autênticos to task for refusing to accept that the party had rejected their demand that he withdraw from the race. Deputy Adolfo de Oliveira put it even more pointedly. “I accepted the rules of the system to be elected federal deputy. As a democrat, I participated in my party’s convention. I respect the decisions of my party, and I proudly vote for Ulysses Guimarães.”\textsuperscript{65} Senator André Franco Montoro and deputy Alceu Collares also submitted written declarations, duly transcribed in the minutes, expressing their disagreement with the anti-candidacy but arguing that the rules of democracy demanded loyalty to the party’s decision.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{62} “Sessão do Colégio Eleitoral para eleição do Presidente e Vice-Presidente da República.”
\textsuperscript{63} If you are unable to play the clip of the individual vote declarations, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKZFRZRG82Sy1UdTQ/edit
\textsuperscript{64} “Sessão do Colégio Eleitoral para eleição do Presidente e Vice-Presidente da República.”
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
Geisel won with 400 votes against 76. In a final gesture of defiance, the 21 autênticos who had refused to vote, along with two others who failed to show up, submitted a written statement for publication in the *Diário do Congresso Nacional*. “We return our votes to the ones who are glaringly absent, the Brazilian people,” the declaration read. They explained that since the MDB platform was opposed to indirect elections, they had accepted the anti-candidacy simply to spread the party’s message, with no intention of continuing until the election. Now that the MDB had betrayed itself, they were the only ones left to protest, even if it cost their careers. Since they knew they could be cassado, the declaration described their principled opposition in the past tense.

We re-encountered our own conscience when we demanded the re-establishment of democratic guarantees, […] when we made our own the anguish of the country’s working masses, who were suffocated by the unacknowledged rise in the cost of living and the strangling of the freedom and autonomy of unions, […] when we defended the intangibility of judicial decisions, or when […] we denounced the progressive denationalization of our economy.

The document concluded with a dramatic statement that evoked Moreira Alves’s self-defense nearly five years before, as they situated their behavior in the context of their perceived ability to speak on behalf of a silenced nation, in a gesture that may appear empty now but would undoubtedly (and indeed did) receive the vindication of history.

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67 If you are unable to play the clip of the Guimarães and Oliveira vote declarations, you may download the file at: [https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKZGVKYWRBBWJHRDg/edit](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKZGVKYWRBBWJHRDg/edit)

68 “Declaração de Voto,” *Diário do Congresso Nacional*, 16 Jan. 1974, 29-30. The present first-person plural and preterite first-person plural verb forms are usually identical in Portuguese, so the defense of parliamentary behavior could perhaps be read in the present as well. However, in the phrase, “we made our own the anguish of the country’s working masses,” uses the preterite form *fizemos* (we made), not the present form *fazemos* (we make), indicating that the other verbs in the section are preterite as well.
Public men do not become great by the number of times they are simply present, but rather by their capacity to reflect the anguish and hopes of the people, in every age. The Brazil which today lives in the silence of factories, offices, fields, schools, and churches will understand us, and the Pátria of tomorrow will be able to do justice to the few who assumed the risk of combining their gesture of inconformity with the protest of their voice.  

The party fidelity clause in the 1969 constitution required that the delegates vote for their party’s candidate; failure to do so would permit their expulsion from the party. Yet the MDB leadership, fearful of exacerbating the party’s serious internal conflicts and losing a quarter of their representation in the Chamber, chose not to do so. Still, in order to signal their disapproval of the autênticos’ gesture, the party leaders did announce their intention to strip them of party leadership posts. The autênticos’ gesture was strongly criticized by the Folha de S. Paulo, which argued that it had accomplished nothing other than illustrating the insurmountable internal divisions within the MDB. The most surprising development was that even once the MDB failed to expel the autênticos, Geisel also declined to order their cassação. It had been four and a half years since a federal politician had been cassado; how would it look to the world if a fifth of the opposition was removed for refusing to vote in a sham election? While Geisel was not averse to cassações – he would eventually remove four autênticos for anti-regime speeches – for now, tolerance was the order of the day.

What, in the final analysis, was the significance of the anti-candidacy? Due to the absence of television coverage and lack of interest in newspapers, it was unable to alter

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how most ordinary Brazilians saw the MDB. Nor did it produce an influx of leftist activists to the party, as most would remain disillusioned with party politics until the 1978 electoral campaign. And other than the state rallies, which few people attended, the drama unfolded in the rarefied air of Brasília, physically and psychologically distant from most legislators’ homes, where a nearly powerless Congress debated issues of passing interest at the state or local level. Yet for the politicians who lived it, the anti-candidacy was still meaningful. Ulysses Guimarães discovered the possibilities afforded by more direct opposition, the allure of becoming a hero, and the excitement of the spotlight. Despite Guimarães’s betrayal at the electoral college, he would continue to defend the autênticos before the rest of the party, eventually nearly being considered an autêntico himself, and showing his younger colleagues the advantages of having a powerful patron. As for the autênticos, they had finally made the dramatic gesture of resistance of which they dreamed, not only against the regime, but also against their own party – and they had escaped unscathed. Considering the dire straits in which the opposition had found itself only a year before, after its second consecutive dismantling at the polls, even the isolated, quixotic anti-candidacy could be enormously encouraging.

**Building a Party from the Bottom Up: The Rise of Orestes Quércia in São Paulo**

While autênticos and moderates alike bickered over a hopeless candidacy and heroic gestures of resistance in Brasília, other young MDB politicians eschewed the autênticos’ strategy of frontal opposition. Principled resistance for the sake of conscience had its attractions to some, but it was too risky to appeal to most ambitious politicians at the local level. Instead, led by Orestes Quércia, the energetic MDB mayor of Campinas, another new generation focused on building the MDB from the bottom up at the local
level. The “Revolution” had happened, for better or worse, and no anti-candidacy or refusal to vote in an electoral college would change that. The only effective route was to win elections, and that required building a party organization at the grassroots level. At the state and local level, politics was always ruled by mundane power struggles among rival factions seeking access to patronage, something equally true for politicians aligned with ARENA and the MDB. Yet it happened that direct elections – the only route to local power – were also the only way remaining to challenge the regime.

If the route to local power was through elections, why would any aspiring politician join the MDB? Since all the governors except one belonged to ARENA, and since governors controlled the disbursement of funds to municipalities, MDB candidates faced an enormous handicap – everyone knew they would be unlikely to receive favors from the governor. To make matters more difficult, the regime had instituted electoral reforms that sought to accommodate traditional local rivalries within ARENA. Under the sublegenda system that the regime had pushed through Congress in 1968, each party could run up to three candidates in mayoral elections. Whichever party received the most total votes among all its candidates would win the election, with the mayoralty going to the top vote getter among the winning party’s candidates, even if an individual candidate for the other party received more votes. Sublegendas were instituted because the generals were aware of both the interpersonal disputes that dominated local politics and the propensity of politicians to align themselves with whoever was in power. They were a

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72 For example, if ARENA ran two candidates, one of whom received 30,000 votes and one of who received 20,000, and a single MDB candidate received 40,000 votes, the ARENA candidate with 30,000 votes would become mayor, since the 50,000 ARENA votes outnumbered the 40,000 MDB votes. The purpose behind sublegendas was to accommodate rival factions within ARENA, especially ex-UDN and ex-PSD politicians who continued their old rivalries. See Lei no. 5.453, 14 June 1968, in Jobim and Porto, eds., 167-170.
powerful tool for keeping the vast majority of local politicians in ARENA. This was no less true in São Paulo, where in 1972, the MDB ran candidates for mayor in only 170 out of 571 municipalities (electing only 58) and won only 80 municipal council seats across the state, compared to an astounding 4,930 for ARENA.  

Yet where most saw insurmountable obstacles, Quércia, the unknown but ambitious 35-year-old former mayor of Campinas, the largest city in Brazil where the mayor was still directly elected, saw opportunity. Born to Italian parents in the tiny town of Pedregulho in the northeastern corner of the state, Quércia was a self-made man. The son of a grocer, he began working in his father’s shop at age 10. At 17 he moved to Campinas, where he studied law and became a reporter. By his 18th birthday, he had promised friends he would run for municipal councilor in the 1959 elections. He was defeated, but the year before the coup, he ran successfully on the ticket of the Partido Libertador (PL), which he joined not out of loyalty to its platform, but because it was the only party that gave him, an upstart from the middle of nowhere, a chance to run. He was simultaneously a councilman, labor lawyer, and businessman, selling cornmeal, mangos, Volkswagens, and later, real estate. In 1966 he joined the MDB, in large measure because the city’s leading political factions had all joined ARENA. In 1966 he was elected state deputy, and in 1968 he accepted an invitation to be one of three MDB candidates for Campinas mayor. Quércia suspected that the only reason the MDB had

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75 Sebastião Nery, *As 16 derrotas que abalaram o Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: F. Alves Editora, 1975), 34.
invited him to head a sublegenda was to increase the party’s vote total enough to elect
one of its other candidates. He thus turned to Jânio Quadros, the model for an aspiring
politician dreaming of a meteoric rise from obscurity. After Quadros advised him that
even if he lost, the campaign would increase his name recognition, he decided to run.79

Quércia was far from what Campinas elites thought a mayor should be. In a race
with five other candidates, he enjoyed the support of none of the city’s political factions.
The incumbent ARENA mayor, along with figures like ARENA senator Carlos Carvalho
Pinto and São Paulo mayor José Vicente Faria Lima, endorsed other candidates. Quércia
related that the current mayor visited local taverns and explained that his preferred
candidate, the aristocratic head of the local Jockey Club, wasn’t the sort to campaign in
bars. Quércia visited the same bars and, in a jab at his adversary, proudly proclaimed that
he was a “bar candidate,” unashamed to mingle with his voters.80 When he was not
traveling from bar to bar, he was going house to house; he claimed to have personally
visited 5,000 families in their homes, a powerful testament to his ambition and drive.

While the two other MDB candidates, campaigning in the midst of the Moreira
Alves crisis, emphasized the struggle against the regime’s “militarism,” Quércia focused
on education, public transportation, housing, and sanitation. He did not entirely shy away
from criticizing indirect elections, the regime’s attacks on civil liberties, and the takeover
of Brazilian industries by foreign corporations, but he focused just as much on wage
policy, cost of living, and workers’ rights.81 When the votes were counted, Quércia had

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79 Ibid., 104-105.
80 Ibid., 105.
81 "Vitória do candidato do MDB em Campinas, é o ponto central das discussões sobre política,” Folha de S. Paulo, 20 Nov. 1968, 11.
won more votes than the other candidates combined. His victory was built above all on votes he received in the new working class neighborhoods on the city’s rapidly growing periphery, where his “man of the people” aura and focus on infrastructure and public health had resonated. “The people were tired of having the [same] old alternatives before them to choose between, alternatives that were nothing more than the city’s old political forces that kept alternating in power,” he said after the election.

Quércia was ambitious, energetic, and a budding expert at using the tools of popular electoral politics that had developed in São Paulo between 1945 and 1964, through politicians like Adhemar de Barros and Jânio Quadros. As mayor of Campinas, he emphasized not gestures of resistance against the regime, but efficient administration and public works projects. Since he “did not have an ideological conception of politics, but rather a strictly electoral one,” Quércia avoided involving himself in the “confrontation of ideas that was developing in the opposition.” Instead, he exhibited an extraordinary ability to conciliate between the party’s diverse ideologies and interests. Over the years, he would nurture good relations with the PCB, which earned him a degree of trust from the left of the MDB; in exchange, the communists gained a patron who could help them gain influence in an opposition party dominated by traditional politicians like Montoro and Guimarães. He also built relationships with intellectuals at the recently created State University of Campinas (Unicamp).

Quércia’s pragmatism hardly set him apart from other politicians; indeed, the ability to navigate between factions and find compromises is practically a requirement for

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82 Nery, *As 16 derrotas que abalaram o Brasil*, 34.
83 “Vitória do candidato do MDB em Campinas, é o ponto central das discussões sobre política.”
Brazilian politicians. Yet the successive waves of cassações had opened space for a new generation of ambitious politicians to compete for power at the local level. Even by the high standards of Brazilian politicians, Quércia was a remarkably skilled negotiator and alliance-builder. While not an adesista, he was more pragmatic than most moderate emedebistas in his posture toward the regime, and his non-confrontational approach could anger autênticos and moderates alike. In 1968, he argued that his goal was “not to overthrow the government or conduct extremist agitation,” but rather to “create conditions for a [political] opening […] through the party struggle, […] even with help from the military.” Instead of focusing on the regime’s attacks on civil liberties and liberal institutions, Quércia urged the party to focus on winning elections by highlighting the socioeconomic issues that mattered to working class voters. He granted that it was also important to address national problems but emphasized that there were national problems beyond “direct elections and democratic freedom.” “Our task is to listen to the people’s aspirations […] and condense them in our program.” Two years later, he held a convention in Campinas for the MDB mayors elected in 1972. The meeting produced the “Campinas Letter,” which reiterated the points Quércia had been making since 1971 and argued that the party should focus its energy on building itself at the local level. Its tone was so conciliatory that it was harshly criticized by one of the most “moderate” MDB national leaders, secretary general Thales Ramalho. “It clashes with, and even antagonizes the MDB’s platform, […] its code of ethics, and its very principles.”

85 “Vitória do candidato do MDB em Campinas, é o ponto central das discussões sobre política.”
86 Quércia in O Estado de S. Paulo, 7 Feb. 1971, quoted in Kinzo, 133.
87 Jenks, 235-236.
88 “MDB quer crescer sem concessão,” Folha de S. Paulo, 10 Jan. 1973, 3.
After his term as mayor ended in 1973, Quércia (who had gotten his successor elected with over 80% of the vote) set his sights on the MDB’s Senate nomination in 1974. Yet as a journalist-turned-politician with no ties to the local or state political elite (the very reason he had entered the MDB to begin with), Quércia could expect no support from party leadership. Instead, he set about founding MDB directorates in municipalities where the party was not yet organized; as he built the party, he would also build a network of support for his own aspirations. He thus resolved to establish political contacts with oppositionists and disaffected arenistas in far-flung municipalities, form local directorates that could field candidates to contest local elections, and ride the support of these allies to the Senate nomination.89 His message to disaffected local politicians could be summarized as, “I’m going to the top, and I’ll take you with me.”

Thus Quércia, who as mayor had already made significant contacts with political leaders from the interior, called upon his allies in Campinas to divide up the state and organize directorates. Those with less political experience chose the region from which they came, or perhaps a region where they had friends, family, or political contacts, leaving the more experienced politicians (mostly city councilors from Campinas or allied state deputies) to work the regions where none of the group had contacts. In larger cities, their task was fairly easy, but in the smaller municipalities (which comprised the vast majority of paulista municipalities), they faced significant difficulties. As Quércia recalled, “Back then the campaign carried out against the MDB was to say that there was no use voting for the party, because the mayors [elected from the MDB] wouldn’t get

89 “Quércia trabalha,” Folha de S. Paulo, 14 Apr. 1974, 3.
anything from the government, because ARENA was the government.”90 When Quércia’s organizers (or sometimes a caravan including Quércia himself) arrived in a town, they would first seek out the ARENA mayor to let him know what they were doing. They would then search for media outlets that were known to be sympathetic to the MDB, or perhaps the local Catholic priest, and ask if they knew of anyone who had a “spirit of opposition.” At times they had difficulty finding anyone to talk to, since many people worried that the MDB was “a party full of subversives, full of communists” – a fear that helps explain Quércia’s refusal to adopt a strongly oppositionist discourse. Sometimes, armed with only a name and address, they would ring a doorbell and ask the person who lived there if he or she would like to join the MDB; often, the resident “would run back inside, lock the door, and talk to us through the little window in the door.”91

Despite the difficulties, within a year, Quércia’s team had expanded the number of local MDB directorates in São Paulo from under 200 to nearly 500. Not only would these directorates provide delegates to the party convention in August 1974 that would select the party’s Senate candidate, but they would also serve as a critical base of support for Quércia and other MDB candidates as they campaigned. When organizing campaign events, the party would finally have local members who could handle on-the-ground planning, which might include services like notifying the ARENA mayor and police of an impending rally, procuring the necessary permits, finding food and lodging for the visiting candidates and party officials, and turning out a crowd for campaign events.

90 Interview with Orestes Quércia in Russo and Melhem, 204.
As one scholar puts it, “The party grew in the interior, but it was tangled up with local issues, with no ideological rigidity; its key point of reference was the dispute for the municipal administration.”

Certainly Quércia always maintained the requisite oppositional discourse. Yet from the limited accounts available (mostly interviews with Quércia and his allies and the brief accounts of the one-time communist journalist and Quércia ally Sebastião Nery), it appears that in most cases, a “spirit of opposition” meant opposition to the faction currently in power locally, not opposition to the “Revolution.”

For example, Quércia and his team quickly learned to begin their contacts by reaching out to the ARENA candidate who had lost the 1972 mayoral election to another ARENA faction. (Under the sublegenda system, even if the MDB did not run a candidate for mayor, up to three arenistas could run against each other.) Even if he did not join the MDB, he was often willing to provide names of people who might be interested.

Quércia’s tireless construction of an MDB machine exemplified the bread and butter (or the beans and rice) of paulista politics. While this was far from the lofty rhetoric and intra-elite negotiation that characterized the career of Ulysses Guimarães, it is how most state and local politicians imagined that politics were to be performed. This was something they could relate to. Even more importantly, it took advantage of the political space available during even the most repressive years of military rule. Due to the military’s dogged insistence on preserving parties and elections, this was a way one could

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92 Ibid., 187.
93 Brazilian political language expresses the fluidity of political affiliations with the paired terms situação and oposição (situation and opposition). Politicians allied with the ruling party at the local, state, or national level are referred to as being “in the situation,” implying the transient nature of both political power and alliances. Its opposite, “in the opposition,” indicates opposition to the “situation”; that is, opposition to the current political status quo, which could change tomorrow, turning the opposition into the situation, in which case, many members of the new opposition would shift loyalties to the new situation.
“oppose” the regime, or at least advance one’s career. And this was something that the regime could do little to control, because it was an “opposition” that challenged carefully, if at all, and focused on gaining electoral support through socioeconomic electoral discourse and public works. Even if it could somehow cast such behavior as “subversive,” the regime’s repressive apparatus lacked the will or the manpower to investigate all of the tens of thousands of mayors and municipal councilors nationwide. As the coming years would show, of the three strategies espoused by members of the opposition, Quércia’s approach would have the most lasting effects.

“Our People Are Still at a Very Low Level”: Détente and Ernesto Geisel’s Authoritarian Vision of Democracy

Strengthened thanks to Quércia’s efforts, the MDB in São Paulo was in a less precarious position by early 1974. The party had also made impressive strides nationwide; Thales Ramalho reported that between 1971 and 1974 the party had grown from 1,180 municipal directorates to more than 3,000. Yet one variable remained that would determine the political climate for the next five years – the new president, Ernesto Geisel, who took office when Médici’s term expired in March. After four years of Médici’s empty promises to allow broadened participation for the political class, would his successor move to relax the political system? These questions were foremost in the minds not only of opposition politicians, but also of those in ARENA, who, however much they enjoyed their guaranteed congressional majority, governorships, and consequent access to the resources of the state administrative machine, were no more satisfied than the MDB with military tutelage. Who was Geisel, and how might the lot of

the political class change under his leadership? In contrast to Médici, might be believe that politicians could finally be trusted with more political influence?

Even before Geisel came to power, there were signs that some within the Armed Forces were prepared to contemplate an eventual military withdrawal from direct political power. In December 1971, General Alfredo Souto Malan, the Army chief of staff, stated at a ceremony promoting new generals: “We can verify that the moment is in sight when the existence of sufficiently broad, diverse, and capable civilian groups will permit the military […] to consider the prospect of […] the controlled disengagement of the Armed Forces.”95 However, although Army minister Orlando Geisel was present at the speech, military contacts informed the US embassy that Médici was “incensed” and had “called [Geisel] on the carpet as a result.” According to the same sources, Malan had not even written the speech or reviewed it before reading it; regardless, it was intended more as an exhortation for members of the military not to harbor personal political ambitions, not for the military to give up its role in the political system.96 While in 1971 a few members of the Armed Forces – either Souto Malan or his speechwriters –believed that the maturation of the political class would permit a “controlled disengagement” sooner rather than later, Médici did not believe the time had come.

In 1973, Médici’s civilian chief of civilian staff João Leitão de Abreu approached the famous Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington and asked him to analyze the Brazilian political situation. Huntington’s confidential paper suggested a gradual process of “decompression” that should aim for the institutionalization of the regime along the

96 Tel. Brasília 2026, 29 Dec. 1971, NARA, RG 59, Box 1691, DEF 9 BRAZ.
Decompression was clearly on the minds of some of Médici’s closest confidants, but the president hesitated. By the time he was ready to announce his successor in mid-1973, in the eyes of politicians, there had been virtually no progress toward returning any of their prerogatives or power.

While some have argued that the “hard-line” Médici must have had the less overtly coercive Geisel imposed on him by a resurgent “liberal” faction within the military, as Geisel pointed out years later, after over four years of unprecedented economic success, with the regime riding a wave of popularity, the wildly popular Médici could have selected whomever he wanted. According to Geisel, Médici believed that with leftist “subversion” on the retreat, a general with a long active service resume was no longer necessary; at the same time, the continued holdout of some leftist guerrillas prevented a civilian from taking command. That left a reserve general, preferably one with abundant administrative experience – a firm hand, but not too firm. In other words, Geisel was not an objectionable choice for Médici, and he did not expect that Geisel’s attitude toward the political class would differ significantly from his own.

Geisel, the son of a German immigrant, had served as chief of military staff in the Castelo Branco government, but he was not close to Costa e Silva and spent his term in

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98 Castelista is a term used to describe officers with the supposedly more “moderate” and legalist and less authoritarian outlook of former president Castelo Branco.
99 Geisel vehemently denied in his lengthy 1993-1994 oral history interview that he had been imposed upon Médici. Médici’s son Roberto, in a 1995 oral history interview, gave a similar account, despite his own utter disdain for Geisel, and claimed that his father’s goal was to return power to civilians after his successor’s government. See d'Araújo and Castro, *Ernesto Geisel,* 257-260; Médici, d'Araújo, and Soares, 31-39. Both accounts raise questions about the dichotomy that many scholars, especially Thomas Skidmore, have drawn between “moderate” or “castelista” and “hard line” or “radical” military factions. For a day-by-day account of Médici’s selection of Geisel based on private journals and interviews, see Gaspari, *A ditadura derrotada,* 215-228. Gaspari also cites the private correspondence and diaries of Geisel’s personal secretary to suggest that Médici may have been considering Geisel as early as 1972. Gaspari, *A ditadura derrotada,* 25.
obscurity as a justice of the Supreme Military Court. When Médici took office, Geisel’s brother Orlando occupied the powerful position of army minister, while Geisel received in the important but politically isolated directorship of Petrobrás, the state oil company. Together with his close friend and collaborator, the well-read, politically astute General Golbery do Couto e Silva, Geisel was known for his unyielding respect for hierarchy and the chain of command. In a half-hour private meeting in Rio de Janeiro in mid-June 1973, Médici informed Geisel that he had chosen him as his successor.

Politicians had high hopes that Geisel, a one-time ally of Castelo Branco, might be a comparative “liberal” who could offer an enhanced role for the political class in his administration. While his “liberalism” was far from a repudiation of the military tutelage that so rankled politicians, it held the possibility that he might deliver the limited return to “democracy” that Médici had failed to deliver. Though politicians could not have known it, before his initial meeting with Médici in Rio, the chief of military staff, General João Batista Figueiredo, suggested that Geisel reassure Médici that he would not repeal AI-5. Geisel refused to make any such promise, demonstrating that as president, he would make his own decisions.\(^\text{100}\) His appointment of Golbery, head of the SNI under Castelo Branco but an enemy of Médici, to the influential post of chief of civilian staff in his new administration further demonstrated his independence from his predecessor.\(^\text{101}\)

In his first cabinet meeting, only four days after taking office, Geisel laid out his vision for the amelioration of military rule, as he promised that he would make a “sincere

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\(^{100}\) Gaspari, *A ditadura derrotada*, 224.

\(^{101}\) Golbery and Geisel had both been cabinet members under Castelo Branco, but Golbery and Médici were rabidly disliked one another. During the negotiations that led to Geisel’s nomination, Figueiredo reportedly lied to Médici to assure him that Geisel and Golbery were no longer close and that Golbery would not be appointed to a cabinet position. Ibid., 217-219.
effort toward a gradual, but secure, perfection of democracy.” This democracy, however, would be based on “honest and mutually respectful dialogue” that would help create “a healthy climate of basic consensus and the institutionalization of the principles of the Revolution of ’64.” What this meant was that the military would continue to define what constituted “respectful dialogue” and “basic consensus,” while allowing no substantive challenges to the “Revolution.” Since politicians had demonstrated that they could behave themselves, this “perfection” could offer the “stimulation of greater participation from the responsible elites and the people in general.” He hoped, he went on, that he would not have to use AI-5 and the other “exceptional instruments for the maintenance of […] security,” but he would not eliminate them until they were “surpassed by a creative political imagination, capable of instituting, at the opportune time, efficacious safeguards and prompt and truly efficient resources within the constitutional context.”102 While the calls for increased participation and the possibility that AI-5 might be abolished were enormously encouraging to politicians, any relaxation of the regime’s repressive nature would be conditioned upon politicians’ continued good behavior.

No one knew, perhaps not even Geisel or Golbery, his closest advisor, knew how far this process would go or how long it would take. Looking back, Geisel recalled, “We thought that when we left the government, the country would be more or less normalized. We didn’t dare say, ‘On such and such date, at such and such time, we’re going to do this or that.’”103 Despite his interest in some sort of liberalization, he still had to contend with elements in the military, particularly in the security and intelligence apparatuses, who

103 d’Araújo and Castro, Ernesto Geisel, 264.
could cause problems, or even threaten a coup, if the “perfection of democracy” went too fast. What is clear is that Geisel did not have in mind a participatory democracy in any sense. Nor would the military tolerate a simple return to pre-1964 semi-liberal and populist politics; to do so would have been to admit the failure of the “Revolution.” Rather, what Geisel had in mind was what he would later call a “relative democracy,” in which direct elections for governor or president need never come at all. 104

In July 1974, despite the lack of clear evidence of a shift, politicians remained cautiously optimistic about Geisel. Even as their hopes swelled, Geisel’s secretary circulated a proposal that Geisel decree constitutional changes to the terms of federal deputies in order to institute the most favorable possible electoral calendar to guarantee the regime’s perpetuation in power. If his suggestions were adopted, Ferreira projected, the regime could continue through 2004 and beyond, with continued indirect elections for president and governors. “If it occurs like this, there will be no critical moments in sight for the regime […] The system can last.” While the plan was never seriously considered, it demonstrates that indefinite indirect elections were anticipated, Geisel unilaterally amending the Constitution was considered feasible, and the regime would always be military-dominated, since Ferreira mentioned in passing problems posed by “factions formed by generals” attempting to influence the outcome of indirect elections. 105

Whatever reforms Geisel had in mind, they fell far short of politicians’ hopes.

104 Bethell and Castro argue, “At most he would take Brazil back to the position it was in before December 1968 by eventually revoking AI-5, ending the arbitrary nature of the regime, and restoring, within strict limits, the rule of law.” Yet politicians had still enjoyed considerable, if attenuated, power and prerogatives before AI-5, it is improbable that Geisel envisioned even a return to 1968. See Bethell and Castro, 202.
Direct elections for powerful executive offices were particularly threatening because of what Geisel saw as the intellectual and political backwardness of most Brazilians. Two decades later, he still inveighed against the idea that democracy like that practiced in Europe could work in Brazil, considering the “educational level, the mental level, the level of discernment, the economic level of the Brazilian people.”106 “I don’t disagree that it’s important to listen to the people,” he granted, “but I believe that our people are still at a very low level. […] Full, absolute democracy for Brazil is fiction. We have to have democracy, we have to evolve toward a full democracy, but the stage we are at imposes certain limitations.107 The people could not be trusted far.

What Geisel had in mind was a system in which ordinary (literate) Brazilians could participate through direct elections for municipal councils, state legislatures, Congress, and possibly also mayors. Yet the political system would protect against their fundamental incompetence by making sure that the government was at a minimum under strong military influence and controlled the selection of the president and governors. A two-party system, or perhaps eventually a multi-party one, might conceivably allow a “responsible” opposition to offer “constructive” criticism, but not unproductive and possibly subversive “contestation.” Under no circumstances could the opposition be allowed to come to power.108 He only wanted the “collaboration” of the political class and voters if they never challenged him on anything he considered important and offered only cautious criticism on specific policies without questioning the regime’s legitimacy.

106 d’Araújo and Castro, Ernesto Geisel, 444.
107 Ibid.
Whatever the qualifications, Geisel aroused further hopes five months later in an August speech to ARENA leaders, when he referred to a “slow, gradual, and secure détente (distensão)” of the political system with “a maximum of possible economic, social, and political development and a minimum of indispensable security.” Distensão (varyingly translated as “liberalization,” “decompressing,” “opening,” “relaxation,” or “détente”), with its fitful starts, constant steps backward, and frequent fear of “hard-line” military backlash, is one of the key concepts for understanding the remaining decade of military regime. While it added to the excitement over Geisel, the reference to détente was balanced by warnings to “those who think to speed up this process by playing the game of manipulating public opinion and, in so doing, [act] against the government.”

The brilliance of Geisel’s speeches lay in the fact that one could read anything into them – military factions who were still distrustful of the political class were reassured that détente would not get out of control, and politicians could plausibly read their own desire for increased power into the speech, even if Geisel promised little that was concrete. As a secret SNI report wryly noted, politicians were excited about the promise of a “perfection

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109 Geisel, 122. The word distensão in the sense used by Geisel is difficult to translate. It literally means “distension,” which in English has a primarily medical usage indicating stretching, expansion, or swelling. Skidmore varyingly glosses it as “liberalization,” “decompression,” or “opening,” or leaves it untranslated. “Opening” is clearly inadequate, as abertura was a distinct concept employed after 1979 by Geisel’s successor, João Batista Figueiredo, that referred to a much broader political opening. “Liberalization,” though it may be what the political class hoped for, would seem to go further than the slow, gradual, secure, and, above all, highly controlled process initiated by Geisel. Jenks and Bethell and Castro translate it as “decompression,” which, with its implication of a release of pressure, is probably closer to what Geisel meant. However, if Geisel had meant “decompression,” he would have used descompressão, since he was already familiar with the term through the paper Huntington had presented to Golbery. The best translation is “détente,” used by Bolivar Lamounier, which carries its original French meaning of “relaxation” and appears to be very close to what Geisel had in mind. Moreover, the Brazilian press in the early 1970s frequently used the word “distensão” to refer to the gradually less tense relationship developing between the US and the Soviet Union – called détente in English and French. (See Bethell and Castro, 202; Jenks, 229; Kinzo, 145; Lamounier, “Authoritarian Brazil Revisited: The Impact of Elections on the Abertura,” 56; Skidmore, The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-85, 164-174.)

110 Geisel, 122.
of democracy,” but “abstained from commenting on the passages that allude to the responsibility that falls on the political class.”

Although the détente that Geisel had in mind fell far short of the hopes of the political class, a new leader brought new possibilities. Golbery was so impressed with Huntington’s report on decompression that he invited the American political scientist to Brazil twice in 1974, where he queried him at length about how to open channels of communication with the Church, the press, labor, and universities and how to strengthen Congress and political parties. Through Golbery, Geisel made moves to contact the groups in question. In August 1974, Golbery met with São Paulo bishop Paulo Evaristo Arns, a persistent advocate for disappeared political prisoners (though the general never kept his promise to provide an answer regarding the prisoners’ fate). In a private meeting with Ulysses Guimarães and Thales Ramalho at his home in early 1975, Golbery assured the two opposition leaders that Geisel wanted to repeal AI-5, abolish the two-party system, and offer amnesty to those affected by the institutional acts, including politicians who had been cassados. Golbery only revealed these plans after swearing Guimarães and Ramalho to secrecy; as Guimarães would recall years later, “We left that meeting like the apostles after seeing the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor. Absolutely dazzled, holders of information as extraordinary as it was enrapturing, with the same recommendation as in the Gospel: ‘Tell no one what ye have seen.’”

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111 SNI report to Geisel, March 1974, FGV-CPDOC, EG pr. 1974.03.00/1.
113 Sydow and Ferri, 171.
114 Gutemberg, 145-151. The scriptural allusion is to the Transfiguration of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-9, and Luke 9:28-36. After seeing Jesus transfigured and conversing with Moses and Elijah, Peter, James, and John were commanded by Jesus to tell no one what they had witnessed.
As Golbery’s meeting with Guimarães and Neves indicated, it looked as though Geisel would seek a more collaborative relationship with politicians. Portella announced that henceforward, before proposing legislation to Congress, the executive branch would invite legislators to participate in the drafting of prospective laws. Still, while allowing legislators to participate in drafting legislation was a step forward from the Médici years, when the executive presented completed laws to Congress for its dutiful approval, neither Geisel nor Portella spoke of Congress proposing important legislation of its own.115

The strategy Geisel and Golbery followed thus put into action what Médici had promised, perhaps even considered, but failed to deliver – the normalization of the regime’s relationship with the Church, students, labor, and, above all, the political class. Now that politicians were behaving better, détente would reward them for the progress they had made, while still not providing them with significant independence. As Santa Catarina ARENA deputy Aroldo Carvalho understood it, “Decompression is among the strategic objectives of the Brazilian Revolution. The behavior of politicians […] can offer evidence to the President of the Republic not only of the maturation of the political class, but above all of its qualification to lend its effective collaboration to those who direct the nation.”116 However, as Carvalho hinted and the Ferreira memo demonstrated, under no circumstances should détente lead a challenge to the “Revolution,” with its triple pillars of development, security, and political reform. Any military “disengagement” was dependent upon the political class continuing to behave according to their model.

Conclusions

AI-5 had provided the opportunity to “save” the “Revolution,” which, in the military’s eyes, had not gone far enough between 1964 and 1968. Between 1969 and 1974, the military set about implementing its plan to transform Brazil, and by 1974 it appeared that they had been successful. Breathtaking economic growth, the defeat of “subversion,” and meek politicians convinced many in the military that their “Revolution” was finally succeeding. A few noisy autênticos and some opportunistic MDB politicians building directorates in the interior were hardly a cause for concern. Yet all was not as it appeared. If the political class bowed to military tutelage, it was only because they had to in order to survive, almost never because they thought it proper for the military to supervise them. Whenever they had the chance, politicians continued to push back against their marginalization. For a few, like the autênticos, this took the form of courageous words or actions designed to remind the generals of the illegitimacy of their rule. For others, like Quércia, this meant working behind the scenes to build up their personal base of support, aggressively pursuing their own advancement in the face of military insistence that “revolutionary” politics were supposed to rise above self-interest. Most, including nearly all members of ARENA, resisted by practicing politics, inasmuch as possible, as they always had, by refusing to bury their rivalries, by quietly hoping that they might one day again enjoy their old power and privileges.

For both ARENA and the MDB, conforming to the military’s vision was never more than a temporary strategy intended to protect its practitioners as they waited for the storm to blow over. As ARENA senator Clodomir Millet put it in a meeting of ARENA legislators in the early 1970s, “We are politicians. We know what we want, and we know
how far we can go under the circumstances. [...] Let’s be coherent, and, as the same time, show that we are enlightened." Or as ARENA’s Filinto Müller told another meeting of legislators in 1972, their “common objective” was to “consolidate and enlarge our parliamentary prerogatives.” Détente was exciting for politicians because it implied a weakening of the regime’s repressive measures and an increased role for legislators. And for arenistas, freer elections, one of the first steps of détente, would enable them to earn the military’s trust by proving that they could win elections on their own. For their part, the generals thought that elections would demonstrate the success of their party and their reform of the political system. For it to work, however, ARENA would have to win.

117 Grinberg, 157-158.
118 Ibid., 161.

As he left a dinner with Ulysses Guimarães in early 1974, sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso was uneasy. Cardoso, who came from a long line of military officers and politicians, had been forcibly retired from his post at the University in São Paulo by AI-5 in 1969.1 After returning from exile in the United States, the co-developer of dependency theory had helped found a research institute called the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP). At a dinner in the Brasília home of MDB senator Ernani do Amaral Peixoto, arranged by his son-in-law, the young researcher and aspiring politician Wellington Moreira Franco, Guimarães had asked Cardoso and CEBRAP to help develop a campaign strategy for the upcoming legislative elections. Speaking as a member of the intelligentsia that had opposed the regime so forcefully in the 1960s, Cardoso recalled later, “We didn’t trust the MDB, or parties in general, because we were coming from exile, […] from torture, prison, prosecutions. We didn’t believe that the parties could truly be a tool for modifying the system; we thought they were just a tool for the dictatorship to legitimate itself.”2 Guimarães was equally uncomfortable, as he worried about the implications of associating with leftist academics. Turning to Moreira Franco, the MDB president asked, “Look here, all this about sociology, sociologists, socialism… these people aren’t communists, are they?”3

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1 Cardoso’s great-grandfather was a general, federal deputy, senator, and provincial president under the Empire, and his father, also a military officer, was involved in the tenentista movement of the 1920s and had served a term as a PTB federal deputy from São Paulo. “Fernando Henrique Cardoso,” DHBB, http://www.fgv.br/cpdoc/busca/Busca/BuscaConsultar.aspx
2 Interview with Cardoso in Russo and Melhem, 25.
Despite the reservations of both Cardoso and Guimarães, the MDB’s openness to new collaborators and new strategies would be a significant development in the decade-old military regime. During the 1974 campaign, the MDB moved beyond its “monophonic plainsong” that simply criticized the regime’s assault on democracy and civil liberties to address the socioeconomic issues that mattered most to voters.4 “Democracy with wages, income distribution, trade unions, participation of women, blacks, etc.,” Cardoso recalled.5 In large measure, this echoed the strategy of Orestes Quércia, who had urged the MDB to accept the irreversibility of the “Revolution” and focus on becoming a legitimate electoral alternative by emphasizing the failure of the economic “miracle” to improve the lives of the working and lower classes. As one of the party’s campaign slogans went, “Brazil is doing well. Are you?” The resounding answer given by voters would awaken the regime and politicians alike to the importance of electoral politics, even in the highly circumscribed “democracy” the generals sought to construct, and would have profound implications for the second decade of military rule.

“You Don’t Protest What Is Good”: ARENA Confidence and MDB Pessimism

Scheduled for November 15, the elections would select one third of the Senate, the entire Chamber of Deputies, and all state deputies. As the only races pitting one ARENA candidate against an MDB one, the Senate races assumed importance as a reflection of voters’ attitudes toward the regime.6 Reasonably free elections held a key

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5 Kinzo, 148.
6 The Senate elections were statewide elections in which each party was permitted one candidate, with an alternate in case he did not serve out his term. For the Chamber of Deputies and legislative assemblies (as well as for city councilors), Brazil used (and still uses) an open-list proportional system. Instead of having districts, all candidates for federal or state deputy run together in one statewide election, and each voter can select one candidate (or vote simply for a party). The available seats are then divided among parties based
place in Geisel’s plan for a “slow, gradual, secure” political détente. In 1970 the Médici administration had persecuted MDB candidates, who were left timid by the threat of cassação. The result had been the demolition of the opposition at the polls and the creation of the inconvenient impression abroad that Brazil was a de-facto one-party state. This time, Geisel hoped to create conditions allowing the MDB to perform better. As he put it in a conversation with his secretary, “The victory over the MDB has to happen in such a way that it doesn’t liquidate the party. Imagine if tomorrow there were no opposition in the Senate. That can’t happen.”7 The opposition had to be preserved in order to give an appearance of a competitive system, but the MDB would not be allowed to contend for power.8 As Élio Gaspari explains, “The victory [of ARENA] should neither be so large that it looked fraudulent, nor so small that it looked like a defeat.”9

The SNI concurred. In a secret September report to Geisel, the intelligence agency cast the elections as a panacea for all Brazil’s political problems. They would bring about “the desired valorization of the parties and politicians themselves,” and enable politicians to “contribute to the perfecting of the regime, familiarizing the electorate with Brazil’s most important problems.” They would provide “an X-ray of national aspirations,” and stimulate “the making of a political model adapted to the national reality.” The benefits were not limited to the regime; politicians would also have the opportunity to

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7 Gaspari, A ditadura derrotada, 454.
8 Sebastião Carlos Velasco e Cruz and Carlos Estevam Martins, "De Castello a Figueiredo: uma incursão na pre-história da 'abertura',” in Sociedade e política no Brasil pós-64, ed. Bernardo Sôrj and Maria Herminia Tavares de Almeida (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1984), 49.
9 Gaspari, A ditadura derrotada, 454.
“demonstrate creativity in the political campaign, […] but creativity, not contestation, much less subversion.” The election would provide an evaluation of the regime’s performance and enable responsible, “creative” politicians to earn respect from voters while helping legitimize the “Revolution” and develop a uniquely Brazilian form of (highly restricted) democracy. And since the elections were being conducted “in a climate of ample liberty, without abuse of power, creating equality of opportunity,” the opposition would have the opportunity for a “numerical and qualitative expansion [that] will constitute a valuable fact for the fourth revolutionary government.”

Since the elections were intended to increase the prestige of politicians without allowing the MDB to grow significantly, arenistas had every reason to be optimistic about both the progress of détente and their own electoral prospects. They represented a government that had presided over a half-decade of double-digit growth. Inflation had fallen to historically low levels, at least according to official data. The preceding five years had witnessed the construction of a road across the Amazon basin, a bridge across Guanabara Bay, and hydroelectric dams. If the military had resorted to imprisonment, torture, and disappearance to rid itself of the armed left, for most Brazilians, this meant only that they no longer had to worry about bank robberies and other “terrorist” acts. And in spite of difficulties in larger cities, the party had swept the 1970 and 1972 elections. As São Paulo’s vice governor-elect put it, “A protest vote is inadmissible because […] the excellent situation that we are in compared to other countries shows that we are doing fine. You don’t protest against what is good, against what is best, against development.”

11 “Ferreira Filho diz que voto de protesto é inadmissível,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 Nov. 1974, 3.
In August the magazine *Visão* predicted, “ARENA, like in the last elections, will be the winner of these elections. Even if it loses two or three seats in the Senate and another 10 in the Chamber of Deputies (which would be a surprise), this would not affect its formal dominion and the […] impotence of the opposition.”12 In September, the party’s national president, Piauí senator Petrônio Portella, predicted that ARENA would win the Senate races in every state except Guanabara.13 More cautiously, members of ARENA’s national leadership confided to the press that out of 22 states, there were seven where the party would not lose the Senate race under any circumstances; five where their candidate was “unbeatable,” but where due to ARENA conflicts the MDB had a small chance; five more where ARENA faced strong MDB candidates; and only five that presented serious difficulties.14 If the MDB pulled off a miracle, an anonymous ARENA vice-leader told the press, ARENA could lose half the Senate seats in play.15

Despite its confidence, ARENA was seriously divided in nearly every state, primarily as a result of rivalries based on family ties or pre-1965 party affiliations. The gubernatorial selection process earlier in the year had exacerbated the conflicts.16 Immediately after taking office, Geisel had sent Portella to each state to discover the political class’s consensus choice for their new governor, who would take office in March

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16 Although AI-3 had established indirect gubernatorial elections in 1966, the 1967 constitution reinstituted direct elections. However, the regime would continue to impose indirect elections on an ad hoc basis. After the decree of AI-5, the junta’s amended constitution instituted indirect gubernatorial elections in 1970, but not for future elections. In 1972, the Médici government proposed a new amendment that renewed indirect elections in 1974, which the ARENA congressional supermajority approved after no small amount of grumbling. For an account of ARENA dissatisfaction with the 1972 amendment (and with indirect gubernatorial elections in general), see Grinberg, 167.
1975. In contrast with Médici’s selections in 1970, a key qualification in the era of détente would be political skill, not only administrative or technocratic expertise. In a few states ARENA unified around a candidate acceptable to Geisel, and the choice was easy. But in most states warring ARENA factions came to no consensus, and Geisel and Portella searched for a candidate who would not further divide the party. In Pernambuco, for example, four ex-governors attempted to select a common candidate before Portella arrived, but the one who had belonged to the UDN was unable to reach an agreement with the three formers members of the PSD. When Portella arrived, he was met at the airport by no fewer than fourteen prospective candidates representing five ARENA factions sprinting across the runway, trying to get the first handshake. In the end, he chose the candidate who appeared to have the broadest support, but senator Etelvino Lins was so upset with the selection that he refused to run for re-election.

In still others, Portella ignored the consensus and imposed a candidate of Geisel’s preference, causing politicians to question whether their input had been taken seriously. Pernambuco ARENA senator Paulo Guerra wryly commented, “Consensus is what they

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17 Médici had sent then-ARENA president Rondon Pacheco on an identical mission in 1970, but despite a full program of handshaking, meetings, and banquets, Pacheco had no real power, and in the end Médici himself selected the new governors. For a discussion of the 1970 selection process, see Jenks, 352-365.

18 In keeping with the heightened hostility toward the political class among the military after 1968, Médici had avoided making political experience a primary consideration when he chose governors. However, in many cases his technocrat governors lacked the patience or ability to compromise with their legislative assemblies, which meant they spent more time fighting with deputies than advancing the “Revolution’s” agenda. In 1974, then, Geisel chose to re-emphasize political experience. See Ibid., 365-381.

19 This is what happened in Santa Catarina, where the rival Ramos and Konder-Bornhausen families who had dominated state political life for half a century were able to agree on senator Antonio Carlos Konder Reis. Of course, this solution had been worked out in advance, rendering Portella’s meetings in Florianópolis a mere formality; there was some grumbling when Portella informed deputies that they would have 30 seconds each to relay their preference, with the limit rigorously enforced by a timer with a bell. “O fim da missão Portella,” *Veja*, 19 June 1974, 22; “Azares de Portella,” *Veja*, 22 May 1974, 23.


21 “O fim da missão Portella,” 22.
call it when Petrônio Portella brings us a name, and no one’s stupid enough to say they’re against it.” São Paulo fell into this group. The preferred candidate, both of current governor Laudo Natel and the party, was Médici’s finance minister, Antonio Delfim Neto, whose policies were credited with creating the economic “miracle.” But Delfim’s economic credentials were eclipsed only by his ambition, and Geisel could not tolerate an assertive governor with probable presidential aspirations in Brazil’s wealthiest state. So after Portella met with Natel, spent hours listening to state deputies’ input, and spoke with business leaders, he announced, without speaking with Geisel, that the candidate would be someone who had not figured prominently in the suggestions – the engineer and businessman Paulo Egydio Martins, a close friend of the new president.

ARENA factions whose favored candidates were not chosen often felt marginalized, as they would be left without access to the patronage networks, funded by federal disbursements of tax revenue, that governors had at their disposal. In order to placate the aggrieved groups, Portella and Geisel often agreed to give them the open Senate seat. With candidates chosen with rivalries in mind, as though Senate seats were spoils to be distributed, electability was a secondary concern. And with their own positions secure, it was possible that incoming governors might avoid supporting the Senate candidate, preferring an MDB win to the victory a rival arenista. Still, despite the bruised egos and simmering conflicts, Geisel and ARENA remained confident of victory; a divided ARENA was surely still infinitely stronger than the MDB.

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22 “As longas listas.”
24 Jenks, 248-249.
Meanwhile, despite Geisel’s desire that the MDB grow, the party faced a bleak outlook. In September, Guimarães, in a statement that could have also applied to his futile anti-candidacy, proclaimed, “What the MDB aims for isn’t electoral success, but, above all, that of the ideas and theses we defend.” In light of regime intimidation, voter apathy, and candidate recruitment difficulties, his attitude was not unreasonable. Though repression was reduced compared to 1970, it was not altogether absent. Only weeks after Geisel took office, the justice ministry and attorney general announced their intention to prosecute Bahian autêntico deputy Francisco Pinto for violating the national security law. (In a congressional speech in March, Pinto had called Augusto Pinochet, head of the Chilean junta, “the cruelest of the characters who have tyrannized Latin America over the past few decades,” a “fascist” who had “dishonored the state he should serve and the uniform that protects him.”) Then in July, justice minister Armando Falcão asked the attorney general to instruct regional electoral prosecutors to challenge the candidacies of politicians “compromised by corruption or subversion.” Finally, in October the STF

26 Francisco Pinto (MDB-BA), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 15 March 1974, 578.
27 Letter from Armando Falcão to José Carlos Moreira Alves, 11 July 1974, Arquivo Nacional – Rio de Janeiro (AN-RJ), Divisão de Segurança e Informações do Ministério da Justiça (DSI-MJ), Caixa 3527/08194, SECOM 596/74. It is striking how thoroughly the electoral courts ignored Falcão’s missive, at least in São Paulo. All electoral candidates were required to submit a copy of their “political-electoral antecedents” from their state’s political-social police (Departamento de Ordem e Política Social – DOPS). The DOPS files of paulista candidates enumerated accusations of corruption and subversion, but this stopped the TRE from approving not one candidacy. Candidates were only rejected if they failed to turn in the appropriate documentation or if they had a pending criminal case against them. For example, DOPS reported that ARENA candidate Antonio Maria Filho, a city councilor from Santo André, was also a communist affiliated with the PCB, but with no apparent follow-up, the TRE approved his candidacy with the formulaic, “considering that the documentation presented was considered to be in order and nothing exists that would induce the rejection of the registration.” (“Processo no. 565: Antonio Maria Filho,” TRE-SP, Registros de Candidatos 1974, Caixa 2552.) Another candidate had had nearly 30 civil and criminal cases brought against him in the last decade, though he had not been found guilty in any of them. His DOPS file recorded numerous accusations of corruption while he had been a mayor in the interior. Yet the TRE approved his candidacy, since “nothing exists that would induce the rejection of the registration.” (Processo no. 621, Lotf João Bassitt, TRE-SP, Registros de Candidatos 1974, Caixa 2554.)
found Pinto guilty and sentenced him to six months in prison. Détente meant that the MDB could compete freely, but only if its candidates were acceptable to the regime. The role of the MDB was to be “opposition, not contestation,” and if the party refused to police itself, the regime was more than willing to do the job for it.

In order to reassure the military, the MDB insisted that the party had accepted the “Revolution” and did not seek a return to the pre-1964 political system – precisely the message Quércia had been urging. As Montoro explained, the MDB was not opposed to the regime; rather it “disagrees with the government every time that it sees the interests of the people harmed.” He repeated, “We don’t want to return to the past, and we are not putting the Revolution on trial because it is a historical and irreversible fact. […] Our enemy is not the government – who we are helping to rectify the errors of our process of development – but ARENA.” Explaining one of the party’s slogans, “Without fear and without hate,” Guimarães put it similarly: “The MDB [is] without fear, because it has the law and the people on its side; the MDB [is] without hate because it does not have the vengeful aspect that they want to attribute to it, it is not stuck in the past.”

Yet even if the party succeeded in reassuring the military that it was not a threat, it still had to reassure its own members that it was safe to run and that they could win. However, the MDB showed few signs that it could become competitive. In São Paulo, Quércia pressed to become the MDB Senate nominee, but April opinion polls gave his ARENA opponent, incumbent senator and former governor Carlos de Carvalho Pinto, a

29 “Voto em branco preocupa o MDB.”
75% to 7% advantage. MDB leaders were no more optimistic about their chances. Franco Montoro, a federal deputy who had bucked the trend in 1970 and won one of two open São Paulo Senate seats, was designated the MDB’a national campaign coordinator. Though it was expected that a coordinator would exude optimism, in early September Montoro guaranteed victory in only four Senate races and ventured that the party had a good chance in four more. Guimarães cautiously predicted that the MDB would modestly increase its representation in the Chamber to 100 and win five Senate races.

As late as October 16, Veja remarked, “Not even the most optimistic opposition militant believes in a torrent of victories in the Senate races. With three of its scarce eight [sic] seats in play […], the MDB will be satisfied if it at least manages to preserve them.”

In a secret report, the SNI also judged the MDB’s prospects to be limited, though the party could not have known this. Forty days before the elections, the agency predicted that the MDB would modestly increase its representation in the Chamber of Deputies from 87 seats (28% of the total) to between 99 and 126 (27 to 35% in the now-364-seat Chamber). The São Paulo delegation would remain firmly in ARENA hands; the SNI expected somewhere between a 32-14 to 35-11 advantage for ARENA, similar to the current 32-11 composition. Finally, the MDB could slightly improve its position in legislative assemblies, with ARENA’s current 51-16 advantage in the São Paulo assembly holding steady somewhere between 50-20 and 54-16.

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32 Nery, Grandes pecados da imprensa, 194.
33 “Painel: O tema é nosso,” Folha de S. Paulo, 13 September 1974, 3.
34 Kinzo, 151.
35 “A oposição na hora de falar,” 25.
36 “Apreciação Sumária no. 13/74,” 5 Oct. 1974, CPDOC, Arquivo Geisel, EG pr 1974.03.00/1, 3-4.

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To achieve even these modest goals, the MDB would have to convince enough voters that it was not just “a tool for the dictatorship to legitimate itself.” This would be even more difficult in light of widespread voter apathy and disgust with the political system. In 1970, the number of blank and spoiled ballots nationwide had outnumbered the MDB’s votes. In mid-September, Guimarães admitted that blank ballots were “one of the great enemies of the party; in fact, they constitute a third party, which only favors [the party of] the situation.” The task before the opposition was to convince voters opposed to the regime or bored with uncompetitive elections that the MDB could become competitive and that its message was significantly different from ARENA’s.

To that end, the party leadership began to study how to articulate a nationally coordinated message. As Quércia had observed, criticism of “political” issues like indirect elections, AI-5, limitations on student mobilization, and even torture and repression had not resonated as widely as hoped in 1970. For working and lower class Brazilians, disregard for human rights by the police was a fact of life, so why should they worry about the military torturing communist “subversives” or not respecting habeas corpus? Debates over direct vs. indirect elections and the prerogatives of Congress had even less relevance for people engaged in a daily struggle for survival. The key for the MDB, then, would be to expand its appeal, particularly to working and lower class voters who perhaps felt that the economic “miracle” had not done enough to improve their lives.

38 This was a concern for ARENA as well, since in 1970 the high number of blank and spoiled ballots had reduced ARENA’s percentage of the vote compared to 1966, to below 50%. “Portela: É preciso vencer os votos nulos e em branco,” Folha de S. Paulo, 25 Sept. 1974, 3.
The MDB leadership thus initiated contacts with Cardoso and his group of intellectuals at CEBRAP. In one version, related above, Amaral Peixoto arranged a meeting between Guimarães and CEBRAP researchers. In another version, MDB leaders had read CEBRAP articles in the opposition weekly *Opinião*, and Guimarães visited economist Paul Singer in his home to arrange an encounter. Despite initial unease, for intellectuals who had spent the last five years in exile from their university positions, it must have been exhilarating to have an opportunity to influence public discourse. Besides, many at CEBRAP had been favorably impressed by the anti-candidacy, and when they met Guimarães, they discovered that they had more in common than they might have expected. In the end, Cardoso, Singer, and other CEBRAP researchers agreed to create an MDB campaign manual linking political and institutional issues with socioeconomic ones. The MDB would distribute the manual to candidates nationwide, with instructions to focus on “the high cost of living, the disparities in income distribution, the tight wage policy […], the increasing incursions of foreign capital into the Brazilian industrial sector, and excessive centralization […] of economic and political decision making.” This message was designed to attract a population dissatisfied with an uneven distribution of wealth, but it was also targeted at the military, which they hoped would not consider criticisms of inflation and housing, wage, and social security policy to be as inflammatory as other hot button topics.

Yet even with its new campaign strategy, the MDB faced another difficulty – candidate recruitment. In São Paulo, the ideal Senate candidate would be Guimarães, who

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39 Moreira Franco, Testimonial for the 80th birthday of Fernando Henrique Cardoso.
40 Kinzo, 147.
41 Ibid., 148.
after the anti-candidacy was the only politician with the name recognition to challenge the respected Carvalho Pinto. But Guimarães refused to run. His re-election to the Chamber was certain; why would he give up his career to run in a race he would certainly lose? When Montoro jokingly reminded him of his words, “It is necessary to navigate, it is not necessary to live,” Guimarães responded, “At least a cautious man dies of old age.” In Minas Gerais, the strongest candidate, deputy Tancredo Neves, left the candidacy to the unknown mayor of Juiz de Fora, Itamar Franco. The MDB in Paraná nominated Francisco Leite Chaves, a lawyer who had never run for office, after autêntico deputy Alencar Furtado declined to run. And in Rio Grande do Norte, “for absolute lack of anyone else who dared perform the role,” the candidacy went to Agenor Maria, a former sailor, street vendor, and one-term ARENA federal deputy who was currently working as a truck driver. His opponent, federal deputy Djalma Marinho, who as head of the Constitution and Justice Committee had courageously opposed the attempt to revoke Moreira Alves’s immunity, disparagingly dismissed Maria out of hand. “I could never debate that boy. I have nothing to learn from him, and I’m too old to teach him anything. For the first question, I would just ask him who discovered Brazil.”

The MDB’s difficulties were not limited to the Senate; the party also struggled to find candidates for federal and state deputy. To an extent, ARENA shared this difficulty,

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42 Interview with Montoro in Melhem and Russo, *Dr. Ulysses, o homem que pensou o Brasil: 39 depoimentos sobre a trajetória do Sr. Diretas*, 40. The saying Guimarães quoted was “O seguro morreu velho.” The rough English equivalent is “Better safe than sorry.”


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illustrating just how undesirable a political career had become for young members of the Brazilian elite. With the business opportunities afforded by the economic “miracle,” what was the appeal of becoming a powerless deputy in a puppet legislature? In the new Brazil, on a headlong rush toward development, power, wealth, and prestige would lie in the technocracy or in business, not in rubber-stamping the government’s legislation.

If ARENA’s situation was less than ideal, the MDB’s was worse. In São Paulo, while the party found nearly the maximum of 134 candidates to run for state deputy, it managed to recruit only 46 for federal deputy – barely half the 86 the party was allowed to run.\(^{47}\) In other states, the situation was worse. In Maranhão, the MDB could have had 14 candidates for the Chamber but ran only four (versus nine for ARENA); for the legislature, the party was entitled to 42 but ran 18 (against 39 arenistas). And in Bahia, the MDB ran 14 federal and 40 state candidates, as opposed to 39 and 89, respectively, for ARENA. In only two states did the opposition manage as many federal candidates as ARENA; in only one did the MDB run an equal number of state candidates.\(^{48}\)

Moreover, candidate registration data at the Regional Electoral Court (Tribunal Regional Eleitoral – TRE) indicate that in São Paulo many MDB candidates were outsiders – younger, less wealthy, and less likely to have political experience or claim a prestigious profession. If the pattern held true in São Paulo, a state whose vibrant

\(^{47}\) “Candidato do MDB-SP ao Senado é Orestes Quércia,” Folha de S. Paulo, 12 Aug. 1974, 4; Centro de Memória Eleitoral, Tribunal Regional Eleitoral – São Paulo (TRE-SP), Caixas 2750-2759. This did not merely reflect the weakness of the MDB – ARENA was also unable to find 86 candidates for federal deputy, though its 73 did significantly outnumber the opposition’s.

\(^{48}\) Margaret Jenks argues that the MDB selected its candidates in a more democratic manner than ARENA. This may have been true for the Senate and for deputy in Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara, where the party ran close to the maximum number of candidates, as well as for state deputy in São Paulo, where candidates allied with Quércia could claim to have arisen from the party “bases,” but the claim does not hold for the rest of the country, where the MDB was lucky to find candidates at all; if MDB candidates were selected in a more democratic manner, it was because they were the only ones who wanted to run. See Jenks, 249-252.
economy meant that social and political ascent was less difficult than in other states, it is likely that the same trends applied in the rest of Brazil, particularly the North and Northeast, where a few families, always affiliated with ARENA, controlled access to candidacies. With such an inexperienced group of outsiders running for the opposition alongside politicians like Guimarães who had survived 1970, it appeared laughable to think that the party had any chance of seriously challenging ARENA.

Certain patterns emerge from analyzing the demographic composition of the candidates in São Paulo. For example, MDB candidates tended to be slightly younger than their ARENA adversaries. While average ages for both federal and state deputy were similar, the MDB had a far higher percentage of candidates under the age of 40. Overall, 28.3% of MDB candidates for federal deputy were under 40, while only 23.2% for ARENA candidates were in this age range. Among candidates for state deputy, 39.1% of emebedistas were under 40, while only 27.5% of arenistas were. In all likelihood, young aspiring politicians were drawn to the MDB because the party’s smaller size meant that they would not have to jockey for influence with as many older, more established, more connected politicians as they would in ARENA.

In addition, MDB candidates’ occupations were less prestigious than those of their opponents. While liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, engineers, economists, and teachers) were the largest occupational group in both parties, ARENA was dominated to

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49 For a demographic study of the 46 federal and 70 state deputies elected from São Paulo in 1974, see Cardoso, "Partidos e deputados em São Paulo: passado e presente." While I have analyzed data from all the candidates, Cardoso included only the deputies elected.

50 Registros de Candidatura 1974, Caixas 2750-2759, CEMEL; DHBB. See Appendix C, Tables 2-5.

51 The one exception is in business and agriculture, a category in which the MDB had a higher percentage of candidates; this difference was due to the high number of self-declared merchants – comerciantes – in the MDB.
a greater extent by the professions of the urban upper middle and upper classes. The most significant statistic, however, is the greater number of non-industrial, non-agricultural, non-professional, non-government occupations in the MDB. While they were far from a dominant force, the MDB allowed travel agents, carpet makers, elevator operators, drivers, electricians, filmmakers, designers, and others to run. This may indicate that the party was more open to non-traditional candidates, but it is more likely reflective of recruitment difficulties; the MDB ran electricians and elevator operators because it could not find enough lawyers and doctors.

As a result of their less prestigious professions, MDB candidates on average were less wealthy. When they submitted their registrations, candidates were required to submit a declaration of assets, including the value of their land, houses, apartments, businesses, cars, jewelry, telephone lines, bank accounts, stocks, farm equipment, livestock, etc. MDB candidates claimed far fewer assets, and most of the wealthiest candidates belonged to ARENA – one candidate for federal deputy, Adhemar de Barros Filho (son of the former governor), submitted a 14-page declaration listing stock in dozens of companies, dozens of bank accounts, seven cars, a boat, and real estate holdings scattered throughout the interior. Meanwhile, while 46.5% of ARENA federal candidates and

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52 Since the Empire, the Brazilian political class had been dominated by members of the liberal professions, in particular lawyers. See John W. F. Dulles, *The São Paulo Law School and the Anti-Vargas Resistance (1938-1945)* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Kirkendall.


54 Since politicians often listed assets according to the amount originally paid, and inflation quickly rendered these values meaningless, it is difficult to ascertain candidates’ actual worth; questionable assessed land values or prices (sometimes of only a few cruzeiros) make it virtually impossible. As a result, I have simply counted the number of assets listed by each candidate.

55 “Processo no. 604: Adhemar de Barros Filho,” Registros de Candidatura 1974, Caixa 2553, CEMEL.
40.2% of state candidates claimed fewer than 10 assets, 62.2% of MDB federal candidates and 74.6% of state candidates claimed fewer than 10.\textsuperscript{56}

One surprising statistic is that ARENA candidates were also more likely to have been previously investigated by DOPS, whose files the TRE was required to consult in order to screen for “subversive” candidates. While 52.1% of federal ARENA candidates and 38.6% of state candidates had a DOPS file, only 34.1% of MDB federal candidates and 27.8% of state candidates had such a file. If the MDB were as dominated by communists and “subversives” as the regime believed, it is surprising that more of its candidates did not have DOPS files, since one of the primary “subversive” activities DOPS monitored was involvement with communists. Guimarães’s DOPS file, after all, made a point of mentioning that he had once sent an Easter card to PCB leader Luiz Carlos Prestes.\textsuperscript{57} Furthermore, the fact that so many more ARENA candidates had DOPS files underlines their political insider status. DOPS was more likely to monitor already elected politicians, like São Paulo businessman and ARENA federal deputy Herbert Levy, who had a 19-page DOPS file outlining his ties to labor unions and criticisms of the regime since 1964.\textsuperscript{58} Most MDB candidates, with their limited experience, were simply not important enough to attract the gaze of the political police.

Thus, in addition to confronting the regime’s repression, voter apathy, and its own lack of optimism, the MDB would face ARENA candidates who were older, wealthier, and exercised more prestigious professions, while being able to count on the federal and state governments to discreetly (or not so discreetly) support their campaigns. In a world

\textsuperscript{56} Registros de Candidatura 1974, Caixas 2750-2759, CEMEL; DHBB. See Appendix C, Tables 8-9.
\textsuperscript{57} “Processo no. 687: Ulysses Silveira Guimarães,” Registros de Candidatos 1974, Caixa 2555, CEMEL.
\textsuperscript{58} “Processo no. 620: Herbert Victor Levy,” Registros de Candidatos 1974, Caixa 2554, CEMEL.
in which prestige, wealth, and connections were the surest route to political power, ARENA candidates would clearly enjoy a strong advantage in November. What chance did the MDB have to meet even Geisel’s modest goals, much less win?

“If I Eat One Chicken, and You Don’t Eat a Chicken”: ARENA Bickering and the New MDB Message On the Campaign Trail

In São Paulo, Ulysses Guimarães had another reason beyond his fear of losing for not running for the Senate; he doubted he could defeat Quercia at the MDB convention, scheduled for August. Quercia had been campaigning for over a year, and it was certain that delegates from the directorates he had founded would vote for him. Nonetheless, much of the MDB leadership in São Paulo, including Montoro, scrambled to find a candidate to challenge him. While Quercia tactfully attributed their resistance to fear that an unknown politician could not beat Carvalho Pinto, the real issue was Quercia’s status as an outsider from the interior, an up-and-comer who was not part of the established political class. After all, the MDB leadership initially floated the name of the equally unknown Antonio Tito Costa, Montoro’s current substitute in the Senate and a lawyer who represented the party and individual candidates before the electoral justice system, as an opponent for Quercia. In June, two months before the convention, it was rumored that Costa would embark on a whirlwind tour of the interior to try to offset Quercia’s advantage; an ebullient state secretary general Arlindo dos Santos predicted that Quercia would not manage even 120 of the convention’s 550 votes. However, Costa’s candidacy

59 Interviews with Montoro and Quercia in Melhem and Russo, *Dr. Ulysses, o homem que pensou o Brasil: 39 depoimentos sobre a trajetória do Sr. Diretas*, 15-16, 326.
60 Ibid., 326.
61 “Painel: Senado e MDB,” *Folha de S. Paulo*, 26 May 1974, 3
went nowhere – it was absurd to think that a two-month tour of the interior would offset Quércia’s years of work. In the end, Montoro and his allies recruited the autêntico federal deputy José de Freitas Nobre to run against Quércia.  

The attempt to challenge his candidacy could only have intensified Quércia’s suspicion of party leadership. Montoro gave cause for particular concern, since he and Carvalho Pinto had belonged to the same party before 1965, and Quércia worried that Montoro might support his former ally.  

It was not out of the question; in 1970 former members of the PDC and UDN now in ARENA, including then-governor Abreu Sodré, had discreetly – and occasionally openly – supported Montoro over his ARENA opponent, a former ally of the hated Adhemar de Barros.  

At the August 11 convention, 361 of the 434 MDB delegates voted for Quércia.  

In his acceptance speech, Quércia repeated the MDB’s usual message. “The fight for the restoration of democracy is our guiding principle,” he proclaimed. “The principle of the fullness of constitutional guarantees […] the principle of the rule of law built upon the constitution without institutional acts.” At the same time, he combined these themes with a more emphatic focus on expanding access to the benefits of economic development – the same themes that had oriented his entire career.  

They say that in order to achieve an accelerated pace of development, the power to make decisions oughtn’t escape the hands of the privileged few. […] It’s worth remembering that in the countries that have maintained […] an accelerated pace of development, popular participation is equal and permanently guaranteed as a fulcrum and constant impulse for the most vital deliberations. […] The workers  

63 Interview with Montoro in Melhem and Russo, Dr. Ulysses, o homem que pensou o Brasil: 39 depoimentos sobre a trajetória do Sr. Diretas, 40.  
64 Melhem, Política de botinas amarelas: O MDB-PMDB paulista de 1965 a 1988, 189.  
65 Ibid., 115.  
66 “Candidato do MDB-SP ao Senado é Orestes Quércia.”
are seeing their salaries wasted away by salary readjustments that don’t keep up with the increase in the cost of living. […] Democracy is not created in a lab and does not need professors to teach it; rather, it needs politicians who practice it. 67

When Quércia insisted that democracy was not created in a lab, he was making a jab at the regime’s attempts to produce an artificial and restricted “democracy” via alchemistic political experimentation. When he decried “professors who teach it,” he was targeting his opponent Carvalho Pinto, a respected law professor who two weeks before had proclaimed, “Democracy […] is a regime that belongs to adults, and its authenticity depends on a permanent educative effort.” 68 Yet despite highlighting his party’s desire to facilitate popular participation, the last sentence revealed its limits, since the most important ingredient for democracy was “politicians who practice it.” Even if the MDB’s vision of democracy in 1974 included the participation of ordinary Brazilians in a way that the liberal discourse of Moreira Alves’s defenders in 1968 had not, the political class would retain its primacy, even as it listened more attentively to popular demands.

Carvalho Pinto came from one of the state’s most venerable political families; his father had been a state deputy, his grandfather a senator, and his great uncle, Francisco Rodrigues Alves, president of Brazil in 1906-1912. A graduate of the São Paulo Law School, he had served as São Paulo governor from 1958-1962. In 1963 he was invited to be Goulart’s finance minister, but during the coup, he sided with the military. Yet he always numbered among the regime’s conditional “liberal” supporters; he nearly joined the MDB instead of ARENA in 1966, and after AI-5, he had signed Krieger’s telegram

67 Ibid.
decrying the act. Still, despite his résumé, Carvalho Pinto had not distinguished himself in the Senate; from 1971, when a computer was installed to track senators’ activity, until the end of 1973, he only proposed one bill and gave 15 speeches.

Both candidates believed that the political class should guide popular participation, and both spoke of expanding the benefits of the economic miracle. But while Quércia spoke of trusting ordinary people to contribute to the political process, Carvalho Pinto spoke of teaching an ill-prepared electorate to collaborate with the regime’s vision of limited democracy. While Quércia decried the effects of inflation on salaries, Carvalho Pinto pompously spoke of “the definitive institutionalization of the principles of the Revolution of 1964,” now that the “stages of political-administrative cleansing and socio-economic propulsion […] have come to a victorious conclusion.”

As a result of his humble origins and years of campaigning door-to-door in working class neighborhoods, Quércia spoke the same language as voters; Carvalho Pinto, despite years of campaign experience, struggled to shed his aristocratic image. These differences would come to the fore as the campaign got underway in earnest in mid-September.

On September 12, at the initiative of Montoro, the MDB gathered ten of its Senate candidates, a collection of state and federal deputies, and over a dozen presidents of state directorates at the São Paulo legislative assembly to implement a unified campaign message. The attendees approved a statement that endorsed “the struggle of the Brazilian
people for development with democracy,” and promised to work for “a better distribution of income, wage policy appropriate for the pace of Brazilian development, and the direction […] of greater resources toward the education, health, and housing sectors.”

The candidates received a CEBRAP-authored booklet filled with slogans, advice about how to use free television time, and statistics about inflation and the cost of living. In response to government claims that per capita income was rising, candidates were instructed to highlight the unequal distribution of wealth. “What does per capita income mean? It’s the average between someone who makes a million, and someone who makes 200. The average is good, but one is dying of hunger, while the other has everything.” Or, “If I eat one chicken and you don’t eat a chicken, on average we’re each eating half a chicken.” It was a populist discourse to be sure, but it was based on undeniable, glaring socioeconomic inequality, as documented by the regime’s own data.

This was the message that the paulista MDB would repeat for the next two months, as it used official statistics to highlight Brazil’s most pressing problems – cost of living, wage policy, and problems facing farmers and small businesses. Two weeks later, when the party opened its state campaign headquarters in downtown São Paulo, an overflow crowd packed the three-story building to hear MDB personalities including Guimarães, Montoro, and Quércia give short speeches focusing on the rapidly rising cost

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72 “Voto em branco preocupa o MDB.”
74 Interview with Montoro in Melhem and Russo, Dr. Ulysses, o homem que pensou o Brasil: 39 depoimentos sobre a trajetória do Sr. Diretas, 39-40.
of living. In order to keep the campaign coordinated, the party leadership agreed to meet every Monday at Montoro’s home to evaluate the previous week’s developments.

Quércia set out on a caravan across the state, where he emphasized not only the meetings with politicians that had characterized the anti-candidacy, but also contacts with voters. On a typical day, the MDB candidate traveled to Santos, where he met with coffee brokers, shook hands with people on the street as he walked to the municipal market, inaugurated two new campaign offices, swung by the offices of the Santos Docks Company to greet workers, visited working class neighborhoods in Santos and neighboring Guarujá, awaited a commuter train to greet steelworkers, inaugurated another campaign office in nearby Cubatão, and finished the day with visits to Praia Grande and Cidade Ocián. On another day, in Guarulhos he scheduled meetings with students and workers and launched campaign offices for two MDB deputy candidates.

Quércia claimed that by the time the election arrived, he would have visited 500 paulista municipalities for a third time in the last year and a half, a pace that had left him 10 kilos lighter than when he began. At each stop, he reiterated the MDB’s message. In the Paraíba Valley, he criticized “the ever higher concentration of wealth in the hands of an ever smaller minority” brought about by the regime’s economic and wage policies. In the São Paulo suburb of São Bernardo, home to many of the country’s automobile makers, he promised workers, “We will always be alert in the defense of your interests

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76 “Quércia tem certeza de vitória,” Folha de S. Paulo, 8 Oct. 1974, 3.
77 “Quércia inaugura comitês em Santos,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 Oct. 1974, 3.
78 “Quércia tem certeza de vitória.” See also “Candidatos ao Senado retomam campanha,” Folha de S. Paulo, 12 Oct. 1974, 3.
[...] The combat against the current wage policy, the lack of assistance through social security, and the many other catastrophes that afflict the Brazilian worker are the cause of constant concern in our struggle.”\textsuperscript{81} At the same time, he emphasized these issues alongside the party’s usual themes; on a trip to Americana, the \textit{Folha} reported, “Like in all the cities on his itinerary, he brought up the principal themes of the MDB campaign, like development with social justice, the cost of living, the participation of students in national politics, and direct elections.”\textsuperscript{82} To those who argued that the MDB wanted to re-establish the state of things prior to the “Revolution,” he retorted that ARENA, filled with career politicians, was the party of the past. “I started to do politics in 1964, while Carvalho Pinto had already been a minister for João Goulart, in addition to governor.”\textsuperscript{83}

\textbf{Figure 4: Quércia on the Campaign Trail}

\textsuperscript{82} “CP e Quércia prosseguem campanhas pelo interior,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 21 Sept. 1974, 5.
\textsuperscript{83} “A oposição na hora de falar,” 25.
The Quércia campaign combined the MDB’s traditional repudiation of the regime’s disregard for democratic procedures and civil liberties, its new emphasis on socioeconomic inequality, and Quércia’s own longstanding interest in policy-related problems that affected voters in a tangible way. It was a very different campaign from the one the party had run in 1970, one far more suited to an authoritarian military regime that had little tolerance for direct insubordination, but maintained elections and insisted that the role of the opposition was to criticize specific policies and offer suggestions for improvement. The MDB was playing by the rules of the game and doing so brilliantly. If ARENA faltered, there was a real chance the election could go to Quércia.

ARENA opened its office in São Paulo on September 11 with the presence of governor Laudo Natel, future governor Paulo Egydio, São Paulo mayor Miguel Colassuono, a host of ARENA deputies, and Carvalho Pinto. The event was open to the public, and the smaller-than-expected crowd was entertained by a professional “crowd exciter” who had performed the same task for former governor Adhemar de Barros. He incessantly played “Pra frente, Brasil,” the patriotic theme song of Brazil’s 1970 World Cup victory, while the crowd waited for the late-arriving politicians. The most notable of the speakers was Carvalho Pinto, who gave a short speech including an endorsement of direct elections.84 Two days later (on Friday the 13th) the party launched its campaign in the city of Bauru with a public rally. Like the boisterous opening of the office in São Paulo, arenistas envisioned the rally as part of an ongoing effort to bring politics back into public space, a throwback to the colorful political rallies that had characterized politics before 1964. Yet despite the impressive list of attendees, including Carvalho

Pinto, the event attracted little public interest; it was scheduled at the same time as a television novela, and many public schools held evening classes.  

The ARENA campaign looked similar to the MDB’s; ARENA politicians visited a dizzying array of cities in the interior, met with local political leaders, and held rallies. Throughout September, Carvalho Pinto was the headliner at the ARENA stops, though in a meeting with students in suburban São Paulo, he was forced to defend himself against the infamous computer revelation that he had not been an active senator. “Parliamentary work cannot be measured by statistics and speeches. […] The dignity of representation is measured more by quality, not quantity,” he intoned. He guaranteed, “I am tranquilly certain of victory,” and claimed that the electorate would “not tolerate destructive criticism, is conscious of its responsibilities, and supports men who speak […] truth, with

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86 “Carvalho Pinto nega estatística absoluta,” Folha de S. Paulo, 6 Sept. 1974, 3.
seriousness and honesty.” Whatever his prognostications, ARENA leadership decided by mid-month that his campaign needed to be “given dynamism” and resolved to place Carvalho Pinto, Egydio, and the state ARENA president at the campaign headquarters once a week to receive visits from politicians. They also opted to intensify his contacts with voters, starting with a whirlwind trip to Guarulhos that featured meetings with workers, civil society groups, students, and businessmen.

Matters grew worse in late September, when Carvalho Pinto left the campaign due to an illness. Though he distributed a doctor’s note to prove his good health, he explained that he would take break from active campaigning. “The campaign is going well, it will be victorious, and there’s no need for me to appear at rallies.” But, with no sign of the candidate on the campaign trail, the ARENA state president soon announced that the party had again opted to “reformulate” and “reinvigorate” the campaign, shifting from direct contacts with voters to TV advertising. Carvalho Pinto spent the rest of the campaign in his São Paulo office receiving delegations of politicians, students, and workers and recording TV ads, while making rare appearances at local rallies.

With Carvalho Pinto unable or unwilling to campaign, the responsibility to coordinate the ARENA campaign in São Paulo fell to Paulo Egydio Martins, Geisel’s
designated governor. The 46-year-old Egydio had gotten his start in politics as a student activist while earning his degree in engineering; since finishing college he had worked in the direction of various mining firms, his business aspirations aided by his marriage into a family of industrialists. He had participated actively in plotting the coup, and after an unsuccessful run for mayor of São Paulo with the UDN in 1965, he was named industry and commerce minister for the remaining year of the Castelo Branco government. As a minister, he became friends with Geisel, then chief of military staff, and the two remained in close contact over the coming years. Thus, it is not surprising that Geisel tabbed Egydio to be governor, “elected” by the state legislative assembly. With his engineering degree, business background, and relative inexperience in electoral politics, Egydio personified the sort of governor Geisel wanted – a driven, competent administrator, familiar with the state’s political factions without being beholden to them.

With Carvalho Pinto’s health in question, Egydio took command of the ARENA campaign, meeting with politicians and speaking at rallies at a pace to rival Quércia. Yet his efforts garnered attention not so much for his defense of ARENA or Carvalho Pinto, but for his attacks on the political and business classes and his complaints about the MDB message. In early October, an analysis by the national ARENA leadership had expressed concern that the effects of the world oil crisis could hurt the party’s prospects in November. They worried that the nation’s economic elite, above all in São Paulo, were

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angered that the government’s measures to reign in inflation had slowed the rate at which they made money and might express their displeasure by refusing to use their “great capacity for extra-party leadership” to support Carvalho Pinto.\(^{95}\)

At a mid-October stop in Matão, Egydio blasted the state’s “economic and cultural elite” for failing to recognize that the slowing rate of economic growth was due to the global downturn, not any failure of the regime’s policies. “As strange as it may seem, it is among this class that we observe the greatest reactions against the situation the country is going through. And in such a completely immature, irresponsible way that demonstrates that some people don’t even deserve to be called elites.”\(^{96}\) He compared a vote for Quércia to a vote for Cacareco, the famous zoo rhinoceros that received over 100,000 protest votes in the 1958 São Paulo municipal elections. “It is neither acceptable nor understandable that […] São Paulo should elect a Cacareco.”\(^{97}\) As he explained to a reporter, the Cacareco vote had demonstrated “political immaturity,” as voters ignored real issues to cast a protest vote; in Matão, he had been frustrated as local elites ignored the issues facing the working class and complained to him about the low price of sugar.

Friends of mine from […] the elite came to tell me that they are dissatisfied with the government, and that’s why they’re going to vote for the opposition, for this government to learn its lesson. […] I do consider this a Cacareco vote, because until now, this class has made a lot of money, they’ve benefited from the economic stability the government achieved, and now, suddenly, just because they can’t make as much money as they used to, they want to protest.\(^{98}\)

In a clear threat that the military might react poorly to anything short of a convincing ARENA victory, Egydio insinuated that such political immaturity, whether expressed as


\(^{96}\) “Paulo Egídio adverte as elites e o empresariado.”

\(^{97}\) Ibid.

blank or spoiled ballots or as a protest vote for Quércia, could result in the “slowing down” of Geisel’s “gradual political opening.”

“The vote isn’t a weapon of protest,” he argued. “Rather, it is an instrument of political choice. […] It will not be possible to form a political consciousness in this country if the voters act like children.”

Political détente meant that voters had matured sufficiently to realize that the regime and its civilian allies were the best choices to carry Brazil toward security and socioeconomic development.

While not attacking fellow arenistas, Egídio launched salvos at MDB candidates, who he called “weak men who use the language of the past to, with demagoguery, try to turn the people aside from the right path” – a reference to their focus on socioeconomic issues, which he interpreted as a throwback to an obsolete populist past.

For Egídio, the MDB was buying votes by promising quick fixes to a crisis beyond anyone’s control. “The Brazil of demagoguery, the Brazil of easy formulas, the Brazil where everything can be resolved by a speech, by a word to deceive the people – that Brazil is definitively buried, and no one will resurrect it,” he vowed. “Instead of looking for rocks to throw through windows, we use them to build hydroelectric dams.”

Running a more muted effort was governor Laudo Natel, who explained that his responsibilities kept him from being able to travel as often.

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100 “Egídio: o voto é forma de escolha, não de protesto”; “Egídio renova advertência de que é preciso maturidade,” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 Nov. 1974, 3. Senate vice-leader Eurico Resende (ARENA-ES), asked to comment, agreed, “The government wishes for political re-opening via a gradual process, hoping, however, to receive the stimulus of the electorate […] so that a qualitatively and numerically strong ARENA can proceed in its commitment to carrying out the re-establishment of the rule of law.” “Resende: voto deve ser responsável,” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 Nov. 1974, 3.
103 “Paulo Egídio: a Arena não atira pedras, constrói usinas com elas.”
104 “O senador faz uma reunião e diz que está bom.”
weekend trips to far-flung regions of the interior, the frequency with which he and
Egydio re-affirmed his commitment cast doubt on his explanation.\textsuperscript{105} Beneath the surface,
they suffered from the same divergences as other governors and their replacements. Natel
had served the regime faithfully but was now denied the coveted privilege of choosing his
successor, and he had not even been allowed to select the Senate candidate.\textsuperscript{106} He may
have wondered why he should help the party any more than necessary.

The end result was that the state’s three top arenistas ran separate campaigns.
Carvalho Pinto remained in the capital recording TV spots and attending occasional
rallies; Egydio, like Quércia, headed a caravan of politicians crisscrossing the interior;
and Natel visited the interior on the weekends, but without joining Egydio’s caravan. By
the end of the month, \textit{Veja} casually reported, as though it were common knowledge, that
Carvalho Pinto’s candidacy was running into difficulties due to the “indifference of
various sectors of the party, and above all of the current governor, Laudo Natel.”\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{105}“Comitê da Arena reune Laude e Egídio”; “Egídio fala sobre a volta à normalidade,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo},
across the state made so many insistentences of unity that they began to ring hollow. The mayor of Diadema
proclaimed, “We are united and in harmony to elect Carvalho Pinto” – one month after refusing to meet with
the senator after he visited one of his political rivals. An ARENA candidate for state deputy shouted,
“We are united and in harmony alongside Carvalho Pinto and [his substitute] Aldo Lupo. Who cares if our
adversaries say that they’re really old and form a ‘sesquicentenary duo’?” (“Sesquicentenary team” is a
translation of \textit{dobradinha sesquicentenário}. Carvalho Pinto was 65 years old, and his substitute was 62, so
the claim that they had 150 years between the two of them was exaggerated.) “Os programas políticos

\textsuperscript{106}Carvalho Pinto had been an ally of Jânio Quadros, while Natel had belonged to the small Republican
Party (Partido Republicano – PR) and had been elected Adhemar de Barros’ vice-governor in 1962,
replacing Adhemar for a few months after he was cassado in 1966. While federal deputy and informal
Natel spokesman Rafael Baldacci had originally hoped to be the candidate, he had announced in late 1973,
undoubtedly with Natel’s blessing and after extensive negotiations with the Carvalho Pinto camp, that he
would set aside his pretensions in favor of the incumbent senator. While the press hailed the accord as a
“miracle for the paulista ARENA,” once Geisel named Egydio Natel’s successor, Natel’s camp was left

\textsuperscript{107}“Uma ciranda de boa vontade,” \textit{Veja}, 30 Oct. 1974, 25. Natel’s almost comically adulatory biography,
one-sided even by the extreme standards of Brazilian political authorized biographies, makes no mention of
the 1974 campaign; it skips directly from a glowing enumeration of his accomplishments as governor to his
Some of ARENA’s difficulties, like Carvalho Pinto’s illness, were accidental. Others, like Egydio’s propensity to say the wrong thing at the wrong time, were due to personal idiosyncrasies. Still others stemmed from the petty personal rivalries that afflict politicians everywhere. All of these were serious problems that diminished the party’s chances in the Senate race in Brazil’s most important state. More importantly, however, the campaign highlighted far deeper problems that afflicted the party nationally. Some of these, like the forced presence of former enemies in the same party, had also been problems in 1966 and 1970. Others took on heightened significance in the context of détente and the early stages of an economic downturn. ARENA had grown complacent after a series of easy victories, confident that as the party of the “Revolution,” the military would see to its victories through intimidation of the opposition or censorship. To make matters worse, by cowing or driving away anyone who might oppose them, the generals had attracted the type of politician they were trying to eliminate – opportunists with few ideas and little electoral appeal whose most notable quality was their boundless ability to say yes. Moreover, it was easy to be the government party when everything appeared to be going well. However, when the “miracle” began to fade and the opposition highlighted the uneven distribution of its benefits, ARENA politicians faced a quandary. To which of their constituencies should they cater: the military or voters?

The generals were aware of some of the problems ARENA faced, especially internal discord. In his famous August speech proposing détente, Geisel also called on his party to set aside its rivalries, arguing that the “legitimate disputes that oxygenate party supposedly triumphant departure from office in March 1975. If there were any defense of Natel’s campaigning to be made, his hired biographer would very likely have mentioned it. See Viveiros.
life should now give way to the greater interests of the party” and urging “a profound sense of loyalty, capable of immolating the individual in favor of the collective.” While “a climate of combat and competition is understandable and […] a fertile element of political activity,” it should never be allowed to harm ARENA’s “public reputation and respectability.” Similarly, justice minister Falcão warned against “party disloyalty,” understood to refer to the refusal of disgruntled arenistas to participate in the campaign. “It is often inevitable that dissensions arise within parties. However, when it’s time for elections, […] it is each person’s duty to be rigorously faithful […] and to never […] put at risk the victory of their own party.”

The pleas fell on deaf ears. It was only in late September, a month after Geisel’s appeal, that the former allies of Adhemar de Barros decided to endorse Carvalho Pinto’s re-election bid. However, federal deputy Adhemar de Barros Filho, son of the former governor, made it clear that his priority was “electing the greatest [possible] number of colleagues from the same political origin”; that is, his focus would be on candidates from his old party, not ARENA as a whole. Supporting ARENA meant helping one’s allies be elected. At the same time that it promised an increased role for the political class, particularly for ARENA, détente showed its fundamental contradiction. The generals wanted to provide space for their allies to participate more meaningfully in politics, but they also wanted them to do so with a sense of self-sacrifice that most totally lacked. The generals wanted loyalty, yet they failed to fully grasp that ARENA’s unquestioning obedience over the last five years was opportunism, not loyalty.

108 Geisel, 117-118.
To make matters worse, ARENA’s duty was to support the government wholeheartedly. However, anyone could see looming economic problems: inflation was increasing, and wages were not keeping up with prices. Some arenistas emphasized the regime’s economic successes and the global crisis provoked by the oil shock, which could be blamed for anything unpleasant, like falling citrus or sugarcane prices. A Paraná federal deputy admitted that the MDB campaign was resonating with an electorate worried about the economy. He argued that the key for ARENA was to “enlighten” voters about the international causes of the crisis, lest they “decide on the basis of emotional opinions that do not reflect all aspects of reality.”

Yet not all ARENA candidates were convinced that voters would believe that economic problems were beyond the regime’s control. Anyone knew that unequal wealth distribution and declining real wages had not begun with the oil crisis, and other targets of MDB criticisms – agriculture or housing policy, the administration of social security and pensions, indirect elections, and the suppression of civil liberties – had nothing to do with the global downturn. It was thus a temptation for some ARENA candidates to echo the MDB’s campaign, and the opposition complained that ARENA was stealing its message. In September, Guimarães blasted such arenistas. “They all remained in Congress […] these last few years without taking any measures to correct what they now consider a mistake,” he lamented. “When they come out in favor of changes, they are either betraying the government to which they owe loyalty, or the electorate, because […]

once they are elected they will continue to neglect the problems they bring up now.”

Deputy Aldo Fagundes smirked, “I’m sure it isn’t easy to defend the refusal to keep wages even with inflation, exchange rate indexation, the uncontrolled increase in the cost of living, housing policy, the foreign debt, and the progressive transfer of our national riches to multinational corporations.”

This concerned even ARENA president Portella, who said it was “inadmissible that ARENA candidates […] should publicly defend the opposition’s position […] with the aim of gaining electoral profits. […] Dissenting within the party […] is healthy, […] but you can’t take that dissension out to the street.”

“A Judge’s Mind, a Woman’s Womb, and the Ballot Box”: ARENA Nervousness and MDB Optimism at the Close of the Campaign

By mid-November, as the campaign was about to end, there were signs of concern for ARENA and optimism for the MDB. While the opposition had run an efficient, focused campaign, ARENA had been hampered by its rivalries and the contradiction between supporting the government and attracting voters. At the same time, how much difference would any of these factors make? Most voters did not attend rallies or read newspapers – what difference would it make to them if the old governor was helping the new one, or if Carvalho Pinto could campaign in person? As the campaign neared a close, however, the effects of a new variable were only beginning to become clear – television.

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113 “Presidente do MDB confia em ‘surpresas,’” Folha de S. Paulo, 4 Sept. 1974, 3.
114 “Deputado diz que a Arena usa as teses da oposição,” Folha de S. Paulo, 8 Sept. 1974, 6.
115 “Portela: arenista não usa tese de Oposição,” Folha de S. Paulo, 24 Sept. 1974, 3. Commenting on ARENA candidates calling for the revocation of AI-5, Célio Borja, Chamber majority leader, pointed out, “It doesn’t hurt anyone to be consistent. If you are against the acts of exception now, you should have been during the four years of your term. If you never brought these themes up before, you shouldn’t do it in these 60 days before an election.” On the other hand, federal deputy Aureliano Chaves, Geisel’s designate for governor of Minas Gerais, said that it was unreasonable to expect candidates not to address “transitory” measures like AI-5, which would be abolished eventually; debate was “the best route to achieving [democratic normality].” “Célio apoia Portela: é preciso coerência,” Folha de S. Paulo, 27 Sept. 1974, 3.
The breakneck journeys from town to town, animated evening rallies, and hand-shaking sessions with workers were the type of campaign that the political class was used to, but it was only half the story. The other half took place on television and radio, and it was this campaign that was visible to Brazilians. The 1965 electoral code, as amended the following year, required stations to set aside one hour of electoral programming per party during the afternoon and another in the evening between 8:00 and 11:00 p.m. Within these slots, the parties could do almost anything they wanted – short films, question and answer sessions with voters, debates between candidates, or segments for individual candidates for federal and state deputy to solicit votes.

Though free TV time had been available since 1966, only in 1974 did television begin to play a prominent role in campaigning. In 1966 there had been only 2,334,000 television sets in Brazil. By 1970, the number had grown 4,584,000, and by 1974 it had risen still further to 8,781,000. This represented fewer than one set for every ten people in a country whose population was approaching 100 million, and the distribution of televisions was probably skewed toward the upper and middle classes. The city of São Paulo, the wealthiest region of the country, had up to 1,700,000 televisions, according to one report. Regardless of how widespread it actually was, television provoked the same excitement among politicians that social networking would 35 years later. It was a new technology, replete with thrilling possibilities. With television, a candidate could speak to voters directly, without door-to-door campaigning. One broadcast could reach more

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116 Lei no. 4.737, 15 July 1965 and Lei no. 4.961, 4 May 1966 in Jobim and Porto, eds., 57, 114.
voters in an instant than a politician could meet in months of grueling campaigning – with every percentage point it climbed in the ratings, a party in São Paulo city gained 30,000 viewers, an unachievable number for all but the largest of rallies. Moreover, television held the potential to appeal to the working class, as sets became less expensive. While radio projected only a disembodied voice, television allowed candidates to court voters with the creation of a visual persona. As Veja boldly announced, “1974 will probably be [a year] of a great transition, in which the traditional methods of electoral campaigning will begin to effectively be abandoned in favor of television.”

The newness of television meant that politicians were uncertain how to employ it. A US political scientist who observed a state-level TV planning session in 1974 noted that the party officials she observed plotted television strategy among themselves, without viewership data or information about how voters might respond. Many candidates, accustomed face-to-face campaigning, feared that their lack of experience with cameras might hurt them. In Bahia, some stations were forced to remain off the air during the campaign hour because not enough candidates were willing to face the cameras; the MDB Senate candidate did brave an appearance but bolted from the set when an exploding studio light startled him. Other candidates complained that they did not know which camera to look at, or they failed to notice the signs technicians held up to show how much time they had left. Even Quércia, who had the advantage of publicity consultants, struggled. “[His] performance […] leaves much to be desired, because he has

120 “Procuram-se eleitores, vivos,” 22.
121 Jenks, 244-245.
122 “Procuram-se eleitores, vivos,” 22; “Os votos do Ibope.”
123 “Os programas políticos ainda são engraçados. Mas bem menos que antes.”
an immense difficulty transmitting his political positions.”

After the election, Quércia admitted, “I really did have problems with television at the start of the campaign. […] It was hard to work with all those people standing there, looking. I always felt better at rallies, being able to feel the reaction of the people I was speaking to.”

Although broadcasters had to reserve a one-hour primetime slot, the electoral code permitted parties to negotiate other arrangements. Only in São Paulo, however, did they take this route. Fearing that viewers would simply change the channel or turn off the TV when the campaign hour began, the paulista parties negotiated a different agreement. Each party replaced 10 of its primetime minutes with 20 thirty-second ads to be sprinkled among the evening novelas. They also each made short films to play during their remaining minutes. The MDB, with the help of an advertising firm whose head was a former MDB electoral candidate, recorded a film of Quércia walking and driving through downtown São Paulo, buying newspapers and being mobbed by adoring children – an attempt to present him as a man of the people. The party also solicited questions from voters and recorded Quércia’s answers, designed a cartoon with a talking sun telling candidates to vote for the MDB, and invited candidates for federal and state deputy to briefly discuss topics of their choice. Still, the talking sun was of poor quality, and, since the cash-strapped party had spent less than a fifth the amount ARENA had, the

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125 “O senador: Agora começam as preocupações de Quércia,” Jornal da Tarde, 18 Nov. 1974, 42.
126 Montoro explained that the scene with the children was staged. While he and Quércia were at the studio of variety program host Sílvio Santos, there was a large group of children outside, trying to get tickets to see Santos’s program in studio. A member of the film crew approached the children. “You’re looking for tickets? That guy over there is Quércia, and he has tickets,” and then filmed the ensuing melee as the children mobbed the candidate. Interview with Montoro in Russo and Melhem, 17.
MDB could not afford to make more films. Instead, they played the Quércia film over and over, so much that arenistas snickered that the MDB’s real message was, “Vote for Quércia. If you don’t, he’ll never stop riding around in a Volkswagen van and stopping to buy newspapers.” Regardless of the ads’ quality, they did make the unknown Quércia into a star; when the MDB caravan arrived in Votuporanga, 500 km from the capital, fans surrounded Quércia’s car requesting not speeches, but autographs.

Meanwhile, ARENA, with the help of an advertising firm headed by a former ARENA municipal councilor, recorded a greater variety of ads in São Paulo, including a series of images of the public works of the “Revolution” followed by an image of Carvalho Pinto. Another featured a boy explaining why his father was voting for Carvalho Pinto. Still another, in a before and after format, glorified the “Revolution’s” defeat of “subversion.” ARENA also collected documentary films about grinding poverty in the rest of the world, thinking to use them to highlight the government’s success at keeping Brazil immune from the worst effects of the global economic crisis – a strategy of dubious wisdom, since working class Brazilians who could ill afford rice and beans were unlikely to believe that the “Revolution” had defeated poverty at home.

Despite all the enthusiasm, it was unclear what difference television would make. On the one hand, by early October the electoral broadcasts had managed to attract as many as 24% of viewers in the city of São Paulo and up to 29% in Rio de Janeiro,
representing over two million people.\textsuperscript{133} And in São Paulo, the 30-second ads had exposed a wider swathe of the electorate to the parties’ message. In Rio Grande do Sul, a televised debate between Jost and the MDB’s Paulo Brossard received the largest television audience ever seen in the south of Brazil.\textsuperscript{134} On the other hand, in Bahia, where 90\% of televisions were turned off when the electoral hour began, an ARENA candidate began his broadcast with, “Dear viewers, please don’t turn off your TVs.”\textsuperscript{135} In Rio, a British diplomat commented, “I have yet to find a Brazilian who has sat through a single one of the nightly television election broadcasts.”\textsuperscript{136} A magazine story referred to the beginning of the daily electoral hour in Rio Grande do Sul as “the exact moment at which 150,000 televisions in Porto Alegre are habitually turned off.”\textsuperscript{137}

Even though ARENA enjoyed a larger budget, both parties suffered not only from irregular voter interest but also from the same inconsistent technical quality and nervous candidates. At the same time, being on equal footing with ARENA was a new experience for the MDB. Had the election been carried out only via rallies and face-to-face campaigning, ARENA, with its vastly superior organization and financial resources, would have held an overwhelming edge, but television diminished that disadvantage. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, the MDB’s Saturnino Braga, a relatively unknown engineer and former one-term federal deputy, was facing the incumbent senator Paulo Torres,

\textsuperscript{133} “O voto do Ibope.”
\textsuperscript{135} “O voto do Ibope.”
\textsuperscript{137} “Allegro ma non troppo,” Veja, 6 Nov. 1974, 23. Mandatory political programming had long awakened the disinterest of the Brazilian masses, particularly during the Estado Novo, when the mandatary Hora do Brasil on the radio each evening was derisively dubbed \textit{a hora de fala sozinho} (the hour of talking to oneself) because most listeners simply turned the radio off for an hour. See Bryan McCann, \textit{Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 27-29.
president of Congress. Braga had only entered the race in September, when his party’s original candidate had withdrawn for health reasons. “I, who never knew how to build a political machine, […] was greatly benefited by TV,” he claimed. “One week after my candidacy was launched, the entire state of Rio had heard my name.” Moreover, as recently at a year before, during his travels around the interior, Quércia had observed a reflexive association between the MDB and subversion. Yet now the MDB was on television, on equal footing with ARENA, speaking as much about agriculture and wage policy as about AI-5. Even if the MDB’s message, candidates, or technical quality were no more convincing than those of ARENA, the simple fact that they were placed on an equal footing, allowed to preach their message, was a victory for the party. Television should have been, if anything, an advantage for ARENA, with its larger budget and superior production. Instead, it served to level the playing field even further than ARENA’s own lackluster on-the-ground campaign was already doing.

By November, it was clear that the MDB stood a better chance than anyone had expected. There were the usual tensions. The autênticos, for example, had claimed that “moderates” were appropriating their oppositionist message after doing nothing to challenge the government for the last four years. And not all candidates stuck to the official message. In Amazonas, during a campaign stop with Senate candidate Evandro Carreira, Guimarães was unsettled when the arenista mayor threatened to shut down their rally, and Carreira challenged the mayor during his speech with, “Come on, you feeble

139 Jenks, 243-246.
goat! I’ll piss on the barrel of your revolver!” In Pernambuco, the MDB withdrew support from a candidate after he beat his wife when she announced that she would vote for ARENA. Yet despite recriminations, rivalries, and renegades, the MDB had found a message that reflected real concerns about economic policy that focused on growth and foreign investment, while the working classes continued to suffer from inflation, stagnant incomes, and a government that appeared inattentive to their plight.

Five weeks before the election, Quércia had guaranteed victory for the first time, citing public opinion polls conducted at the MDB’s behest. At about the same time, representatives of the São Paulo US consulate visited 18 of the state’s largest cities and reported to Washington that a Quércia victory was looking likely; their political contacts pointed to “a growing protest vote against the government’s failure to come to grips with the deteriorating economic situation.” Local ARENA political leaders continued to work on the campaign, but they confided to the consular officials that all was lost; one predicted a 3:1 margin for Quércia statewide. In late October, Montoro, the party’s national campaign coordinator, boldly guaranteed MDB victories in six Senate races (including São Paulo) and predicted that they would win at least 10 of the 22 seats in play. Less than a week later, he predicted wins in 14 states, and by November 7 he said the MDB could win in 16 and significantly increase its representation among São Paulo’s

141 Gutemberg, 143.
142 “Painel: Mau comportamento,” Folha de S. Paulo, 3 Nov. 1974, 3.
delegates to the Chamber of Deputies and in the state legislature. The victory of the
tireless, self-made Quércia over the feeble, aristocratic Carvalho Pinto appeared certain –
a poll the day before the election found a 61-33% advantage for Quércia.

For its part, ARENA feigned confidence nationally, so much that if one took their
words at face value, victory was certain. Although both Carvalho Pinto and Quércia
submitted written responses to an eight-part questionnaire from the Folha, when the
Jornal da Tarde sent similar questionnaires to Senate candidates in four other states only
the emedebistas responded. After meeting with the presidents of 17 state ARENA
directorates in late October and examining a range of public opinion polls, Portella
confidently informed Geisel that the party feared no “compromising” defeats. Yet as the
ARENA vice governor-elect of Minas sagely noted, nothing was certain. “The mind of a
judge, the womb of a woman, and the ballot box – you only know anything once they’re
opened.” Nevertheless, representatives from six states, including São Paulo, all assured
Portella that unexpectedly strong MDB candidacies had been contained.

The press concurred with ARENA’s prognostications. In an analysis of every
Senate race except two (São Paulo and Maranhão, where ARENA ran uncontested), the
Folha gave an advantage to the government party in thirteen states and to the MDB in
only three, with four states considered toss-ups. Veja was even more certain; it
guaranteed ARENA victories in seven states; gave the party the advantage in eight more;

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146 “Montoro elogia linha do governo federal,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 Nov. 1974, 3; “Montoro define
pretensões do MDB,” Folha de S. Paulo, 7 Nov. 1974, 3.
147 “Quércia pode vencer por 1 milhão e 700 mil votos,” Jornal do Brasil, 16 Nov. 1974, 2.
148 “Em Minas, a luta do desconhecido contra o veterano,” Jornal da Tarde, 8 Nov. 1974, 6; “Em Sergipe, a
idade conta,” “Amazonas,” “Paraíba,” Jornal da Tarde, 12 Nov. 1974, 8;
149 “Uma ciranda de boa vontade,” 24-25.
150 “Em poucos Estados a situação está definida.”
identified six states, including São Paulo, as toss-ups; and guaranteed an MDB victory in only Guanabara.\(^{151}\) The problem was that since the TSE had ruled that opinion surveys could not be publicized until after the elections, no one in the press had any real idea as to who might win; their predictions were actually informed guesses based upon TV advertising, the public’s perceived response to the campaign, and hints dropped by politicians, who could contract opinion polls for their own use.

The MDB closed its campaign in the capital on November 9-10 with a series of motorcades through poor and working class neighborhoods. The, first a 2.5-hour procession of 100 cars, with Quércia waving and smiling at the front, began in Vila Maria, famous for its overwhelming support in the 1950s for Jânio Quadros. Though the fireworks and rockets attracted hordes of children, the parade attracted little attention, as residents were more interested in their work or errands than in the passing politicians. That afternoon the party held another parade across town, and there was yet another in the southern zone of the city the next day, this time accompanied by boys on bicycles.\(^{152}\)

On the evening of November 9, ARENA held a spirited rally at a São Paulo convention center to celebrate its “unquestionable victory.” A crowd of 5,000 cheered as Carvalho Pinto, Egydio, and Natel entered to a rain of confetti “in the style of North American campaigns.” Carvalho Pinto praised the regime for establishing order, respecting democracy, defeating inflation, and turning Brazil into “the only nation that is emerging from the underdeveloped world.” He implored voters to avoid a protest vote for the MDB, which he deemed “a crime against our own families,” since the opposition was

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made up of self-interested careerists seeking only to fulfill “personal ambitions.” Egydio called for São Paulo “to give an example of political maturity and responsibility, the example of an adult people, thus giving São Paulo the conditions to transform itself into a political power.” And Natel insisted that it would be foolish not to elect a senator with Carvalho Pinto’s qualifications. “The Senate […] is a place only for experienced people, who have lived a long time, who can contribute to the country. Look at the type of people the Senate is made up of: ex-governors, ex-ministers, men who gave all in public life.”

On November 11-12, each party held its final rally before the election. (Electoral law prohibited rallies on the last two days of the campaign, November 13-14.) The MDB, predictably enough, held its rally in Campinas, hometown of its Senate candidate. ARENA took the bold step of holding its rally in Campinas too, the day before the opposition’s. But after ARENA attracted only 500 people, mostly public employees and party militants, to a subdued rally in the street outside its campaign office, the party promptly scheduled another rally for the following night, to compete directly with the MDB. The next evening, however, as ARENA prepared, the state secretary of public safety (an Army colonel and Natel appointee) recommended to Egydio that he cancel the ARENA event, in order to avoid confrontations with attendees at the previously

153 “Música, discursos e otimismo,” Folha de S. Paulo, 10 Nov. 1974, 4.
154 “No reduto do MDB, poucos ouviram a Arena,” Jornal da Tarde, 12 Nov. 1974, 6; “Arena encerra a campanha,” Folha de S. Paulo, 12 Nov. 1974, 3. It is unclear whether the November 11 rally was meant to be ARENA’s closing event. According to the Jornal da Tarde, it was, and ARENA thought about but ultimately abandoned plans for a second rally the next evening. The Folha de S. Paulo omitted any mention of the sparsely attended November 11 rally, claiming that ARENA had decided to move the rally to November 12 in order to directly compete with the MDB. The Jornal da Tarde, like its parent newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo, had a government censor stationed in its office, but the censor’s dictates could be inconsistent. The Folha was not under prior censorship but, obedient to prohibitions that arrived daily from Brasília, was careful to avoid offending the regime. It appears most likely, although not certain, that ARENA did indeed hold a rally on November 11 and then, due to the embarrassingly poor attendance, chose to hold another the next evening. The Folha may have chosen to omit mention of the November 11 rally in order to avoid embarrassing the government-allied party.
The scheduled MDB rally.\textsuperscript{155} The MDB rally went ahead as planned, though a downpour kept attendance far below the 20,000 the party had predicted.\textsuperscript{156}

The TV campaign also ended the evening of November 12. For the final evening, the parties dispensed with their 30-second slots, reserving all 30 minutes for speeches. The MDB divided its time between Guimarães, Montoro, and Quércia, who delivered a calm and collected speech in which he reiterated the party’s criticisms of the regime’s attacks on democracy and socioeconomic policy while footage of his rallies played.\textsuperscript{157}

“We are not a provocative, illicit, or systematically destructive or negativist opposition,” he insisted. “In the same way, we also refuse to be a compliant, obedient, and well-behaved opposition, mere decoration for the country’s pseudo-democratic landscape.”\textsuperscript{158}

A nervous Carvalho Pinto tripped over his words as he rushed through a flowery six-page speech outlining the “Revolution’s” accomplishments in infrastructure, employment, stability, and security, but without mentioning the military once.\textsuperscript{159}

This is no longer the Nation of ten years ago, defeated by disrepute, by capital flight, by chaos, by anarchy, by disrespect to authority, by war between brothers, by hatred between classes, by hopelessness, and finally by the hunger and misery that prowled the homes of those least favored by fortune. On the contrary, today it is a Nation conscious of its potential, a Nation with defined objectives, a Nation secure in its steps, a Nation that opens a path for itself among the other nations of the Universe with dignity and sovereignty, receiving the applause, the admiration, the esteem of other peoples as it grants a future to its children, where all will be able to participate in the advantages of civilization.\textsuperscript{160}

While the “Revolution” had not achieved all its objectives, it was absurd to believe that transformation could be accomplished overnight, without “easily corrected passing

\textsuperscript{155} “CP: não aceitamos o pessimismo,” Folha de S. Paulo, 13 Nov. 1974, 3.
\textsuperscript{156} “A guerra do MDB em Campinas,” Jornal da Tarde, 13 Nov. 1974, 10.
\textsuperscript{157} “Na TV, como o combinado,” Jornal da Tarde, 13 Nov. 1974, 11.
\textsuperscript{158} “Quércia: não somos Oposição nem destrutiva nem consentida,” Folha de S. Paulo, 13 Nov. 1974, 3.
\textsuperscript{159} “Na TV, como o combinado.”
\textsuperscript{160} “CP: não aceitamos o pessimismo.”
difficulties.” A “conscious, responsible” electorate would surely see that “it would be suicidal madness, insanity on our part, if we did not bestow the indispensable political and parliamentary rearguard so that the new governor can execute his government with efficiency.”¹⁶¹ Elections could be free, but if the electorate had overcome its susceptibility to populist demagoguery and was ready for democracy, it would vote for ARENA.

During the second broadcast that night, the MDB replayed its earlier tape, while Egydio, in a live broadcast, refuted the MDB message. “Quércia defends the ideas of the ‘40s or ‘50s, which offer nothing for the construction of the country. Ideas covered by the dust of March of ‘64.” In response to the criticisms of AI-5 and limitations on student mobilization, he claimed that what workers and students really wanted was better schools and workplaces; as for the opposition’s criticism of housing policy or social security, had they offered any solutions, or only pointed out problems?¹⁶² As the final comments made clear, while arenistas were eager to receive voters’ acclamation for the “Revolution’s” having in ensured peace and promoted development, they did not want to be held responsible for its shortcomings, even though centralization of authority in the hands of a few generals and technocrats left no other culprits.

“A Revolution Through the Vote?” The Political Class and Military Interpret the Elections

There was nothing to distinguish election day under a military dictatorship from election day during the 1945-1964 “Populist Republic.” Cabos eleitorais (allies of candidates committed to doing the leg work of attracting voters) filled the streets outside polling places, passing out flyers and shouting the virtues of their candidates. They were

¹⁶¹ Ibid.
¹⁶² Ibid.
joined in some cases by candidates for federal or state deputy, seeking to eke out every possible vote at the “mouth of the ballot box” (boca de urna). Long lines greeted voters early in the morning; middle class voters wanted to vote early so they could take advantage of the day off and leave the city for a long weekend, and working class voters, as one bar employee put it, “are already used to waking up early and getting in line.”

For voters from other cities who had not changed their registration and were thus unable to vote, even longer lines waited outside post offices, where they were required to purchase a telegram to send home, justifying their failure to fulfill their civic obligation – up to 150,000 flooded São Paulo’s central post office during the day.

When the polls closed that evening, the tedious counting of millions of paper ballots for senator, federal deputy, and state deputy began. The next morning, with the tally barely begun, the paulista press predicted a Quércia victory by a stunning margin. Folha exit polls showed the MDB candidate winning by 66% to 29% in the capital and by variously large margins in Santos, Campinas, and São Paulo’s industrial suburbs. Even more shocking, the polls showed almost identical margins in the races for federal and state deputy. The Jornal da Tarde published partial results of polls by IBOPE (Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística), the largest Brazilian polling and market research firm, which revealed that Quércia would carry the state by a 60% to 31% margin. Moreover, the polls predicted victories for MDB Senate candidates in at least

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166 “Previsão dá a vitória a Quércia,” Folha de S. Paulo, 16 Nov. 1974, 1.
Guanabara, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, and Rio Grande do Sul.\(^{167}\) Stunned arenistas were reduced to spluttering that polls did not mean anything and that voters may have changed their minds by the time they went to vote.\(^{168}\)

In the end, the MDB won 16 of the 22 open Senate seats. In Santa Catarina, the last poll, in early November, had predicted a 20-point victory for the ARENA candidate, but when the votes were counted, the MDB had won by five. A late October poll in Paraná had shown a six-point advantage for ARENA; the MDB won by three.\(^{169}\) The MDB also seized control of the state legislatures and Chamber of Deputies delegations in Acre, Amazonas, Guanabara, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, and São Paulo. The opposition nearly doubled its representation in the Chamber, to 160 out of 364 seats (44%), well over the one-third for which it had hoped. Passing the one-third mark gave the MDB the right to set up commissions of inquiry and enabled it to block constitutional amendments. Even if the regime made gubernatorial elections indirect again in 1978, the MDB would be in a position to elect governors, as it now controlled six state legislatures, including some of the most powerful states. While ARENA continued to control the governorships, the remaining legislatures, and both houses of Congress, its confidence and that of the generals who acted as its patrons had been shaken.

The same two questions were on the lips of politicians and generals. First, how had such an astounding result happened? The MDB had nearly tripled its representation in the Senate and fell fewer than 25 seats short of a majority in the Chamber. This was


\(^{168}\) “Coordenador da campanha de Quércia diz que não falava de vitória só por tática,” *Jornal do Brasil*, 16 Nov. 1974, 2.

\(^{169}\) “Quércia pode vencer por 1 milhão e 700 mil votos.”
not supposed to happen. With leftist “subversion” defeated and the economy on better footing than at any time since the boom under Kubitschek (1956-1961), the voters who had delivered resounding victories in 1970 and 1972 were expected to be enlightened enough to support the “Revolution.” Instead, ARENA had lost the national Senate vote by 4.5 million votes and only outpolled the MDB by 1 million in the Chamber.

The second question was how the military would respond. The first time the regime had suffered a shocking electoral defeat, when two states elected governors allied with Kubitschek in 1965, Castelo Branco had faced enormous pressure to annul the results that lessened only when he decreed AI-2. The second political defeat, when the Chamber of Deputies defied the military in the Moreira Alves case, had led to AI-5 and large-scale retaliation against the political class. It was common knowledge that not everyone in the military was pleased that Geisel and Golbery had opted for even a limited, controlled détente. Would military “radicals” use this third major political defeat as an excuse to slow or halt détente, or even annul the elections?

SNI director General João Figueiredo undoubtedly spoke for many when he fumed, “These shitty people don’t know how to vote.”170 Three days after the elections, a secret SNI report similarly grumbled, “In order for the vote to achieve its true role, it would be necessary for it to be free, but also, and above all, that it be enlightened.”171 At the same time, the agency believed that although unenlightened voters were the most immediate cause, an MDB plan to overthrow the “Revolution” had played a role too.

“Sheltered by the law, the MDB organized a broad movement of contestation, which

170 Gaspari, A ditadura derrotada, 474. (What is the Gaspari source?)
171 “Apreciação Sumária no. 15/74,” 18 Nov. 1974, CPDOC, Arquivo Geisel, EG pr 1974.03.00/1.
penetrated homes through public services like radio and television […] in order to [carry out] a fruitful campaign of disinformation.”\textsuperscript{172} A November 25 report claimed that communists had actively supported MDB candidates, particularly the autênticos, “whose position coincides with the political arguments defended by the PCB.”\textsuperscript{173}

The MDB’s contestation, disinformation, and cooperation with communists were not the only culprits; the confidential SNI report reserved plenty of blame for their civilian allies. “In spite of the recognized weaknesses of ARENA, no one imagined that that the party would be reduced to such a low level through the behavior of incapable and neglectful leaders and the lack of party unity.” The MDB’s strategy had been “well-articulated and intelligent,” it went on, and it was not surprising that ARENA candidates had been unable to refute their arguments, since they were “mostly unprepared and often implicated with the past.” Though the SNI’s first report identified thirteen causes of the disaster, five of those specifically blamed ARENA, two blamed MDB demagoguery and subversion, and one pointed at the “discontent of the political class with the secondary role to which it was relegated under the previous government.” If the regime had erred, it was not by marginalizing proven ARENA leaders; rather, it was by failing to do enough to replace “discredited names” with new leaders.\textsuperscript{174} Even after a dramatic electoral defeat, the SNI still held to the military dream of reforming politics, if only everyone “implicated with the past” could be removed or convinced to behave from now on.

\textsuperscript{172} “Apreciação Sumária no. 15/74.” The section quoted is underlined in the copy in Geisel’s personal archive, indicating that the president may have found this line particularly interesting.
\textsuperscript{173} “Considerações sobre a situação interna,” 25 Nov. 1974, CPDOC, Arquivo Geisel, EG pr 1974.03.00/1.
\textsuperscript{174} “Apreciação Sumária no. 15/74.”
Ultimately, the SNI analysts blamed the entire political class. “In the quest for the vote, on one side were those who could give a complete outlet for their demagogic impulses; on the other, those who had their demagoguery barely contained by constantly disrespected party commitments.” The analysis concluded, in a statement that would have horrified politicians, “The perspectives for the evolution of the national political situation are gloomy. Everything indicates that in addition to establishing new parameters of political behavior, in the future the government may feel obligated [to take] extreme measures designed to ensure the continuity of the revolutionary process.”175 The disunity of ARENA and “radicalism” of the MDB cast doubt on the idea that the political class had evolved toward the cooperative, enlightened leaders the military envisioned.

Politicians knew that this sort of debate must be happening within the military, but they had no idea what the outcome would be. They thus spent their time offering explanations that discouraged military annulment of the elections. Carvalho Pinto, for example, agreed that an unenlightened electorate was to blame, though he put it more elegantly than Figueiredo in a long-winded concession statement.

The conscious and sovereign vote is the most legitimate manifestation of the will of the people. […] It does not matter if sometimes the emotional effect of the conjunctures of the moment, exacerbated by the political struggle, impairs a rational and broad view of what is to the country’s advantage; the important thing is that with the repeated practice of the vote, the experience itself can render the people capable of more reassuring and safer choices.176

In other words, direct elections could still have a positive role, because even if the people, deceived by supposed demagogues like Quércia, occasionally made bad choices, the consequences would teach them to make better decisions next time. By voting for poor

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175 Ibid.
176 “Carvalho Pinto diz que cumpriu sua missão,” Folha de S. Paulo, 20 Nov. 1974, 3.
MDB candidates, the people would eventually realize that it was in their best interest to support the regime. The people did not know how to vote – but they could learn. While the statement could be interpreted as reassuring the military that the elections were not evidence of widespread contestation against the “Revolution,” it also betrayed Carvalho Pinto’s inherently elitist vision of democracy as he advocated elite tutelage for the masses – something not so different from the tutelage the military had in mind for people like him. The responsible, the enlightened, the rational had the duty to shape their inferiors.

Yet most ARENA politicians could not afford to blame voters, however indirectly, because they had to worry about future elections. Indeed, most publicly accepted that this was simply how democracy worked. The president of the executive committee of ARENA in São Paulo explained that the only thing left to do was “respect the popular verdict and take lessons for the future.”177 Adhemar de Barros Filho pointed out, “The only thing we can do is accept the decision of the people” and “make the necessary adjustments.” Sometimes, the decision of the people was simply inexplicable, he said; after all, even Winston Churchill had lost an election in 1945 after winning World War II.178 This was a different interpretation than Carvalho Pinto had used, but it served the same purpose – to show the military that if the regime were going to maintain elections, their results would have to be respected, even if the outcome was unpleasant.

To that end, some regime supporters argued that ARENA’s defeat should be seen as a victory for Geisel or Congress. The MDB had only been able to compete equally because Geisel had permitted it; paradoxically, the real victors were Geisel and détente.

178 Ibid.
“The liberty that existed during the campaign contradicted even the MDB platform,” explained the ARENA leader in the São Paulo state legislature. If détente was going well, there was no reason to reverse it. Or perhaps the defeat of ARENA would work out for the best, because the MDB victory had brought a crop of new politicians to Congress. Although some feared that the “cultural level” of Congress would decline with the victory of outsiders, other returning politicians were pleased that the incoming congressional class would be the most representative of Brazil’s population in history.

For arenistas, the goal was not only to convince the military not to annul results, but also to convince them that ARENA was not really to blame – and thus could be trusted to win future elections and still deserved to be valorized. It was easiest to blame reasons beyond anyone’s control, especially a supposed worldwide propensity for protests votes in 1974. As São Paulo federal deputy Herbert Levy pointed out, ruling parties had also suffered defeats in the United States, France, and Germany. Privately, Chamber president Flávio Marcílio repeated this, reminding contacts at the American

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179 “Para líder da Arena, é procurar as razões,” Folha de S. Paulo, 18 Nov. 1974, 3.
180 “A maior renovação do Congresso,” Folha de S. Paulo, 24 Nov. 1974, 6. Whether such “renovation” was a virtue was up for debate. In early December, O Estado ran a multi-page series of stories profiling the “low level” of many newly elected deputies who had demonstrated their lack of education and intellectual prowess on the campaign trail as they used bribes and demagoguery to attract votes. What was most ironic was that many of the new deputies profiled were poor, Afro-Brazilian, or female, often with limited formal education, who spoke the language of ordinary people and demonstrated that they understood their plight. See “Nível de alguns eleitos preocupa,” “Preço da cebola ajuda a eleger no Amazonas,” “Derci sensibiliza com o feminismo e poesia,” “Paulistas usam bandeirinha, carnava e muito dinheiro,” “Miro, o mais votado no país,” “Piauiense, votado até no Ceará,” “Nostalgia dos mineiros elege quem prometeu praia e navio,” “Alegando pobreza, poeta ganhou terno para a posse,” “Vingador’ vai para a Assembléia,” “Compra de votos não preocupou o candidato,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 1 Dec. 1974, 4-6, 8, 10.
embassy that the defeat should be interpreted in the context of the overthrows of authoritarian regimes in Greece and Portugal.\textsuperscript{183}

Or perhaps, arenistas suggested, the defeat had resulted from the MDB campaign, but the opposition should not be seen as a danger to the regime. Levy suggested that the government had not done a good enough job publicizing its message while recognizing that the MDB had run a more organized campaign; he particularly credited the opposition for encouraging voters with no preference for deputy to cast a vote for the party, a tactic ARENA had ignored.\textsuperscript{184} Several other arenistas argued that the opposition’s focus on socioeconomic issues – “with moderation but firmness” – had been a wise strategy, and the MDB had made its arguments in a language accessible to the working classes, while ARENA directed its message to the middle and upper classes.\textsuperscript{185} Other politicians suggested that maybe it was due to equal television time for the opposition and the enthusiasm generated by Guimarães’s anti-candidacy a year before. Finally, it was possible that local specificities, like discontent in Guanabara and Rio de Janeiro with the pending fusion of the two states, or frustration in Paraná at the price of coffee and soy, were to blame.\textsuperscript{186} An MDB win need not serve as evidence for contestation or subversion, from the opposition or the electorate. This argument may also have been intended to convince the military that while the MDB was not a subversive threat, it was an electoral one. And if the MDB could non-subversively contend for power, the generals would need the collaboration of their ARENA allies more than ever.


\textsuperscript{184} “Herbert explica derrota.”

\textsuperscript{185} “Brasília: a discreta ausência arenista,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 17 Nov. 1974, 10; “Para líder da Arena, é procurar as razões.”

\textsuperscript{186} “Brasília: a discreta ausência arenista.”
A few arenistas proposed that they and Geisel had acted in good faith, attempting to offer honest explanations for the economic downturn, but that their message had been neutralized by a demagogic, perhaps even subversive MDB. São Paulo’s remaining ARENA senator, Orlando Zancaner, admitted that the results had been an “electoral whirlwind” and “the most impressive defeat at the polls in the history of [São Paulo].” Yet inasmuch as the MDB performed well, it was because leftists, who were adept at manipulating voters with socioeconomic arguments, had infiltrated it.\textsuperscript{187}

Zancaner, however, was in the minority. More honest arenistas admitted that a large portion of the blame had to go to ARENA itself. Many blamed divisions within the party, which had led some members to fight each other more than the MDB.\textsuperscript{188} Members of the old PSD grumbled that the UDN had been too dominant in ARENA, and their intransigent posture, in contrast with the PSD’s pragmatism, had led the party to dismiss the MDB’s socioeconomic message. If ARENA’s leaders had demonstrated the flexibility of the ex-asedista Guimarães or Montoro, a former Christian democrat who had strong affinities with the PSD, the disaster might have been averted.\textsuperscript{189} Or perhaps the fault belonged to party leadership (and, implicitly, the regime) for imposing candidates who should have been chosen freely by party conventions.\textsuperscript{190} Chamber president Marcílio complained that ARENA had erred in imposing candidates due to personal considerations rather than the will of the majority.\textsuperscript{191} For Senate candidates who had lost, the problem lay not with the candidates, but with the party for not supporting them wholeheartedly – the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{189} “Querem estilo PSD na Arena,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 24 Nov. 1974, 5.
\textsuperscript{190} “Políticos comentam origens do malogro,”
\textsuperscript{191} “Marcilio atribui a derrota à liderança,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 19 Nov. 1974, 3.
\end{flushleft}
losers in Acre, Paraíba, and Pernambuco ascribed to this view, though the candidate in Pernambuco, the septuagenarian incumbent João Cleofas, admitted that his opponent, autêntico deputy Marcos Freire, was “young and nice, while I’m old and ugly.”

A few high-ranking ARENA leaders, some of whom enjoyed ready access to Geisel and Golbery, dared to partially attribute the disaster to major party and regime figures. On one level, this represented merely a desire to dodge accusations that they could have done more themselves to avert an MDB victory, but their pronouncements also betrayed frustration with the regime’s efforts to control the political class. Levy told the press that some blame had to be ascribed to Médici for marginalizing civilian politicians and the electorate, and Piauí senator Hervídio Nunes blamed privileging of technocrats with no political expertise at the expense of proven politicians. In the same tone, Maranhão senator José Sarney argued, “You can’t practice politics without politicians. The Revolution in all its greatness will also have to recognize that a structure from a period of compression doesn’t work during one of decompression.” At the same time, the “Revolution” had dealt punishing blows to coronelista politics and, to some extent, to political oligarchies. In other words, although ARENA must adjust its behavior, the regime must also re-evaluate its relationship with the political class.

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Coronelismo refers to the long-standing phenomenon of rural bosses, often wealthy landowners, who use a mixture of paternalism, clientelism, and naked intimidation to control local politics. For the classic study of coronelismo see Victor Nunes Leal, Coronelismo, enxada e voto: o município e o regime representativo no Brasil (São Paulo: Editora Alfa-Omega, 1975).
Privately, other prominent arenistas were willing to extend such critiques to the current administration. In a conversation with US diplomats, Marcílio and Senate majority leader Virgílio Távora, along with O Estado political journalist Carlos Chagas, blamed Golbery, Falcão, and Portella for “imposing candidates over the objections of local party directorates.” Marcílio fumed that in a truly democratic country, Golbery and Falcão would resign for their failures, particularly in São Paulo, where if they had listened to the political class and selected Delfim Neto for governor, the Senate race would have been closer, and ARENA’s majority in the legislature could perhaps have been preserved. For Marcílio and Távora, regime leaders had “reaped the results” of their marginalization of the political class.\textsuperscript{195} ARENA had proven its loyalty time and again since Congress was reopened in 1969, but instead of reciprocating with some trust of its own, the regime had imposed gubernatorial and Senate candidates with no thought for electoral viability. As Távora explained to the press, ARENA would face further electoral defeats unless it stopped simply being the “party of the government.” The regime had imposed leaders on the party at the state level because they were loyal, but in so doing it had diminished the influence of more independent-minded politicians who had proven at the polls that they enjoyed the approval of the electorate. ARENA had become a party that worried more about pleasing the government than establishing a true party platform, and it had paid the price in its defeat to the comparatively organized, unified MDB.\textsuperscript{196} When Golbery and vice president Adalberto Pereira dos Santos came to dedicate a portrait of Geisel in the office of the Rio Grande do Sul congressional delegation, a

\textsuperscript{195} Tel. Brasília 8923.
deputy begged them to tell the president, “The politician, the man who knows how to recognize dissatisfaction, has been relegated to the background.”

MDB politicians were eager not to apportion blame, but rather to claim credit. Quércia claimed, not inaccurately, that his municipal organizing contributed to the party’s surprisingly strong performance in the interior of São Paulo. Guimarães (along with party leaders like his housemate, Guanabara senator Nelson Carneiro, and party leaders like secretary general Thales Ramalho) pointed to his own anti-candidacy the year before as a factor that had “untied, unfastened, decompressed, disinhibited the party,” because as a result of his travels around the country the MDB had “gained spontaneity, gained popularity, gained impetus, acquired rhythm from that point forward.”

Montoro was the most shameless in claiming credit. In a prominently featured interview in *Veja*, which called him “the primary author of the opposition’s success,” he took credit for the MDB victory, claiming that the emphasis on “criticizing the Brazilian development model” had been his idea all along. In his retelling, the strategy meeting he had organized in São Paulo in September had included all the Senate candidates (when in fact only half had come), and he failed to mention the campaign manual (prepared by CEBRAP at the initiative of Guimarães) that had been distributed there. “To understand the MDB victory,” he crowed, “all you need to do is read my book *From the ‘Democracy’ We Have to the Democracy We Want*. All these arguments are in it.”

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198 “Povo mostrou que quer diálogo, diz Quércia.”
200 Armando Rolemberg, “Entrevista: Franco Montoro,” *Veja*, 27 Nov. 1974, 4. Montoro’s book, a collection of some of his speeches, had been released a few weeks before to some fanfare, not due to its
also took credit behind the scenes, when he gave US diplomats the impression that he was responsible for shaping Quércia’s campaign. Other opposition politicians began to grumble that Montoro was taking too much credit; it was not as though no one else in the party had ever included socioeconomic issues in their campaigns.

Yet even as they reveled in their victory, MDB politicians were preoccupied with the same question that was likely on the minds of arenistas. Would the military respect the results? In the coming days, opposition politicians insisted repeatedly that the elections signaled not the unenlightened nature of the masses but their growth toward what Freitas Nobre called “greater political maturity and consciousness.” Quércia argued that he had won, above all, because the people had accepted his message. “This result […] means that the people of São Paulo […] want dialogue […] [and] participation in the fruits of development through […] direct elections.” He claimed that dissatisfaction with the cost of living, social security, and housing and wage policy had led to the MDB content, but because he had scheduled a meeting with Geisel to present the president with a copy, although the meeting had been postponed due to fears that it would give the MDB publicity in advance of the elections. Though the title included the first use of “democracy” in quotation marks, emphasizing the hollowness of the “democracy” brought by the “Revolution,” press reports, probably under the orders of censors, excluded the quotation marks, thus blunting the book’s criticism. O Estado, like the other papers, printed the title without quotation marks, but then slipped past its censor the fact that a reporter had asked Montoro whether he had printed a special version of the book, without the quotation marks around “democracy,” to deliver to Geisel. (Montoro replied that he had not.) See “MDB e governo: o início de um diálogo,” Jornal da Tarde, 22 Oct. 1974, 3; “Resumo político,” Jornal da Tarde, 23 Oct. 1974, 3; “Geisel-Montoro, um encontro cordial,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 5 Dec. 1974, 5; “Geisel e Montoro: diálogo de 20 minutos,” Folha de S. Paulo, 5 Dec. 1974, 5; André Franco Montoro, Da "democracia" que temos para a democracia que queremos (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1974).

Tel. Brasília 8740. Montoro continue to take credit for decades. As late as an oral history interview published in 2004, long after he and other former MDB icons had broken with Quércia to form the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira – PSDB), he claimed that Quércia had barely won the party convention and, “It fell to me – and God knows how much work it was – to make his candidacy viable.” Interview with Montoro in Melhem and Russo, Dr. Ulysses, o homem que pensou o Brasil: 39 depoimentos sobre a trajetória do Sr. Diretas, 40.


victory. What looked like demagoguery to some was in fact rational people voting in accordance with their interests. Montoro asserted, “More than the victory of parties or candidates, the elections [...] represent a vigorous affirmation of the Brazilian consciousness and the maturity of the Brazilian people.” As he stated repeatedly, the results were “a revolution through the vote.”

Yet the single most important theme sounded by opposition politicians was that their victory was not a “contestation” of the regime. During Montoro’s meeting with US diplomats, he revealed that “his immediate concern was to prevent both his party stalwarts and the government from overreacting to the outcome of the election.” On the bright side, they had one less autêntico to worry about, since Francisco Pinto was in prison for insulting Pinochet during his March visit. During the meeting, Montoro called Porto Alegre to inquire about a rumor that the Senate victor there, Paulo Brossard, had issued a “vindicative” victory statement; to his relief, the rumor was false. He emphasized, in the paraphrase of the diplomats, “Now that the MDB campaign had been so successful, it would be foolish to adopt a vindictive tone, thus giving the military the opportunity to annul the election results and to thwart the prospects for a strengthened democracy.”

Indeed, in December the press praised the autênticos for taking a restrained course.

Notwithstanding autênticos’ claims that the election proved that Brazilians supported their demand for the MDB to become “a true opposition,” Montoro insisted,
“These elections […] do not have any sense of revenge, contestation, or return to the past.” After all, Geisel had guaranteed a free election, and the parties had responded by “conducting the campaign at a high level with an objective debate of the problems that interest the Brazilian population.” Tancredo Neves, who had once advised an autêntico to “wait under the tree” until the storm passed, reiterated that the MDB had always aimed for “responsible and constructive opposition,” and now that it had improved its position, it would continue to reject “revenge and a yearning for bygone days,” instead striving for “elevated collaboration that excludes adesismo and radicalism.” And Guimarães insisted, “Opposition is not negation. […] We do not intend to create obstacles or wage war between branches of government; besides, that would be unpatriotic.” The military would not annul the elections, because the MDB had conducted itself impeccably. “We never made slanderous or defamatory attacks. We never created tumult in parliamentary work. […] What we want is dialogue.” São Paulo municipal councilor Samir Achoa went further when he stated in one breath that the elections represented a popular longing for democracy but in the next qualified that this should be a “democracy with security and without contestation, […] a democracy in the Brazilian style,” one in which “citizens’ rights should be preserved, but without the anarchy that makes institutions deteriorate” – a sentiment with which Geisel and Golbery would have heartily agreed.

At the same time, as Neves’s statement rejecting radicalism and adesismo made clear, the MDB would not abandon its positions simple because it had performed well at

210 “Renovação, e não revanchismo, diz Montoro.”
212 “MDB não fará guerra de poderes, diz Ulisses,” Folha de S. Paulo, 20 Nov. 1974, 3.
213 “Respeito sem anarquia,” Folha de S. Paulo, 18 Nov. 1974, 3.
the polls. Amidst speculation about how much the party would collaborate with the regime and in states where the MDB had won a majority in the state legislature, autêntico deputy Alencar Furtado asserted, “We have come out of this election convinced that instead of repressing popular aspirations and mass movements, the power of the people should be summoned to build the nation.” Quêrcia called for the party to maintain its “struggle with steadfast positions, unyielding, without allowing the opposition to present itself […] as an acquiescent opposition.” Despite the MDB’s desire to reassure the military and its adoption of a broader socioeconmic platform, Guimarães insisted that direct elections, legislative and judicial independence, and the revocation of AI-5 were “points of honor” on which the MDB would accept no compromise.

Despite politicians’ initial nervousness, there are no indications that anyone in the military advocated annulling the elections. On November 19, an unnamed high-ranking government official told the press, “For now, there is no problem with the increase in the opposition’s parliamentary power,” a statement that reassured even as the “for now” contained a thinly veiled warning to the MDB. ARENA still dominated the Senate, and the MDB was still a minority in the Chamber. A few MDB state legislatures would not cause immediate problems; after all, the government had co-existed for years with an MDB government in Guanabara. They could present a problem if the 1978 gubernatorial elections were again indirect, since a majority MDB legislative assembly could elect an MDB candidate, but those elections were four years away, and a solution could surely be

found by then. Perhaps the MDB was subversive; but surely it posed no significant threat to the regime. For now, the SNI advocated restructuring ARENA and working to win the 1976 municipal elections. In order to challenge MDB arguments about income distribution and the cost of living, the regime should improve its “social communication.”

It was also worth remembering that ARENA had gained a majority of the votes nationwide for the Chamber – if the MDB vote in the Senate races reflected popular aspirations, so too did the ARENA victory in the Chamber. The people were not unequivocally against the “Revolution.”218 They had merely made a poor choice. Privately, when Geisel’s secretary sneered, “What can you expect from an electorate like this, from little people like these?” Golbery responded with only, “That by practicing, they’ll get better at it.”219 At the highest levels, the generals still believed that if the people could be taught to avoid demagoguery and “emotional” protest votes, elections could fulfill their intended function of validating the “Revolution.”

Not only did powerful members of the military believe that the people were salvageable; they thought that politicians could learn their lesson too. In a ceremony to honor the soldiers killed in the 1935 communist uprising, Brigadier Osvaldo Terra de Faria told a military audience, Geisel among them, “The recent event […] reaffirms the ideals of the Revolution of March” by “fulfill[ing] the civic calendar of political renovation” and facilitating the “emergence of new leaders.”220 This reaffirmation had been made possible because politicians had accepted that politics had changed forever.

218 “Apreciação Sumária no. 15/74.”
219 Note from Heitor Ferreira to Geisel, with an annotation by Golbery, cited in Gaspari, A ditadura derrotada, 474.
If in the beginning the followers of unconditional liberalism [...] did not submit themselves to the natural restrictions of the pedagogical-corrective process, today they have grasped the slow and secure rise of pragmatic Brazilian liberalism, which harmonizes [...] development and security, freedom and responsibility, production and work, education and emancipation in unwavering pursuit of a greater objective – the common good.221

The Senate unanimously voted to transcribe the speech in its annals, and politicians lauded its apparent endorsement of détente. Sarney, who days before had complained that the regime tried to “practice politics without politicians,” gushed that the speech “reflects the degree of receptivity in the Armed Forces to the adjustments that President Geisel is promoting.” Montoro called it “the most auspicious happening of recent times.”222 São Paulo MDB president Lino de Matos exclaimed, “Those who militate in politics see in this attitude of the Armed Forces an authentic ratification of their indispensability in public life.”223 Even the autênticos added praise. “The Armed Forces finally accept the notion that force, which coerces the people, can only have negative effects on the construction of the future of the country,” Lysâneas Maciel stated.224 At the same time, politicians pointedly ignored the reference to a “pedagogical corrective process” directed at the political class. While they understandably preferred not to applaud Terra de Farias’s condescending assertion that they had learned their lesson, it probably seemed safest to allow him (and hopefully others in the military) to go on thinking that they had.

221 Ibid. In the evaluation of the US embassy, “The speech was clearly intended as a powerful statement of the Armed Forces in support of President Geisel at a time when mischief-makers might have been tempted to seize upon the election results to discredit his administration.” The fact that it had come from a high-ranking officer at a solemn official function on a day normally devoted to railing against communism and leftists was a strong indication that it reflected not only the position of the Geisel administration, but also the majority position within the military. Tel. Brasília 9007, 30 Nov. 1974, NARA-CP, RG 59 [retrieved from Access to Archival Databases, http://aad.archives.gov, 4 May 2010].
223 “Posição militar agrada políticos,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 29 Nov. 1974, 4.
224 Tel. Brasilia 9007.
The final indication that the military had moved on from ARENA’s defeat came at the end of December, when Geisel gave a televised end-of-year address. In a lengthy discussion of the elections, he proclaimed that they had proven not only the people’s “faith in democratic values,” but also the “Revolution’s” commitment to democratic institutions, whatever its critics said. He singled out the MDB for its “moderation and self-discipline as it abandoned an inept and already superseded posture of contestation,” even as he chastised ARENA for “benefitting – or perhaps we should say wearing itself out – from a long period of comfortable but softening majority status. The consequences are before us. Let this serve as a warning […] ARENA acted like it was the only party, even though in reality it was not.” Yet he put the opposition on notice that he would not tolerate “irresponsible attitudes of pure contestation” or “taking advantage of democratic guarantees in order to destroy them the first time the opportunity presents itself”; nor would he hesitate to use the “instruments of exception” (that is, AI-5) if necessary.  

Elections and politicians would continue to be important for the “Revolution,” but the game would be played on the military’s terms. Dissent would only be tolerated so far.

**Conclusions**

Geisel, Golbery, and their allies in the military had hoped that the 1974 elections would mark a turning point in their decade-old “Revolution,” as an electorate grateful for the regime’s victories in the economic, security, and political arenas bestowed their endorsement on pliant and “responsible” ARENA candidates. Yet when the television cameras had been turned off, the stages from rallies dismantled, and tens of millions of paper ballots counted, the “Revolution” had been dealt a shocking blow. The elections

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were a turning point, not because they marked the triumph of the military’s “pedagogical-corrective” transformation of politics, but because they laid bare the dissatisfaction of politicians with their marginalization and the frustration of voters with the regime’s economic and social policies. However much Geisel, Terra de Farias, or the SNI attempted to deceive themselves about the elections’ meaning, many of their handpicked candidates had been rejected decisively, ARENA politicians had proven themselves more concerned with their petty rivalries than with the orderly development of the nation, and the MDB, through an aggressive campaign targeted at the working classes, had demonstrated that it would not be satisfied with perpetual opposition. Even if no one knew what the full implications were, it was clear that the relationship between the military and political class had shifted.

Intellectuals immediately realized that the elections marked a pivotal moment, not only for the relationship between the military and political class, but also in the evolution of Brazilian electoral democracy. The first to offer an evaluation were the researchers at CEBRAP, who had seen security officers invade their office in September and arrest several staff members, two graduate students, and economist Paul Singer. Lamounier and Cardoso, who had worked on the MDB team, opened their 1975 edited volume on the election by emphasizing that the masses were not “apolitical and apathetic.” They criticized claims that due to their “cultural backwardness,” “representative democracy

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226 According to a conversation Cardoso had with a British diplomat, Singer was held incommunicado for a week as his CEBRAP colleagues sought the intervention of federal ministers, military figures, and Egydio. Singer reported that he had been “intensively questioned and repeatedly threatened with torture,” as his interrogators attempted to make him admit that CEBRAP was a front organization for communist activity. Singer was believed to be an informal advisor of Golbery, and the British embassy interpreted his arrest and week-long confinement as a calculated attack by military factions incensed with his and Geisel’s plan to relax the regime’s repressive grip. T.J. Bellers to A.J. Collins, 18 Oct. 1974, BNA, FCO 7/2583.
does not work among us.” In spite of the “inexistence of a democratic system,” the people had chosen the opposition because of a generalized impression that the MDB more closely represented the interests of the popular classes, while ARENA and the government were on the side of “established interests and social exploitation.” The MDB victory was not populist because voters had chosen a party, not a charismatic politician, thus signaling the “constitution of a citizenry.” The results did not demonstrate that Brazilians were not ready for democracy; they proved that democracy was overdue.

Yet the results did not represent popular identification with the MDB, but merely a generalized feeling that the party was perhaps less beholden to the rich and powerful interests. As Lamounier discovered through questionnaires filled out by over 800 paulistano (residents of the city of São Paulo) voters, only 8.8% of ARENA voters believed that an ARENA victory would benefit the lower classes, while a larger minority of MDB voters (36.1%) thought that the party’s win would do so. Both older age and higher education and socioeconomic status were the most consistent predictors of a vote for ARENA, while the opposite was true for the MDB. Although Quércia had won in every neighborhood of São Paulo, the poorest neighborhoods had voted for him by more than an 8:1 margin, while the wealthiest had done so by less than a 2:1 margin.

A 1975 study in rural São Paulo noted a similar identification between the MDB and the poor, though it too was tempered by heavy cynicism. For rural day laborers (bóias frias), politics had no relevance for “us, the poor people,” but was a game played by “them, the rich people.” As one worker put it, “This whole [political] thing doesn’t

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have anything to do with us farmers. You go, and you vote. I think that elections must do some good, but not for us in the country; but for those people over there, they must do some good. I figure they must do them some good, or else they wouldn’t hold elections.”

As for Quércia and Carvalho Pinto, workers remembered Quércia as a good mayor in nearby Campinas, while Carvalho Pinto had earned a reputation as an “awful boss” for his cavalier treatment of his workers on his nearby ranch. While their cynicism about national politics was not surprising, it was significant that despite their lack of knowledge or interest, they agreed that ARENA was the party of the government and the rich, and they had heard that the MDB was the party of the poor, although they doubted whether that was true. “ARENA licks the bosses’ boots. They say that ARENA is with the landholders. The ones who make a fuss, the MDB… what’s it called? They say that they’re on the side of the poor, but I don’t believe any of that.”

The implications of Cardoso and Lamounier’s book were that while the exact details of its platform may not have been widely known, the MDB was successful in branding itself as the party of the popular classes. It turns out that the first analysis – the only one to empirically examine voter behavior – came closest to explaining 1974. After all, little had changed from previous elections. ARENA had fought, television had

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230 Ibid., 260.
231 Ibid., 259.
232 Subsequent scholars have cited ARENA’s disunion or recruitment strategies, a poorly articulated ARENA campaign, the comparatively unified MDB campaign, the power of television, the regime’s alienation of the electorate through its economic policies and repressive measures, and a new belief among voters, inspired by Guimarães’s anti-candidacy, that the MDB, not blank or spoiled ballots, represented the most effective channel for protest against the regime. As this chapter has shown, most of these, with the exception of the economic downturn and the MDB’s socioeconomic message, were not key factors. Jenks, 246-264; Kinzo, 150-157; Martins, “O balanço da campanha.”; Skidmore, The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-85, 171-172.
been available, and the security forces had tortured in 1970 and 1972 – and ARENA won both elections handily. The variable that changed in 1974 was the MDB’s strategy, along with rising inflation and the decline of the economic “miracle.” Though many voters may not have cared about direct elections, limitations on student activity, or the intricacies of housing or agricultural policy, they recognized that the MDB was promising to participate in government with the needs of ordinary people in mind. Through constant reminders on television and radio, in informal conversations with friends, voters heard a message – even if they doubted it – that at least some politicians acknowledged the dissonance between the regime’s triumphalist discourse and the harsh realities of daily life. This hardly constituted the “revolution through the vote” proclaimed by Montoro, but it did mark a key turning point in the history of the military regime.

Arenistas’ and the SNI’s accusations of populist demagoguery notwithstanding, the MDB strategy had correctly highlighted deep structural flaws in the “Brazilian development model” – rapid economic growth accompanied by an increasingly unequal distribution of its benefits. The opposition realized that it had to move beyond the fight for the forms of liberal democracy and include a greater emphasis on social justice and a more just distribution of wealth. Certainly individual members of the MDB, including Montoro, Quércia, and several of the autênticos, had been making similar arguments for years, but 1974 marked its adoption by the party as a whole. At the same time, MDB politicians and intellectuals still expected that they would supervise the implementation of the agenda – it was not yet fathomable to most that the popular classes might be capable of directly participating in governing the country. In the wake of an unexpected
victory, Guimarães’s comment in September that the MDB was more concerned with defending its ideals than with electoral success had become unthinkable.

At the end of 1974, politicians on all sides had cause for optimism. The MDB was basking in the glow of its victory in the face of overwhelming odds. Although ARENA had lost, government-allied politicians could find comfort in the hope that a more influential opposition would require Geisel to rely more heavily on them. Members of both parties could point to the relative freedom of the campaign and the regime’s acceptance of the results as evidence that détente would proceed according to plan. So far, Geisel was reinforcing politicians’ hope that they could some day regain their prerogatives and rule the country once again. Over the next three years, however, they witnessed the other side of détente, a process that became so “slow, gradual, and secure,” that it began to appear that it would never happen. For in the wake of 1974, the regime faced a new quandary: how to win elections when the people did not want to vote for ARENA. The answer was to manipulate electoral law, to further stack the deck in favor of ARENA. Yet these measures would cause anger among even ARENA politicians, who believed that they did not need the military to stack elections for them; what they wanted was for the military to get out of the way and let them do their jobs. During the 1978 gubernatorial succession, paulista arenistas would have the opportunity to dramatically manifest their dissatisfaction with being subordinated to the military.
Chapter 6: “We Aren’t a Flock of Little Sheep”: Paulo Maluf and the 1978 São Paulo Gubernatorial Contest

On June 4, 1978, over 1,200 ARENA delegates gathered in São Paulo to select their state’s gubernatorial candidate, who three months later would be indirectly “elected” by a stacked electoral college. Geisel and his handpicked successor, João Batista Figueiredo, had already endorsed two-time former governor Laudo Natel for the nomination and instructed the paulista delegates of ARENA to approve their choice, as all the party’s other state conventions would do that weekend. In the wake of rising popular dissatisfaction, especially recent metalworkers’ strikes in São Paulo, and in the midst of their plan to facilitate a gradual, controlled détente after nine years of dictatorial rule, the generals desperately needed the unified support of their civilian allies. But instead of accepting Natel like other ARENA candidates had, former São Paulo mayor and state transportation secretary Paulo Maluf embarked on an aggressive campaign to secure delegates’ support, forcing them to choose between obeying the regime or sending a message that the political class was tired of military tutelage. At the convention, an unexpected twist dramatically highlighted the discontent of the regime’s allied politicians in Brazil’s most populous, economically powerful, and politically volatile state.

This chapter explores the chaotic, contentious, and contradictory process by which the paulista ARENA selected a governor in 1978 – the months of posturing for the generals’ endorsement, the dissident candidates who challenged Natel, the exciting convention, and the surprising reactions of the generals and politicians to it. Ultimately, the convention dramatically highlighted the frustration that ARENA felt with the military’s usurpation of their assumed right to rule Brazil on behalf of the masses, along
with their conviction that détente ought to restore their privileges sooner rather than later. For the first time since the Moreira Alves case, ARENA politicians dared to frontally take on military tutelage and send a message to the generals that there were limits to their patience. In so doing, they demonstrated that even unprincipled, self-interested opposition could have destabilizing effects on the regime. Beginning in 1978, São Paulo would establish itself decisively as the center of opposition, not only from civil society and the MDB, but also from the ranks of the regime’s own supporters.

**Jockeying for the Generals’ Favor: The 1978 Gubernatorial Campaign**

After the euphoria of its victory in 1974 had subsided, the MDB was forced to face the lack of progress in détente. In 1975, the security forces embarked on a vicious campaign against known and suspected communists that culminated in the death of journalist Vladimir Herzog in military custody in October. Moreover, during 1975 and 1976, Geisel had carried out cassações against ten politicians, mostly MDB autênticos. At the same time, the MDB’s new popularity in urban areas and the wealthiest states deeply concerned the generals, while ARENA’s resounding 1974 defeat reinforced their doubts about the party’s ability to win without help. In 1976, a new law spearheaded by justice minister Armando Falcão banned most campaign television advertising.¹ The new law, combined with continued ARENA dominance outside of major cities, handed an easy victory to ARENA in the 1976 municipal elections.

With direct legislative and gubernatorial elections looming in 1978, Geisel feared that ARENA could lose Congress and governorships, particularly in more combative states like São Paulo. This would be especially disastrous for the regime, because

considering the traditional centrality of governors in the Brazilian political system and the problems caused by earlier governors like Lacerda and Adhemar de Barros, the generals feared that the most serious challenges to their political project would emanate from governors who they were unable to control. A formula had to be found to keep gubernatorial elections indirect. The opportunity came in April 1977, when the MDB blocked a constitutional amendment reforming the judiciary on the grounds that the measure did not restore habeas corpus or judicial independence. In response, Geisel placed Congress in recess and used the powers granted by AI-5 to decree an amendment of his own, which the press dubbed the “April package,” that re-wrote election law to favor ARENA. Among other reforms, the package maintained indirect elections for governors and instituted them for one-third of senators. Conventions in June 1978 would select candidates for governor and senator, and electoral colleges, in which rural municipalities (usually controlled by ARENA) would enjoy disproportionate representation, would formally elect them in September. The April package thus guaranteed ARENA a third of the Senate and nearly all the governorships.

Both ARENA and the MDB were stunned. The recess of Congress and decree of the April package represented by far the greatest political step backward since AI-5. Unlike in 1968, this crisis had not arisen out of any significant friction between the regime and the political class; instead, it was a naked power grab, an attempt to keep ARENA dependent on the regime and the MDB perpetually in opposition. While the

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3 In previous indirect gubernatorial elections, the state legislative assemblies had selected the governor. Now, however, with the MDB in control of key state legislatures, a new formula had to be found, leading to the innovation of electoral colleges including representatives of municipalities.

4 The sole exception was in Rio de Janeiro, where the MDB controlled the state government.
recess lasted only two weeks, and Geisel had decreed no cassações, the measure showed that the regime would still not tolerate significant dissent or opposition gains. In language reminiscent of 1968, Golbery explained to the British ambassador that the measures had been necessary “because the opposition were effectively seeking to change the regime from that established in 1964.” The MDB could win power, he admitted, but only “at an appropriate moment so long as they played the game.” As British diplomats put it, “President Geisel’s policy of distensão is dead and there can be little hope of any further liberalising measures during the final two years of his presidency. […] Those who felt that Brazil was set inexorably on the path to democracy will have to think again.”

Disillusion with Geisel and détente could only increase with the package. Naturally the MDB was infuriated, and the party briefly considered disbanding itself in protest. Yet ARENA, rather than appreciating Geisel’s help, was also displeased. Though the party expressed little discontent publicly, a foreign diplomat noted:

ARENA are shamefaced and demoralised. They find it difficult to defend measures in which they had little hand themselves. They are dismayed that President Geisel has apparently thought it necessary to fix the MDB because he had no confident that ARENA […] could do it for him. There is general dissatisfaction in their ranks at being pushed to one side.⁵

Indeed, “the President’s exclusion of almost everybody from the decision-making process” appeared to validate a long-building feeling among São Paulo elites, particularly in the business community, that “there is not enough participation in government.”⁶

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⁵ Norman Statham to FCO, 19 April 1977, BNA, FCO, 7/3279.
⁶ Alan Munro to FCO, Tel. 34, 15 April 1977, BNA, FCO, 7/3279; Stanley Duncan to A. J. Collins, 15 April 1977, BNA, FCO, 7/3279.
⁸ Duncan to Collins.
At the close of 1977, few in the political class appear to have held much hope for the future of détente. Even if Geisel were sincere in his desire to promote a more open political system, what guarantee could any politician have that the generals would not simply change the rules of the game yet again the next time they were thwarted?

When it came to the upcoming gubernatorial contests, ideally, just like it was to have happened in 1970 and 1974, ARENA factions in each state would agree on a candidate and relay their preference to Geisel and Figueiredo (anointed the presidential successor in December 1977), who, provided the candidate was acceptable, would endorse him prior to the state ARENA convention. This scenario assumed that arenistas could agree on their candidates – a dubious assumption, considering the divisions of 1974. Yet with the last two “elections” in mind, politicians had no reason to believe that their opinions – or the new conventions – would be given any more weight this time. As a result, aspiring governors spent their time not campaigning among the delegates, but currying the favor of Geisel and Figueiredo. They did so primarily by forging alliances with key politicians to show that they could lead the political class and proving they had “electoral mass” (meaning that if the election had been direct, they would have enjoyed widespread popular support). O Estado lamented, “[E]ach state will have a governor imposed from the outside in, from the top down, in a personal and un-appealable decision, without the participation of the local political forces and leadership.”

In São Paulo, the state’s political and economic importance made it vital that the generals find a candidate who could unite ARENA and stave off surprises at the party’s

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Two-time former governor Laudo Natel appeared to have the best prospects. Since the end of his last term in 1975, when Egydio replaced him, he claimed to have made 1,730 trips by car to the state’s interior to cultivate his contacts with local political elites. More importantly, he had twice demonstrated his unswerving loyalty and was close friends with Figueiredo, whose preference for Natel had been rumored for six months. Nevertheless, Natel insisted that he was not a candidate and would only become one if invited by the “leaders of the Revolution” via a “revolutionary decision.”

Still, while denying his candidacy, Natel continued his visits to the interior, claiming he was merely sharing the accumulation of his years of experience with local politicians while “absorbing” the political mood. Despite Natel’s perceived advantage, at least six other arenistas, including Delfim Neto, architect the now-ended “economic miracle,” and Olavo Setúbal, current mayor of São Paulo city, were also seeking the nomination. The press engaged in frenzied speculation as the candidates formed competing alliances, traded thinly-veiled insults, traveled to Brasília to meet with regime figures, and showcased their real, imagined, or invented support among politicians and voters.

Only one candidate, Paulo Maluf, employed a different strategy. Appointed mayor of São Paulo from 1969-1971, the son of Lebanese immigrants had long harbored higher aspirations. Yet his benefactor Costa e Silva had died in 1969, and unlike other would-be candidates, Maluf had no meaningful connections with current federal or state officials.

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powerbrokers. Moreover, he had long been dogged by yet-unproven accusations of corruption – a potential handicap in a regime that professed a desire to root out corruption. So when Geisel decreed the “April package” that perpetuated indirect gubernatorial elections but allowed party conventions to select the candidates, Maluf felt he had found his opening. Instead of courting the generals, he chose to focus on the approximately 1,250 delegates (chosen from the ranks of local ARENA party members) who would participate in the state convention. He thus spent the next year making weekly visits to the interior, using his position as president of the São Paulo Commercial Association to gain access to delegates. While vacationing in Paris, he spent his time writing postcards, as he ascertained that the delegates would be flattered to receive mail from France. Maluf reasoned that if one of the criteria for a candidate was the ability to unite ARENA, what better way to do so than through winning the convention? This became his mantra, repeated at every opportunity – no matter who Geisel and Figueiredo endorsed, only the convention could nominate a candidate.

Every Wednesday in São Paulo, Maluf hosted a lunch for prominent arenistas. Then every Thursday he departed for a whirlwind tour of the interior, visiting delegates and party officials in as many as 42 municipalities. He even made a five-day trip during the Carnaval holiday, while the other candidates vacationed. During each trip, he visited not only the delegates who supported him, but also those tied to other candidates, asking that they make him their second choice, in case their candidate did not run at the

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15 Maluf and Pinto, 80-81.
18 “Natel e Maluf em campanha. Até no Carnaval.”
convention. Maluf claimed that in 1977 he had made 625 such visits, and he produced a color-coded map showing where he had been. Each of São Paulo’s 571 municipalities was coded with a colored pin – white represented places where he entertained doubts about his standing, while the vastly more numerous red represented communities where he believed he enjoyed total support. He remarked, “There are ARENA delegates in 571 municipalities, and they should be consulted. Are the delegates going to travel six or seven hours to São Paulo just to ratify a name?” Still, O Estado questioned the extent of his support in the interior, sneering, “Many [delegates] promised him [their] support, just like they promised [others]. The difference is that only Maluf believes these promises.”

Most striking about Maluf’s campaign was his use of the generals’ own arbitrary legal measures to justify a candidacy that contradicted their perceived wishes. It was an open secret that the convention was to be a sham. The state’s ARENA factions would give their input, Geisel and Figueiredo would select a candidate, and the convention would ratify their choice. Yet Maluf, undoubtedly conscious of the generals’ concern with respecting the politically costly “April package,” argued that Geisel had created a law to govern the elections, and, “if this law exists, it exists to be obeyed.” He insisted that by acting in accordance with the “package,” he was collaborating with, not opposing, Geisel, adding, “[T]hey will thank me in the future.”

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19 Getúlio Bittencourt, “‘Como me elegi governador,’” Folha de S. Paulo, 3 June 1978, 4.
21 “Maluf registrará,” Folha de S. Paulo, 4 April 1978, 5.
23 “Maluf registrará.”
24 “Maluf diz que no futuro ainda vão lhe agradecer,” Folha de S. Paulo, 9 May 1978, 6.
A “Revolutionary Decision”: The Generals’ Choice and São Paulo’s Reaction

On April 24, after much suspense, Geisel and Figueiredo finally announced, via a call to Egydio, that the new governor would be Laudo Natel.25 At his home, Natel entertained a steady stream of wellwishers and shared his plans.26 He proclaimed his support for amnesty for opponents who had been cassado or exiled, the revocation of AI-5, the freedom of students to protest, and the institution of a multi-party system. While he wished that the election had been direct, the indirect contest in São Paulo, with its numerous candidates, had “in many aspects resembled direct elections.”27

The paulista press, which had already seen Natel obey the generals’ every command during his previous two terms, gave no credibility to his liberal pledges. A Folha editorial criticized the “monarchical” selection process and proposed that ARENA abolish its “useless and redundant” convention, which would merely bestow its “submissive and affirmative” vote upon Natel.28 Another decried the “Revolution’s” failure to reform politics, as the succession had featured the same “exchange of favors,” “good ole boy politics,” and “shameless nepotism” that the “Revolution” had been intended to eliminate. “Everything has changed, and nothing has been altered.”29 For its part, O Estado accused the regime of harboring the “intention to perpetuate domination without any hint of legitimacy”30 and choosing Natel because its fear of São Paulo demanded a pliable governor who would help keep the state from escaping its control.31

26 “A festa de Natel, de seus amigos e dos interessados,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 26 April 1978, 6.
27 “Natel defende abertura, anistia, fim do AI-5...” O Estado de S. Paulo, 26 April 1978, 7.
30 “Depois disto, que resta?” O Estado de S. Paulo, 26 April 1978, 3.
Many paulista politicians were similarly indignant, either because they disagreed with the “top-down” selection process, or because the generals had passed over their candidate. Egydio, obligated to fly to Brasília to officially hear the generals’ choice, admitted that the selection of his enemy Natel represented a “political defeat” and initially refused even to speak to his prospective successor. As the governor prepared to return home, a reporter convinced him to speak with Natel via telephone. He placed the call and handed the phone to Egydio, but the governor simply repeated, “Hello? Hello?” before handing the phone back. While the reporter held the phone, bystanders could hear Natel on the other end, saying, “Paulo, Paulo, is that you? I can hear you fine…” Other arenistas, reluctant to anger the future President and governor, offered polite congratulations and calls for unity. Yet their conciliatory tone barely masked major discontent. In the state legislative assembly, only a few ARENA deputies bothered defending the generals’ choice – most remained silent as a parade of opposition deputies blasted indirect elections in general and Natel in particular. One arenista, Marco Antonio Castello Branco, harshly criticized the process, asking, “Will the country have to continue watching as Brazil is divided into pieces to be distributed according to personal preferences? Do you call this a revolution? […] If this was the intent of 1964, then I must say […] that I was duped. […] Enough! Enough! It’s time for democracy!”

32 “‘Em política se entra para ganhar, e eu perdi,’” Folha de S. Paulo, 27 April 1978, 5.
33 “Painel,” Folha de S. Paulo, 27 April 1978, 3.
35 Marco Antonio Castello Branco (ARENA), Diário Oficial: Estado de São Paulo, 5 May 1978, 77-78.
Members of the MDB, still bitter over the “April package’s” marginalization of their party, blasted the selection as “a disgrace,” “a circus,” and “debauchery.”36 State deputy Benedito Campos lamented that São Paulo’s fate had been decided by only a few “voters” in Brasília, “leaving 25 million paulistas marginalized.”37 In response to an arenista’s claim that Natel’s selection was justified because it occurred according to “revolutionary criteria,” MDB deputy Antônio Carlos Mesquita dryly remarked that it had been “so revolutionary that the Revolution itself didn’t accept the rules it laid out in the ‘April package,’ because the candidate should have been freely chosen in the [party] convention.”38 A few emedebistas lauded the choice. State deputy Rafael Ranieri, while disagreeing with the selection process, even offered a “friendly hug” to Natel, “an honest and serious man who will be good for São Paulo.”39

The discontent in ARENA was so great that prominent arenistas began considering launching a “serious” dissident candidacy (as opposed to Maluf’s widely-dismissed candidacy) to challenge Natel at the convention. Three former São Paulo governors gathered with Egydio to discuss the possibility but were unable to reach a consensus, limiting themselves to criticisms of the selection process.40 A group of younger arenistas, led by 33-year old municipal councilman Carlos Sampaio Dória, courted Delfim Neto and former industry and trade minister Severo Gomes, but both declined (probably out of fear of harming their future political aspirations), leaving the

37 Benedito Campos (MDB), Diário Oficial: Estado de São Paulo, 5 May 1978, 70.
38 Antonio Carlos Mesquita (MDB), ibid., 73.
39 Rafael Ranieri (MDB), ibid., 69.
A few days later, a group of businessmen launched federal deputy José Roberto Faria Lima as its candidate. The dissident candidacies aroused so much excitement that the press stopped calling Natel the “future governor,” rechristening him the “official candidate.” Despite initial enthusiasm, neither dissident was able to obtain signatures from 10% of the delegates, the number required by law for their participation. They criticized Natel’s selection and forged alliances with powerful politicians, but both lacked support among the delegates, who were personally familiar with only Natel and Maluf. It seemed that Natel’s path to power was secure, with only one minor dissident candidate in his way.

Maluf had remained mired in obscurity since the end of his stint as state secretary of transportation in 1975 (a position he had been appointed to by Natel). He was irrelevant enough by 1978 that Delfim Neto referred to him as “a burnt-out match who doesn’t interest anyone.” Although the press obsessively covered the other candidates’ machinations, the Folha relegated Maluf’s campaign to short blurbs, while O Estado ignored it almost entirely. Yet in the face of significant pressure, Maluf stubbornly refused to withdraw. ARENA national president Francelino Pereira, in a clear reference to Maluf, urged prospective dissident candidates to “understand perfectly the reach of a revolutionary decision and place this decision above their personal convictions, however legitimate.” Maluf later claimed that he had received phone calls and visits from a series of prominent figures. Gen Danilo Venturini urged him to accept the primacy of a

43 “Dória desiste e explica por quê. Faria Lima fica, mas sem esperanças,” Jornal da Tarde, 1 June 1978, 8.
44 “Maluf é rejeitado pelos dois blocos.”
45 “Levanta, sacode a poeira,” Veja, 10 May 1978, 25.
“revolutionary decision,” television executive Roberto Marinho warned him that a confrontation with the generals could have personal and business repercussions, and Air Force minister Délio Jardim de Mattos hinted at a cabinet position. After a fruitless meeting with Maluf, federal deputy Alcides Franciscato fumed, “General Figueiredo chose Laudo Natel, and, thus, [ARENA] has to unite around Laudo Natel. Beyond that, everything is a waste of time. At a convention, there can be no dissidence.”

Reports claimed that his real goal was to leverage a position in the state or federal government. An anonymous ARENA source told *Veja*, “No one believes that Maluf will go until the end. He’ll agree to any accord and accept any position to save his career.” Yet Maluf insisted that he was only interested in becoming governor. It was even rumored that he had confided to friends that he would rather spend Figueiredo’s term in exile than desist.

To one politician who questioned his resolve, he offered to renounce any political office forever if he failed to present his candidacy at the convention. Maluf reiterated that Natel possessed “rare qualities as an administrator and politician,” but that the generals’ endorsement merely meant that Natel was a candidate like him. “The convention […] will not ratify – it will decide. […] Those who say that the convention will ratify are toadies, not democrats.”

It is doubtful that Maluf saw his gamble as opposition. Today, with his old alliance with the dictatorship a weight around his neck, Maluf has made much of his

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46 Maluf and Pinto, 90–91.
47 “‘Tentativa de afastar Natel é perda de tempo,’” *Folha de S. Paulo*, 16 May 1978, 4.
47 “‘Levanta, sacode a poeira.’”
52 “Maluf diz que não é um rebelde iludido,” *Folha de S. Paulo*, 29 April 1978, 5.
courage in opposing the generals in 1978. Yet Maluf never challenged (and has still not challenged) the regime on ideological grounds; on the contrary, he was one of its most ardent defenders. Rather, his affirmations of the convention’s sovereignty were probably motivated by self-interest. In an indirect election with a convention that ratified the generals’ choice (as everyone else expected), Maluf’s lack of connections and reputation for corruption doomed him. If the election had been direct, the pro-opposition mood in São Paulo would have automatically disqualified any pro-regime candidate. Since it appeared certain that the regime would allow direct elections in 1982, a free convention with a set of delegates Maluf could form relationships with, combined with a rigged indirect election, was likely the best chance Maluf would ever have to become governor.

Maluf wanted to be governor, recognized that this was his chance, and was willing to risk his career to achieve it. Yet even without being ideologically motivated, Maluf’s candidacy had the potential to unsettle the convention and spark infighting in ARENA, when the party should be preparing itself to face the MDB in the November legislative elections. And if the unthinkable happened and he won, it would represent the generals’ most dramatic political defeat since the Moreira Alves vote in 1968.

As the weeks passed, he continued his tireless efforts, even spending the Corpus Christi holiday calling delegates from the six phones cluttering his office desk. His staff sent weekly letters to the delegates, along with newspaper clippings about his candidacy

54 Paulo Maluf, interviewed by Kennedy Alencar on É Notícia, RedeTV, 29 Sept. 2011, available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgiRyZtNgTk. Accessed 17 April 2013. When asked if he was ashamed of “supporting a dictatorship that closed Congress, […] made political prisoners, tortured, and murdered opponents?” In part, Maluf responded, “The one who started the political opening in this country was Paulo Salim Maluf, when in 1978, Laudo Natel […] was nominated by Geisel and Figueiredo […] with AI-5 in hand, and I faced all of them. One time even Ulysses Guimarães told me, ‘You were Tiradentes. And everyone else would like to be too. But with your neck [at risk].’”

and copies of his magazine interviews, and he continued to host delegates and ARENA leaders every Wednesday for lunch.\textsuperscript{56} He even claimed that at the convention he would greet each delegate by name and gave incredulous reporters a list of delegates and municipalities. As the names of the most obscure municipalities were read, Maluf responded with their delegates’ names.\textsuperscript{57} By early June, an increasingly confident Maluf claimed the support of 750 delegates.\textsuperscript{58} Yet he was suspicious that Natel might sabotage his candidacy. He even insisted on submitting his registration for the convention, which contained the signatures of 678 delegates (over 500 more than the required 10%), at the last moment, fearing that the ARENA leadership might collaborate with Natel to coerce his signatories to also sign Natel’s list, thus invalidating their signatures.\textsuperscript{59}

Accusations began to surface, however, that some of Maluf’s campaign methods were suspect. Just before the convention, \textit{O Estado} reported that Maluf had bought São Paulo hotel rooms for the delegates who supported him and provided a fleet of vehicles for their transportation, reports the candidate vehemently denied.\textsuperscript{60} Other reports accused him of offering positions in his administration to delegates; one arenista joked that if he kept all his promises, Maluf would have twenty secretaries of tourism.\textsuperscript{61} He had also

\begin{footnotes}
\item[57] “Painel: Por dentro,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 3 June 1978, 3.
\item[58] “Como me elegi governador.”
\item[60] “Métodos de Maluf irritam Planalto,” \textit{O Estado de S. Paulo}, 30 May 1978, 2; “Pelo voto, promessas e pressões”; “Como me elegi governador.”
\end{footnotes}
allegedly promised public works projects for delegates' municipalities in exchange for votes and even assurances that he would help delegates get elected mayor.  

Meanwhile, Natel began to outline his plans for his next administration and recruit ARENA candidates for the November elections. Egydio later recalled that he had tried to warn Natel that his position was precarious and that he ought to forge alliances with politicians and delegates, but Natel reportedly responded, “Paulo, I have already been governor of São Paulo twice. I will be for a third time. Do you think that you still need to tell me anything?” When dissident candidacies began to surface, Natel offered “a warning” to prospective challengers, who he dismissed as “isolated voices […] without any electoral weight.” “No one ignores that my selection was revolutionary […] so why don’t we quit playing games?” He argued that had the generals chosen someone else, his opponents would not be complaining; their griping was based only on personal animosity. The convention would be “just the legal ratification of a choice that […] was accepted by the leaders of the party, who legitimately participated in the contest.” Natel thus avoided debates, interviews, or any action that might legitimate the convention as a contest. In so doing, he likely hoped to convince delegates that his nomination was inevitable, but his strategy also indicated that he did not take the convention seriously.

By the week before the convention, however, with Maluf’s campaign gaining steam, Natel launched his own belated push for support. In addition to submitting a

63 Martins and others, Paulo Egydio conta: depoimento ao CPDOC-FGV, 509.
66 “Natel: ‘Chega de brincadeiras.’”
petition 879 delegates’ signatures (which as the “official candidate” he was not required to submit), he began to actively campaign among them for the first time, although rumors swirled that he was using his influence as a former bank president to offer financial incentives. In a veiled threat, Natel reminded undecided delegates that he was the “Revolution’s” official candidate and enjoyed the approval of the future President.

The regime also showed signs of concern but was limited by the constraints of its “April package,” which stipulated that conventions would nominate candidates. As a result, the generals were careful not to publicly deny that other candidates had the right to run. Moreover, one of Natel’s chief qualifications had been his supposed base of support in the interior; the convention would be an excellent opportunity for him to prove that support. Yet as Maluf continued to gain exposure, Figueiredo decided to take a more active role. On May 31, he sent a telegram urging the delegates to vote for Natel, reassuring them that he “trust[ed] in the perceptiveness of his political vision,” and reminding them of the “national importance of the São Paulo convention for party cohesion.” Combined with last-minute alliances Natel engineered with influential politicians, it appeared the telegram might have tilted the balance just in time.

Thus, on the eve of its convention, ARENA was in disarray. Rival alliances had spent months locked in an impasse, the party had splintered in the wake of Natel’s nomination, three dissident candidacies had arisen, and the feuding threatened to weaken

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69 “De um lado, 9 assinaturas; do outro, 678,” Folha de S. Paulo, 3 June 1978, 5.
70 “Pelo voto, promessas e pressões.”
71 “Figueiredo pede que Arena vote em Natel,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 1 June 1978, 2; “Laudo teme Maluf e pede socorro a Figueiredo,” Jornal da Tarde, 1 June 1978, 8.
72 “Figueiredo quer apoio ao Laudo,” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 June 1978, 4.
the party going into the November elections. While nearly all arenistas gave lip service to
the regime, not so many would placidly accede to “revolutionary decisions,” unless they
benefited a politician with whom they were allied, or unless a deal with that politician
could help their own career. While they were far from principled opponents of
authoritarian military rule, they nevertheless refused to offer the unconditional obedience
the generals demanded. As opposition to the regime mounted from an emerging civil
society, ARENA’s chaotic convention would show just how unreliable even its most
faithful allies had become and how unprincipled, even self-interested, opposition could
strike a powerful blow against the generals’ control.

“We Aren’t a Flock of Little Sheep”: The Paulista ARENA Convention

As the day of the convention dawned on June 4, each candidate mobilized an
army of supporters to appear at the seat of the legislative assembly. Malufistas
(supporterse of Maluf) and laudistas (supporters of Laudo Natel) filled the area in front
of the Nove de Julho Palace, spilling into the street and the adjacent Ibirapuera Park.74
The laudistas carried banners, balloons, and signs emblazoned with the slogan “Laudo is
a person like us” and distributed flyers titled “Thank God, Laudo’s coming back,” and a
hired publicity firm sent a dozen vans fitted with loudspeakers and posters.75 The
malufistas carried their own signs and passed out flyers that proclaimed Maluf “the
delegates’ candidate, with Geisel and Figueiredo.”76 They were led by attractive, young
female supporters who had been bused in by a malufista ex-mayor. Dubbed “malufettes”

74 “Propaganda empata,” Folha de S. Paulo, 5 June 1978, 4.
75 “Crônica do dia em que a ARENA escolheu Salim Maluf,” Jornal da Tarde, 6 June 1978, 18;
“Propaganda empata.”
76 “Propaganda empata.”
by the press, they insisted that no one had paid them to come – they supported Maluf because they considered him “very cool.” The laudistas boasted a band next to the palace entrance, but whenever it started a song, Maluf’s supporters moved in, dancing, waving banners, and shouting Maluf’s name, prompting laudistas to comment, “Laudo brings the band, and Maluf has the party.”

![Figure 6: The Scene Outside the Nove de Julho Palace](source: Tribuna de Santos, 5 June 1978, 3.)

Such an electric election atmosphere had perhaps not been seen in Brazil since before 1964. Doubtless the irony of such excitement surrounding the nominating convention for a rigged indirect election did not escape those present. Yet some chose to interpret it as a testament to São Paulo’s democratic spirit. Former governor Roberto de Abreu Sodré, who had at times run afoul of the regime during his administration,

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77 “De manhã a noite, Maluf trabalhou na boca da urna,” Folha de S. Paulo, 5 June 1978, 5.
78 “Propaganda empata.”
compared the civic spirit on display to the state’s famed 1932 armed rebellion against Getúlio Vargas, an event whose memory lived on in paulista political culture as a symbol of São Paulo’s courage in defying centralizing authoritarian regimes. “The people reveal in their hearts the democratic sensitivity that motivated the Constitutionalist Revolution. We aren’t a flock of little sheep who accept top-down impositions.”

At 9:00, state ARENA president Cláudio Lembo formally opened the proceedings with a speech extolling the convention’s democratic nature and calling for continued reforms by the government. Maluf, himself a delegate, was among the first to vote. He then joined Natel to greet the delegates as they lined up to cast their ballots. Maluf was full of energy as he flew from delegate to delegate – in five minutes, reporters counted 31 hugs and 60 expressions of thanks or greeting. His famous memory served him well. “Every delegate was greeted. The dissident candidate did not hesitate at any moment: he knew by heart the names, the cities, and even the personal details of every delegate, which he made a point of referring to.” He asked one delegate about the chicken that had been sick when last he visited and complimented another on the kibbeh (a Middle Eastern appetizer) his wife had served. When one delegate asked how he could remember so many names, Maluf responded, “But how could I forget you? You’re all my...

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79 “Ambiente de festa e muita animação,” Tribuna de Santos, 5 June 1978, 3. The Constitutionalist Revolution was vastly important in the formation of paulista political culture. Generations of paulistas have invoked the revolt’s memory in defense of a variety of political projects. For example, in 1964 O Estado de S. Paulo compared São Paulo’s role in the “democratic” coup to its defense of liberal democracy in 1932. In 1982, the same newspaper group invoked 1932 again, this time to argue that faithfulness to its spirit demanded the end of the regime. See “São Paulo repete 32,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 1 April 1964, 3; “Comemorando a revolução que ainda não foi feita,” Jornal da Tarde, 9 July 1982 4.
81 “De manhã a noite Maluf trabalhou na boca da urna.”
83 “De manhã a noite Maluf trabalhou na boca da urna.”

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friends. We are going to govern together for four years.” Meanwhile, Natel greeted each
delegate with a smile and candy, and delegates and non-delegates paid photographers to
take their picture with him. His candidate for indirectly-elected senator, current vice
governor Manoel Ferreira Filho, passed out cards begging delegates’ forgiveness for not
knowing them personally but promising to visit them one by one later.

Yet while Natel kept busy greeting the delegates, few sought him out, unless
brought by his allies. São Paulo municipal councilor Brasil Vita exhibited a particular
flair for campaigning when, unsolicited, he dragged delegates to Natel by the arm,
attempting to convince them of their importance by announcing loudly, “There you go,
I’ve brought him to you.” While the delegates did not necessarily dislike him, with
repeated denials of his candidacy and demands that politicians meekly accept his
nomination, Natel had demonstrated an aversion to campaigning, preferring to bask in the
glow of a “revolutionary decision.” According to federal deputy Alcides Franciscato, sent
by Figueiredo to monitor the convention, “Laudo thought the convention would merely
ratify his selection, so he didn’t work.” Meanwhile, Maluf had spent nearly a year
meticulously cultivating the delegates’ friendship.

Despite the enthusiastic electioneering, many delegates voiced dissatisfaction.
When one delegate tried to vote, he was shocked to discover that his recent move to
another district had disqualified him. In a fury, he shouted that he was a victim of Maluf’s
maneuvers and threatened to complain to the electoral court, the TRE. When he invoked

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84 “Maluf.”
86 “Crônica do dia em que a ARENA escolheu Salim Maluf.”
87 “Em nove horas, Natel só fez uma pausa, bastante tenso.”
88 “Crônica do dia em que a ARENA escolheu Salim Maluf.”
his position as a sports journalist (a threat to publicize his mistreatment), federal deputy Antônio Henrique Cunha Bueno (son of the Cunha Bueno cassado in 1969) told him to spend his time covering the World Cup instead of the convention. Several delegates reportedly stated that they considered the process a joke. One remarked that it would have been a shame to stay home watching *Os Trapalhões* (a popular comedy program), when the best comedians were right there in the legislative assembly.\(^9^9\) And São Paulo municipal councilor Carlos Sampaio Dória, whose own bid to challenge Natel had floundered, issued a statement that was remarkable for having come from a regime ally.

This convention has been an uncommon, almost forgotten event of a type to which São Paulo arenistas and the country were no longer accustomed: a contest. Cold due to the absence of the people, stripped of any real democratic meaning, but a contest all the same. If it had not been for the impetus of nonconformity, of fearlessness, of the determination to challenge, to assume risks, to not surrender to intimidation, today we would be watching the degrading spectacle of a subservient, cowardly, and despicable convention. [...] It is distressing, however, to see that public opinion in São Paulo – removed, indifferent, and disgusted, feeling itself a victim of the robbery and usurpation of its prerogative to freely choose its leaders – repudiates this process of candidate selection, fruit of the sub-political process, a method that debilitated and now is rotting the political organism of the nation. Whatever the outcome of this convention, it will not lessen – indeed, it will highlight – the paulistas’ yearning to see restored, in their fullness, their basic rights as citizens, rights which have been plundered by the will that the [laws of] exception instituted. Give back to the people, without further delay, subterfuge, or enticement, the freedoms and prerogatives inherent to a democratic state [...].\(^9^0\)

Around 4:00, as the voting was winding down, Natel, visibly exhausted, withdrew to the office of an allied state deputy to await the results.\(^9^1\) Shortly after 5:00, the tally began. The chamber and gallery, designed to accommodate a few hundred people, were


soon packed with 3,500 chain-smoking spectators nervously awaiting the results. By 7:20, with one box partially counted, Maluf led by 15 votes, and the crowd thinned out as spectators fled the haze of smoke. The smoke continued to thicken, and as the smell of something burning filled the chamber, someone shouted that there was a fire. Lembo assured the crowd that it was only a problem with the ventilation system, but as the burning smell grew stronger and the smoke thicker, it became apparent that there was indeed a fire. Lembo asked the crowd to evacuate calmly – advice that went unheeded as the chamber fell into a panic. The dense smoke made it difficult to find the exits, and spectators climbed over chairs in their haste as someone shouted that the carpet was on fire.

Figure 7: The Crowd Watching the Vote Tally
Source: Folha de S. Paulo, 5 June 1978, 1.

92 “Incêndio e tumulto na convenção,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 6 June 1978, 5.
fire. Amidst the chaos, the ballots from the one opened box were hastily stuffed in an envelope and returned to the box.\textsuperscript{93}

For Maluf and his supporters, it seemed that their worst fears – that the federal government, ARENA, or Natel would sabotage the convention – were being realized. Earlier, a malufista had handed a lantern to state deputy Antônio Salim Curiati, a Maluf confidant who was to observe the tally, saying, “Take this with you. If the lights go out, illuminate the ballot boxes. You know how conventions are. Laudo’s people are capable of anything.”\textsuperscript{94} Their fears were more than paranoia – politicians had noted the odd coincidence whereby the Nove de Julho Palace’s electricity often went out in the middle of important votes.\textsuperscript{95} As they fled the fire, some malufistas could be heard cursing

\textsuperscript{94} “A votação,” \textit{Jornal da Tarde}, 5 June 1978. Natel’s biography insinuates that Maluf’s allies brought lanterns because they intended to set the fire and steal the convention. This accusation was never made at the time; it is more likely the result of three decades of resentment by Natel, who to this day insists he won the convention. Viveiros, 209-210.
\textsuperscript{95} “Deputados estranham cortes de luz sempre nas eleições,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 17 Mar. 1977, 6.
ARENA, while others called for Maluf’s observers to stand ready with their lanterns.

“Illuminate the ballot boxes! If you don’t, they’ll disappear!”

Maluf frantically approached the dais as Lembo, the ARENA executive committee, and Olavo Drummond (the electoral court observer) debated what to do with the boxes. In a panic, Maluf, panting and wide-eyed, climbed the wall separating the floor of the chamber from the dais, shouting, “It’s sabotage! They put this smoke in here on purpose! The count has to happen here! It’s a plot!” as he clutched the ballot boxes and demanded to know what would become of them. Lembo attempted to separate Maluf

Figure 9: Maluf Climbs the Dais to Secure the Ballot Boxes
Source: Jornal do Brasil, 5 June 1978, 3

96 “Crônica do dia em que a ARENA escolheu Salim Maluf.”
from the boxes, and he and Drummond agreed, over Maluf’s vociferous protests, that the count could continue at the TRE’s downtown headquarters.\textsuperscript{98} Maluf’s running mate, José Maria Marin, shouted the new location so that reporters could accompany them.\textsuperscript{99}

Lembo, the executive committee, Drummond, Maluf, Marin, the vote counting observers, and the boxes hastily exited the palace through corridors that were rapidly filling with smoke. The hallways were chaotic, with the remaining spectators still trying to find their way out and getting in the way of the arriving firefighters, who, unfamiliar with the palace, were running to and fro trying to find the fire.\textsuperscript{100} Outside, they met a crowd of delegates and spectators who had evacuated via the same route. Politicians and delegates from both camps, in a rare moment of solidarity, held hands to create a wall around Lembo, the executive committee, and the ballot boxes. Natel descended from his supporter’s office but remained quiet, while Maluf, visibly agitated, was talking incessantly. Lembo expressed concern that moving the ballot boxes could provoke the convention’s annulment, so Drummond agreed to call the director of the TRE to obtain permission. While he looked for a telephone, the electricity went out, but the malufistas immediately lit their lanterns to ensure that nothing untoward happened to the ballots.

Drummond was unable to reach the director, but with the electricity out, smoke pouring from the building, and firefighters on the scene, remaining at the palace was impossible. A police van was commandeered to transfer the ballots to TRE headquarters. Maluf insisted that he and Natel be allowed to ride with the boxes, but it was instead

\textsuperscript{98} “Maluf derrota Natel por 28 votos,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 5 June 1978, 1; “Incêndio e tumulto na convenção.”

\textsuperscript{99} “Incêndio bloqueia apuração.”

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
decided that Lembo, Drummond, representatives of each candidate, and ARENA’s leader in the Legislative Assembly would accompany the ballots. As the van prepared to leave, Maluf attempted to jump in but was forcibly removed. The van pulled out, forcing its way through a crowd of booing politicians.\textsuperscript{101}

Delegates and politicians began arriving at the TRE in short order, but the van with the ballot boxes lagged behind. An uneasy crowd cried, “We want the ballot boxes!”\textsuperscript{102} Shortly thereafter the boxes had arrived, with an agitated Maluf – hair disheveled and glasses missing – right behind. Natel, who had retired to await the results by telephone, was conspicuously absent. No sooner had everyone arrived than the TRE director informed Lembo that since the court’s role was merely that of impartial observer, it would be inappropriate for convention proceedings to take place at TRE headquarters.\textsuperscript{103} While the interested parties debated where to go next, the delegates, politicians, and journalists waiting in the street discussed the situation among themselves, along with a crowd of neighborhood residents, who added their voices to the din.\textsuperscript{104}

Around 9:30, it was decided that the tally would continue at the spacious Anhembi Convention Center, but when the ballot boxes and their accompanying caravan arrived there, it was discovered that São Paulo’s Japanese-Brazilian community had already reserved the hall for a “Miss Nissei” pageant. Members of the entourage asked the organizer to suspend the pageant, but he refused, arguing that the pageant was more important for Japanese-Brazilians than choosing a governor. Meanwhile, the police van

\textsuperscript{101} “A apuração.”
\textsuperscript{103} “Incêndio bloqueia apuração.”
\textsuperscript{104} “Incêndio e tumulto na convenção.”
with the ballots entered and backed up to a tiny room next to the convention hall.\textsuperscript{105} The executive committee met hastily and voted to continue the count in the room, with space for only the committee, the candidates’ observers, and a few reporters. Probably due to Maluf’s hysterics, candidates were specifically excluded.\textsuperscript{106}

As the count recommenced, the politicians and journalists waited in the hall, while Maluf huddled in the van, nervously nibbling on cheese sandwiches.\textsuperscript{107} The crowd received unofficial updates and made conjectures based on facial expressions glimpsed when the door opened. It soon became clear that Maluf’s lead would hold. Boisterous supporters began to chant, “One, two, three, four, São Paulo’s given an example once more!” as Natel’s supporters slipped out. In a reference to Natel’s demand that politicians “quit playing games,” Sampaio Dória remarked to Abreu Sodré, “Tragically, the games have ended for the one who wanted to trample on the paulistas’ pride and dignity.”\textsuperscript{108}

When the final announcement came near 2:00 a.m. – that Maluf had won by a count of 617 to 589, plus five blank and ten spoiled ballots – the malufistas erupted in an ecstatic cheer, hoisted Maluf on their shoulders, and chanting his name, carried him to the main convention hall, now vacated by the pageant. Maluf dedicated his victory to the person whose will he had so blatantly flouted. “I offer this victory to President Geisel […] who, through his steadfastness, maintained the April reform, which permitted the delegates to

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{105} “Crônica do dia em que a ARENA escolheu Salim Maluf.”
\textsuperscript{106} “Ata da reunião da Convenção Regional da Aliança Renovadora Nacional.”
\textsuperscript{107} “Alguém pagou paga ver,” 23.
\textsuperscript{108} “Crônica do dia em que a ARENA escolheu Salim Maluf.”
\end{footnotes}
choose their candidates in a free and democratic election.”109 The malufistas applauded wildly, and one shouted, “Next, the Presidency of the Republic!”110

From start to finish, the convention illustrates the increasingly tense relationship between the military regime and its civilian allies. In 1978 the government faced foes on every side. The regime faced unremitting criticism in the press, which called for a speedy return to the rule of law, and the protests of Catholic clerics, who ceaselessly protested human rights violations. Unions in São Paulo had just launched the country’s first strikes in a decade, students were growing bolder, and the regime had to endure the scrutiny of the human rights-conscious Carter administration in the US. The generals needed loyalty from their civilian allies now more than ever to retain control of Geisel’s process of gradual “decompression,” but despite protestations of devotion to the “Revolution,” Maluf, a majority of the delegates, and various well-known politicians had betrayed them. The head of the state party had opened the convention with a call for a return to full democracy, a municipal councilman had blasted the convention in language befitting the opposition, a former governor had favorably compared it to an armed revolt against another despotic central government, delegates had characterized the proceedings as a comedy, and a suspicious fire had provoked speculation that the regime would resort to sabotage to defeat dissidence. Worst of all, instead of meekly accepting a “revolutionary decision,” Maluf had ignored the will of Geisel and Figueiredo, even as he masterfully justified his candidacy with the regime’s own arbitrary laws, and a sizable bloc of

110 “Crônica do dia em que a ARENA escolheu Salim Maluf.”
ARENA politicians, allies of the regime and representatives of Brazil’s most populous, economically powerful, politically volatile state, had joined in his insubordination.

How much of a rebellion did the convention represent? Some delegates voted for Maluf because they resented federal meddling; delegates from the city of Guarulhos commented, “São Paulo said no. It said ‘Enough!’ to the system, and Maluf deserves our support for having the courage to believe in the sovereignty of the convention.” Others used their vote to express their dissatisfaction with the regime’s economic policy. One delegate, a farmer from the interior, remarked, “I haven’t been able to sell my oranges or my sugarcane. The only way I found to voice my discontent with the government’s agricultural policy was to vote for Maluf.” Still other delegates voted for Maluf because he promised public works for their cities, or because Natel had neglected their region while governor. And others may have voted for Maluf because they were offered incentives, or because their local faction saw support for Maluf as its ticket to political power. Nevertheless, whatever their individual motivations, the delegates knew that their vote represented a gesture of insubordination. Geisel and Figueiredo had made it clear that Natel was their candidate, and Figueiredo had sent a telegram demanding the delegates’ compliance. The last time a significant group of arenistas had so openly defied the generals, it had received AI-5 and cassações in answer. Even if such drastic measures were unlikely now, only a day or two before the convention it appeared that the telegram and last-minute alliances had assured Natel’s victory. Since governors controlled the distribution of federal funds to local governments, and since they habitually used those funds to reward allies and punish enemies, over half the delegates supported Maluf

111 “Nos votos do Interior, a insatisfação,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 6 June 1978, 6.
knowing that if he lost, Natel could withhold funds from their cities and damage their own political prospects (as Maluf later did to delegates who voted for Natel). Yet despite the risk of earning the enmity of the generals and Natel, they voted for Maluf. After all, the “April package” had proven that the regime did not trust ARENA to win elections and had only a passing concern with the institutions of liberal democracy; why, then should the delegates bother doing what Geisel and Figueiredo instructed?

The generals’ defeat had been made possible by their promise of détente while attempting to maintain total control over the political system. To an extent unmatched in any other state, at every step of the process, the paulista ARENA had demonstrated its frustration with military tutelage of politics that utterly discounted the prerogatives of the political class. For arenistas, détente meant that their share of power should increase. If there was nothing in it for them, why support Geisel and Figueiredo? For their part, the generals were used to ARENA grumbling, but not utter disregard for their directives. How would they respond to such a dramatic affront?

The Generals’ Quandary: To Accept or Reject Maluf?

That response, whatever it was, would have to consider the opinion of the press and political class. While the press was not enamored with Maluf, as opponents of the regime’s authoritarianism and avid defenders of São Paulo’s freedom from federal meddling, the paulista dailies were pleased to see their state embarrass the regime. For them, the state was standing up to a government that disregarded the opinion the political

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112 The delegates’ decision occurred in the context of long-time ARENA dissatisfaction with indirect elections. Grinberg notes that indirect elections were seen as discouraging competition and renovation, alienating state governments from voters, and violating democratic principles, and arenistas frequently argued in favor of direct elections. See Grinberg, 156-157.
class and, in so doing, was forcing the government to accelerate liberalization. The
convention was merely the most recent example of São Paulo’s refusal to submit – after
all, hadn’t the previous months seen student protests in São Paulo and strikes in its
suburbs?\footnote{Autonomismo paulista,” Folha de S. Paulo, 6 June 1978, 2; “Alguém pagou para ver,” 25.}
Moreover, the convention was thought to definitively prove how out of touch
the regime was with the political situation on the ground. As Veja dramatically put it,
“Pushed off the precipice by its own incapacity to cross the distance between the real
Brazil and the bionic Brazil mapped out on drawing boards in Brasília, the central
government last week reached the depths of desolation – even the delegates of the
paulista ARENA escaped its control.”\footnote{Luis Weis, “A agonia da exceção,” Veja, 14 June 1978, 20.}
For a gleeful Folha, the defeat of its candidate in São Paulo might even mean that the regime itself was in danger. “The nucleus of power
in Brasília is drawing perilously close to the point of unjustifiability.”\footnote{“Quanto mais cedo, melhor,” Folha de S. Paulo, 6 June 1978, 2.}

The next day, a stunned legislative assembly met in the slightly-damaged Nove de
Julho Palace. Malufista Salim Curiati echoed many others when he labeled the “very
democratic” convention “a historic moment” that had “offered an example to Brazil.”\footnote{Antônio Salim Curiati (ARENA), Diário Oficial: Estado de São Paulo, 10 June 1978, 74.}
For ARENA deputy Paulo Kobayashi, the convention proved that “the Revolution, and
its measures in São Paulo, has entirely exhausted itself,” since it could not “manage to
make its party […], which for 12 years never contested revolutionary measures, swallow
pre-prepared meals.”\footnote{Paulo Kobayashi (ARENA), ibid., 73.}
And for Armando Pinheiro, the convention “constituted the most
important political even in this state, and perhaps in the country, in recent times”\footnote{Armando Pinheiro (ARENA), ibid., 78.}
Opposition deputies, several of whom had attended the convention as informal observers, were similarly pleased.\textsuperscript{119} For emedebista Horácio Ortiz, “the victory of the ARENA opposition was a demonstration that no one else in the government’s own party will allow impositions from the Planalto.”\textsuperscript{120} In an allusion to the Constitutionalist revolution, Del Bosco Amaral interpreted the convention as ARENA’s “new 1932.”\textsuperscript{121} For Vanderlei Macris, the convention illustrated São Paulo’s role as a “key piece in the fight for redemocratization.”\textsuperscript{122} And Manoel Sala gushed that Maluf was “a cultured, very intelligent, hard-working man who thinks fast.”\textsuperscript{123}

On the other hand, soon-to-be MDB Senate candidate Fernando Henrique Cardoso stated that the convention “looks like a tragedy, but it’s really a comedy” because “Maluf’s candidacy doesn’t renew anything. He’s always made deals with the rottenness [in Brasília].” For Cardoso, ARENA was only “playing at democracy,” because “some think they command, others pretend to obey, the governor stays quiet, but it’s clear that he doesn’t consent, and all of this gets legitimated through crooked electioneering.”\textsuperscript{124} The MDB even began to consider running its own candidate in the electoral college, hoping to convince ARENA delegates to repudiate Maluf. Despite initial enthusiasm, along with rumored pleas from Egydio and Abreu Sodré that the party run someone, MDB aspirations were blocked by bitter internal rivalries, ARENA’s heavy

\textsuperscript{120} Horácio Ortiz (MDB), ibid., 72. The Planalto Palace is the presidential office building in Brasília.
\textsuperscript{121} Del Bosco Amaral, ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{122} Wanderlei Macris, ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{123} Manoel Sala, ibid., 73.
advantage in the electoral college, “party fidelity” laws requiring delegates to vote for their party’s candidate, and ideological opposition to indirect elections.125

Yet Maluf had more immediate concerns than the MDB, as the press was rife with speculation that Geisel and Figueiredo, offended by his insolence, might be casting about for a means of preventing his election.126 For the time being, however, the generals proclaimed their acceptance of the convention while downplaying its significance. The day after Maluf’s victory, Geisel’s spokesman insisted that the government saw nothing out of the ordinary with the result. “The only role for the government is to accept the result in accordance with the political and democratic process that has been consistently developed […] over the last several months.”127 When asked if the episode had damaged Figueiredo’s prestige, he responded, “I don’t believe so. He put the same effort […] into all the states. The result was received democratically.”128 A Figueiredo confidant admitted that the general, despite initial disappointment, was now urging ARENA to close ranks behind Maluf, “as long as everything is in order with him.”129

Some in the military argued that there could even be advantages to allowing Maluf to take office. In a conversation with a British diplomat, the director of naval intelligence stated that the authorities were “delighted” that São Paulo would be “landed with a highly unsuitable Governor of their own choice.” The rebellious paulistas, who

127 “Um acontecimento normal,” Folha de S. Paulo, 6 June 1978, 1.
128 “Ludwig nada vê contra a posse,” Folha de S. Paulo, 6 June 1978, 5.
129 “Figueiredo pede todo apoio a Paulo Maluf,” Folha de S. Paulo, 8 June 1978, 6.
had dominated the national economy for too long, needed “to be brought down a peg or two anyhow in the interests of other developing industrial states.” What better way to accomplish this than by allowing them to be governed by “a known crook from the Syrian-Lebanese Mafia”? The paulistas had made their bed – now they could lie in it.

However much resentment they harbored toward São Paulo, Geisel and Figueiredo probably preferred to be rid of Maluf. If Natel was to launch a legal challenge to the convention, or if Maluf were implicated in a pending corruption investigation of his in-laws’ business, the generals could rid themselves of him without direct involvement. Consequently, the President and his successor did their best to avoid him while they waited on the legal system. When Maluf tried to call Figueiredo to pledge his unconditional support, an aide explained that he was in a meeting. Asked when Figueiredo would meet with Maluf, a spokesman responded that Maluf would have to take the initiative by formally requesting an audience. Maluf managed to briefly see only Geisel when he cornered the president during a visit to São Paulo.

His telephone call and impromptu meeting notwithstanding, Maluf made no move to visit Brasília, despite assurances that he would request an audience. Meanwhile, he began visiting the interior of the state again, meeting with party leaders and recruiting candidates to run for ARENA in the November elections. Despite Maluf’s constant protestations of support for the “Revolution,” his avoidance of the generals in favor of

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130 S.L. Egerton, 8 June 1978, BNA, FCO, 7/3471.
131 “Maluf poderá não vencer barreira das impugnações,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 6 June 1978 3; “No governo, poucos acreditam na impunidade da vitória de Maluf,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 7 June 1978, 3.
133 “Um rápido encontro entre Geisel e Maluf,” Folha de S. Paulo, 19 June 1978, 4.
alliance-building at home raises the possibility that having won the convention without their support, he now wished to show that he could run the state without them too, or that he wished to build up a base of support that would make it unpalatable to remove him.

One option for removing Maluf was a pending investigation of his in-laws’ Lutfalla Textile and Weaving Company that stemmed from accusations that the family had pocketed a federal bailout intended to prevent the corporation’s collapse. Although Maluf had not been directly implicated, his wife was a Lutfalla shareholder, and their marriage was registered as one of joint ownership. Thus, any Lutfalla stock she held should belong equally to him, and if the government froze or confiscated those assets to help repay the bailout, Maluf could become ineligible to hold public office. On June 5, only hours after the end of the convention, an investigatory commission released the results of its investigation and recommended the confiscation of the Lutfalla group’s remaining assets.\footnote{“Confisco de bens poderia provocar inelegibilidade,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 6 June 1978, 5; “A CGI apressa sua ação no caso Lutfalla,” \textit{Veja}, 14 June 1978, 24-25.} The justice ministry began to review the report, and the case hung ominously over Maluf’s head.\footnote{“Buzaid nega envolvimento do candidato em processo,” \textit{O Estado de S. Paulo}, 7 June 1978, 7.} Meanwhile, \textit{O Estado} uncovered tax returns showing that he had owned Lutfalla stock; when reporters presented them to Maluf, he was initially speechless and finally stammered that the shares belonged to his wife, not him.\footnote{“Maus momentos: Paulo Maluf sairá ilesos do caso Lutfalla?” \textit{Veja}, 16 Aug. 1978, 26.}

On August 6, Geisel signed a decree confiscating Lutfalla’s assets. If it so desired, the government could plausibly use the decree as an excuse to disqualify Maluf. Yet a presidential spokesman insisted that the case would not affect his candidacy, and a friend of Figueiredo’s assured the press, “It is proven that he has nothing to do with the
problem.”\(^{138}\) Figueiredo himself was ambivalent. “If the justice system says yes, [he is eligible,] I will respect it; if it says no, I’ll also have to respect it.”\(^{139}\) Regardless, an attempt to declare Maluf ineligible would be complicated, since such a move so soon after the convention would look suspiciously like a “revolutionary decision.” For if the government could disqualify Maluf for corruption, why now? The scandal had been brewing for over a year, and Maluf’s relationship to the Lutfallas was hardly a secret.\(^{140}\)

And if the Lutfallas had pocketed their bailout, why had the government not kept a closer eye on them? Was the regime unable or unwilling to combat corruption? Too much attention on the scandal could prove embarrassing, and the inclination was to ignore it.

A more likely possibility – a legal challenge to the convention – had already taken shape June 3, when state deputy and Natel ally Agnaldo de Carvalho submitted a complaint to the TRE alleging that the petition signed by 678 delegates to secure Maluf’s convention eligibility had been tampered with. According to the complaint, the petition originally included only Maluf’s name, with his running mate added only after the delegates signed. This would constitute fraud and render Maluf ineligible.\(^{141}\) However, as Maluf’s lawyers pointed out, the executive committee, on which Carvalho served, had approved the list before the convention.\(^{142}\) And Carvalho was only claiming that 120 signatures exhibited signs of tampering – even if these were thrown out, Maluf would still have more than the required number.\(^{143}\) Maluf’s lawyers provided rebuttals to the
alleged proofs of tampering, and Carvalho responded with affidavits from ten delegates stating that only Maluf’s name was on the petition when they signed it.  

On June 13 Natel filed his own challenge. His lawyers pointed out that in the convention minutes, the number of votes for governor did not match the number of votes for senator or the number of delegates. The most likely culprit for these inconsistencies, they argued, was the chaos surrounding the fire and relocation, during which votes could have been lost. They also claimed that there were inconsistencies on the convention sign-in sheet, including missing and duplicated pages, double signatures, and blank lines. With so many problems in an election decided by a 28-vote margin, Natel argued that it was impossible to know who had won; the only fair course of action was to annul the convention. The executive committee offered a lengthy refutation, accounting for most of the inconsistencies, while Maluf’s lawyers pointed out that during the convention, the laudistas had not made “any protest, any argument, any unanswered complaint […] at any moment,” including the chaotic hours after the fire.

At first glance, it appeared that if the challenges were decided on their merits, Maluf had no cause for worry. Yet as the TRE deliberated, the outcome was far from certain. This could be the perfect chance for the generals to eliminate Maluf without getting their hands dirty. Would they apply pressure on the court to rule in Natel’s favor? Although the TRE was made up of career judges who had spent years in the judicial system, not in electoral politics, and although the court in São Paulo was notable for its independence, would the judges remain impervious to political influences? The

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144 Ibid., 61-64, 78-90.
145 Impugnação 877, 56-59.
146 Ibid., 64-80, 141-161.
candidates and political class waited, and electoral preparations in the paulista ARENA ground to a halt as the party waited to see who would direct its campaign.147

On June 29, the decision in both challenges came. By a 6 to 0 margin, the TRE voted to shelve Carvalho’s challenge, ruling that it contained insufficient evidence and that its accusation of criminal fraud was beyond its jurisdiction.148 By a 5-1 vote, they dismissed Natel’s challenge, ruling that Maluf and the executive committee had sufficiently accounted for the discrepancies and that the party had taken appropriate precautions to guarantee that no ballots were tampered with or lost.149 In short order, Natel appealed to the TSE, asking them to overturn the regional court’s decision.

Initially it appeared as though the appeal also had bleak prospects. The TRE had rejected all of Natel’s arguments, accepting convincing evidence that there were no discrepancies. Natel was left to argue that minor clerical errors in the vote totals in the handwritten minutes should invalidate the convention.150 For Maluf’s part, when questioned about the pending appeal, he repeated the same mantra: “I have faith in the justice system.”151 Nevertheless, as Maluf was undoubtedly aware, in a nation long governed by “revolutionary decisions” and “laws of exception,” faith in the justice system could be misplaced.

And on July 13 a bombshell fell. Brazil’s attorney general, Henrique Fonseca de Araújo, issued a brief in which he endorsed Natel’s appeal, arguing that even if other documents, including the tabulated result sheets from the convention, could explain the

149 Impugnação 877, 408-447.
150 Ibid., 450-464.
discrepancies in the minutes, supplemental documents could not have the same validity as the minutes. The minutes showed a discrepancy of 30 votes between the total for indirectly-elected senator and the adjusted total for governor, a margin greater than the 28 votes separating Maluf and Natel.\(^{152}\) Araújo’s opinion was without merit. The total of 1,194 votes for indirectly-elected senator was a simple clerical error, and it could be easily proven that, in fact, 1,224 delegates had cast ballots in that race, the same number as had voted for governor. Why should a minor miscalculation on handwritten sheets of paper, hastily scrawled at 2:00 a.m. after a 17-hour day, invalidate the entire convention? The attorney general’s contrived justification convinced the press that the TSE decision would be “political,” not juridical.\(^{153}\) Moreover, if the convention was invalidated, the state ARENA directorate would have to nominate a new candidate, since election law stipulated that state conventions had to happen in June. In that case, it appeared the directorate would choose Natel.\(^{154}\) The Folha reacted with stinging opinion pieces, claiming that the inevitable “purloining of the will manifested by the convention” was clear evidence of Figueiredo’s “lack of appetite for the exercise of democracy and his irreparable predilection for authoritarianism.”\(^{155}\) Meanwhile, Natel sought out state ARENA president Lembo, who prepared to call a meeting of the directorate.\(^{156}\) ARENA politicians waited with a sense of dread or eagerness, depending on which candidate they supported, but the press consensus was that Maluf was doomed. Although Araújo claimed that Geisel and Figueiredo had no role in his brief, there were reports that

\(^{152}\) Recurso 5046, Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, in Impugnação 877, 516-526.


\(^{154}\) “No Diretório Estadual, garantia contra derrota,” Folha de S. Paulo, 15 July 1978, 4.

\(^{155}\) “Nem vocação, nem vontade.”

\(^{156}\) “Sem apelação,” Veja, 26 July 1978, 27.
Figueiredo was showing it off to politicians in his office the afternoon before its release.\(^{157}\) The attorney general’s brief looked suspiciously like a thinly veiled effort to salvage Natel’s candidacy. Was there any doubt that the TSE judges would cave in?

The TSE decision stunned everyone. On July 17, by a 4-2 vote, the court ruled in Maluf’s favor.\(^{158}\) The attorney general, presumably with the power of the federal government behind him, had applied public pressure to the judges. And in electoral challenges under the military regime, it was uncommon for the TSE to issue a ruling that contradicted the attorney general’s brief. Yet a majority of the judges ignored the pressure and maintained Maluf’s candidacy. At the “suggestion” of “influential people” (probably Figueiredo), Natel chose not to appeal to the STF.\(^{159}\) Once the government decided in to take no action against Maluf in the Lutfalla case, it appeared that nothing would stop him from becoming governor.

Did Geisel and Figueiredo really want to eliminate Maluf? It is difficult to be certain, since the only hints are press speculation and the regime’s history of ridding itself of troublesome politicians. What appears most likely is that they were willing to accept him but would not have regretted being rid of him. Still, there was no denying that Maluf was an enthusiastic supporter of the regime (his effusive praise for Geisel and Figueiredo had impressed the federal government), and it was unlikely that a Maluf administration would differ substantially from Natel’s.\(^{160}\) What is most notable, though, is not the question of whether the generals wished to remove Maluf, but the fact that they found

\(^{158}\) Recurso 5046, in Impugnação 877, 537-585.
\(^{159}\) “Natel desiste e aceita a derrota,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 20 July 1978, 3.
\(^{160}\) “Governo absorve, mas procede a ação da CGI,” Folha de S. Paulo, 6 June 1978, 4.
themselves effectively barred from doing so, even if they so desired. The Lutfalla case raised uncomfortable questions about the regime’s handling of corruption, and the electoral justice system was too independent to be relied upon to annul the convention. Furthermore, although Maluf’s participation in the convention had violated the authoritarian spirit of the “April package,” it followed the law’s letter perfectly. The president had aroused enormous discontent with the “April package.” How could Geisel simply ignore his own law when it did not work as planned?¹⁶¹ For a regime that based what legitimacy it had on maintaining some level of legality, such a move was unthinkable. To make matters even more complicated, a veto of Maluf risked alienating ARENA politicians nationwide, who might resent blatant federal meddling in state affairs, and if enough ARENA national electoral college members were angered, it was conceivable they could refuse to support Figueiredo in the indirect presidential election and vote for a hypothetical MDB candidate.¹⁶² The convention’s aftermath vividly illustrates not just the constraints that the regime placed on professional politicians and civil society, but also the constraints it faced in its attempts to legitimize authoritarian rule with the trappings of liberal democracy, while promoting a “slow and gradual” political détente that they hoped to control at every step.

Geisel, Figueiredo, Golbery, and former president Médici all met with Maluf in short order.¹⁶³ Reports indicated that a meeting with Natel to discuss November electoral strategy was imminent, but Natel eventually announced that he refused to meet with

¹⁶¹ “Seguidores de Figueiredo não ocultam sua surpresa,” O Estado de S. Paulo, 6 June 1978, 8.
Maluf under any circumstances. Regardless, at a banquet to honor Figueiredo, Maluf asked Natel to come on stage with him. When Natel refused, the candidate pulled him to his feet, grasped his hand, and raised their arms together, grinning from ear to ear as a visibly infuriated Natel glowered back. Maluf was clearly reveling in his astounding victory. During a triumphant trip to Brasília, where he met for an hour with Figueiredo, Maluf was the center of attention. “Carelessly leaning against a doorpost, calling everyone tenderly by name, he resisted their attacks with polite questions. ‘But you want to condemn me. That's not fair. You like democracy, and I did all of you a big favor.’” He called his meeting with Figueiredo “exceptional,” since “President Figueiredo has characteristics similar to mine, like the tendency to speak his mind.” His loquaciousness, boundless energy, and charisma prompted one reporter to exclaim, “He’s not a candidate; he’s a typhoon,” which produced a smile and hug from Maluf.

Maluf won the electoral college vote in September, though six ARENA electors, including Natel, abstained. He immediately sparked controversy when, in his electoral college speech, he proposed the construction of a new state capital in the interior of the state. As governor, he would quickly distinguish himself as a hardworking, able administrator and shameless self-promoter. At the same time, his term was filled with controversy, including persistent accusations of corruption and a costly failed state oil exploration project. Yet his tirelessness, charisma, and unparalleled ability to convince people to support him meant that he was still a rising star on the national political scene.

166 “Maluf diz que São Paulo não reivindica, conquista.”
Conclusions

The 1978 São Paulo gubernatorial contest, nearly forgotten by scholars, was the key event that dramatically catapulted Maluf to prominence. Yet more than that, coming as it did in São Paulo at a time when an emerging civil society was putting unprecedented pressure on the regime, the opportunistic, inadvertent opposition of the ARENA delegates was a sign of the increasing precariousness of military rule. The generals could no longer make unilateral decisions without considering the reactions of their ARENA allies, and politicians’ resistance to the regime did not have to be overtly ideological to be significant. An electorally competitive but pliant ARENA was the regime’s best shot at staving off the gains of the revitalized opposition, but instead of obeying the regime whose legal machinations kept their party in power, the delegates of the paulista ARENA were more interested in pursuing personal ambitions, asserting their state’s political autonomy, and thumbing their nose at a “top-down” political process.

Certainly this is not the sort of “opposition” to the dictatorship that has captivated scholars, who have paid far more attention to opposition politicians and a resurgent civil society. Yet even as leftist sectors of the MDB, priests, students, and workers challenged the regime frontally, self-interested, fractious, and disobedient arenistas were undermining it from within. That undermining was inadvertent, perhaps more often than not, but it was no less effective for being unintended. Opposition from guerrilla movements, student activists, opposition politicians, and even striking workers were something the generals could expect, if not comfortably accept, but open rebellion from ARENA, even if based more on factionalism or self-interest than on disagreement with military rule, was profoundly worrisome because it came not from enemies, but from
allies. What prospects did the generals’ plan for a controlled opening have if not even their own allies in São Paulo would follow their orders?

Maluf’s victory and its aftermath also highlights key differences between the Brazilian generals and their Southern Cone counterparts. In 1978, as the Brazilian regime held gubernatorial nominating conventions, tolerated calls for reform from its civilian allies, and refused to remove the recalcitrant Maluf, the Argentine junta, in the midst of a horrifying campaign of violence, continued to enforce a ban on all political activity; when that ban was relaxed in 1981, the military replaced the president and reinstituted hard line rule. And in Chile, even after Congress was re-established following the 1980 plebiscite, political activity remained tightly controlled to an extent unimaginable in Brazil, where electoral politics dealt punishing blows to the generals in 1974, 1978 (when Maluf won), 1982, and, finally, 1984-85. While the goals of the Brazilian generals – national security, economic stabilization, and a transformed political system – were similar to those of their allies in Argentina and Chile, at nearly every step they attempted to achieve those goals through a co-optation of and collaboration with elements of the political class. When that collaboration broke down, as it did in 1978, the generals had so much at stake in their partnership with the political class that they were forced to swallow a bitter defeat.

More defeats would appear for the regime soon. In May 1978, as Maluf was wooing the ARENA delegates in advance of the convention, a little-known but combative metallurgical union leader in the São Paulo suburb of São Bernardo, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, launched the first strike Brazil had seen in a decade. In 1979 and 1980, as Figueiredo accelerated Geisel’s détente into a program of abertura, even larger strikes, once again led by Lula, would herald the revival of a civil society that had been largely
dormant since 1964. Over the next five years, between 1980 and 1985, an economic crisis of unprecedented proportions and the resurgence of popular opposition to the regime would place unbearable strain on the generals’ political project. For its part, the political class now would face not only the challenge of military tutelage, but also the wholly unexpected challenge of militant workers demanding not simply higher wages, but a fundamental restructuring of Brazilian society that would give true power to the people.
Chapter 7: “We Cannot Think About Democracy the Way We Used to”: Popular Mobilization and the Challenge of New Political Visions

On May Day 1979, up to 130,000 workers packed a stadium in the São Paulo suburb of São Bernardo to hear their leader, Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva, speak. Only a few weeks before, Lula had led metallurgical workers in the cities of Santo André, São Bernardo, and São Caetano (known colloquially as ABC) in a strike that had shaken Brazil, the second in a series of three over two years. In a statement that was little short of revolutionary in a country where the working class’s political participation had long been limited to casting votes, Lula insisted, “It’s up to us, the workers, to change the rules of the game, and instead of being ordered around like we are today, to start giving the orders around here.”¹ Such a scene must have been disconcerting to many São Paulo politicians, business leaders, and intellectuals. The thousands of workers listening to fiery speeches were not simply asking for higher salaries or a greater role in the existing political system. Rather, they were calling for a fundamental reshaping of long-standing social relations, for a Brazil in which the working majority would seize the political initiative from the “directing classes” that had ruled Brazil for centuries. For Lula and the workers who followed his lead, the fundamental conflict in Brazil was not between those who supported the military regime and those who opposed it, or between the military and the political class; rather, it was between workers and the patrões (bosses), who marshaled all the resources of the state – military and civilian – to protect their dominance.

In 1964, the bulk of Brazil’s civilian politicians, along with practically the entire business elite, had supported a military coup to drive away the specter of popular

¹ “Todos do nossa lado, diz Lula,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 May 1979, 10.
mobilization. Goulart’s tentative reforms were seen as profoundly threatening to long-standing paternalistic social relations, between the factory owner and his employees, the rural landowner and his landless laborers. Yet now workers mobilized not at the urging of an aspiring populist and reformist politician, but on their own initiative, unwilling to accept an economic system that appeared to give the rich a free pass as ever-rising inflation ate away at workers’ salaries. How would the politicians, military officers, business leaders, and intellectuals who saw policymaking as their exclusive domain react to this militant, mobilized working class? By resorting to repression, as Brazil’s elites had done for centuries? By seeking to appropriate the workers’ struggle for their own ends? Or by joining the workers in demanding a new Brazil?

The ABC strikes and the wave of workers’ mobilization they inspired across the country represented the beginning of the political class’s acceptance of expanded popular participation as an alternative to both military-directed bureaucratic authoritarianism and their own authoritarian liberalism. Not all politicians supported the strikes – some called for their repression, and many simply sat aside – but a significant swathe of them did. Progressive government allies, “moderate” oppositionists like Franco Montoro and Quércia, the autênticos, and leftist revolutionaries and intellectuals entering politics for the first time rallied to the defense of workers, both in Congress and in the streets. In the same way as politicians in 1968 had rushed to a Brasília university to protect students, in 1979 and 1980 they rushed to the streets of São Bernardo to defend not the children of the elite, but union leaders and workers whose education, cultural tastes, and language were very different from their own. In so doing, they laid the groundwork for unprecedented cooperation between the political class and workers and other segments of
civil society, a partnership that would prove vital to the regime's eventual demise and the emergence, for the first time, of a participatory democracy in Brazil.


In 1978 working class mobilization was perhaps the last issue on the minds of São Paulo politicians. Geisel had named his successor, but Minas Gerais senator José de Maglhães Pinto had also sought the ARENA nomination, and when he failed to displace Figueiredo, he began to issue increasingly severe criticisms of the regime. The MDB was considering running a candidate of its own against Figueiredo in the October electoral college vote. They would soon select General Euler Bentes Monteiro, a leading representative of factions of the military convinced that Geisel and the small group of generals surrounding him had betrayed the “Revolution” by concentrating power in their own hands and failing to formulate a sufficiently nationalist economic policy.\(^2\) In São Paulo, Paulo Maluf was promising to challenge Laudo Natel at ARENA’s convention. And appearing on the horizon were the November legislative elections, which would elect a third of the Senate, the entire Chamber of Deputies, and all state legislatures.

Yet as the political class and military debated the country’s political future among themselves, other groups began to demand a voice in policy formation. The student movement, cautious since the crackdown of 1968, in 1977 had begun to return to the streets, not only to demand educational reforms, but also to protest the regime’s continued authoritarianism as embodied in the April package.\(^3\) In February, the Brazilian

\(^2\) For an outstanding analysis of the Monteiro candidacy, see Chirio, 205-230.

Committee for Amnesty (Comitê Brasileiro Pela Anistia) was founded in Rio de Janeiro, demanding a “broad, general, and unrestricted amnesty” for exiled foes of the regime, political prisoners, and those who had been affected by institutional acts. In July, the United Black Movement (Movimento Negro Unificado – MNU) would be formed in São Paulo, calling attention to the unequal treatment of Afro-Brazilians. The country’s first gay rights organization was founded in 1978, and the women’s movement was growing rapidly. All these movements brought together intellectuals, activists, and ordinary (usually middle class) citizens disenchanted not only with the regime’s suppression of civil liberties and democratic institutions, but with broader questions of human rights, socio-economic justice, and identity politics and prejudice. As economist Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira put it, it appeared that “the process of the disintegration of the authoritarian political model in vigor in Brazil is accelerating day by day.”

Of all these social movements perhaps the most militant and organized was the labor movement, above all in suburban São Paulo, whose automobile manufacturers and heavy industries formed the backbone of the Brazilian economy. Since the mid-1970s, a new generation of dynamic leaders like Lula had encouraged greater contact between union leaders and workers and urged revisions to the law to end state tutelage of unions.

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4 For the most complete discussion of the movement for amnesty, see the 21 analyses in Haike Kleber da Silva, ed. A luta pela anistia (São Paulo: Editora Unesp, Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo, Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2009).
Rather than creating a parallel union structure to the Vargas’s corporatist system, they sought reform within the existing union structure. In 1977, a study revealed that since 1973, the regime had been underreporting annual inflation rates, which were used as the basis for annual salary adjustments; in the years since, metalworkers had lost 34.1% of their salary due to the government’s manipulation of data. Led by Lula, the São Bernardo metalworkers’ union launched a bold though unsuccessful campaign to pressure the government to restore their lost salary via a new adjustment.8

By 1978, Lula had become recognized as a spokesperson for workers, and he was regularly interviewed on television and in newspapers about labor issues. When he spoke in late 1978 at a “National Encounter for Democracy” in Rio de Janeiro, sponsored by architect Oscar Niemeyer and writer Antonio Houaiss, the British embassy noted, with apparent approval, that his speech “articulat[ed] dissatisfaction with the present regime, but without any clear ideological content.”9 Still, mobilized, independent union leaders, even if they avoided direct challenges to the regime, were cause for unease. The security services had been keeping an eye on Lula as early as 1976, when a report from naval intelligence to the justice ministry highlighted a “highly subversive speech” he gave during a visit to the Santos metalworkers’ union, in which he allegedly claimed, “All the revolutionary governments have been of poor character,” and called for unity among workers, “so that we can go back to the way things were before 1964.”10 In Lula, the intelligence services saw the possibility of a return of the union-led “agitation” of the

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Goulart years; the fact that the brother who had convinced him to become involved in the union was a known communist certainly did not help matters. The secret minutes of a June 1978 meeting of the CSN reveal similar nervousness. Planning minister João Paulo Reis Velloso commented, in the midst of a monologue praising the “Revolution” for establishing democracy, “The unions are apparently conducting themselves with a degree of independence. […] Obviously we need to keep an eye on [their] behavior. […] It is necessary to see what the true nature of these union leaders is. If they are acting to defend the legitimate economic interests of the workers, or if other influences exist.”

On the other hand, many paulista opposition politicians and intellectuals were enormously encouraged by this more openly combative unionism. Here were articulate, mobilized union leaders preaching the same message the MDB had since 1974. In May 1978, Fernando Henrique Cardoso argued: “Democracy is a popular issue. […] I don’t believe that we can think about democracy, now, the way we thought about it in the past. […] The number of workers in Brazil has doubled. A substantive democracy will depend on articulations between the diverse social classes.” Similarly, for Almino Afonso, one-time labor minister under Goulart, without the “extension of citizenship (in its triple meaning – civil, political, and social) to all sectors of the population,” along with a political party on which workers “stamped the seal of their social presence,” Brazil’s democratization would remain unachievable.

12 “Severo defende a livre expressão para trabalhador,” Folha de S. Paulo, 10 May 1978, 7.
Calls for popular participation were not restricted to left-leaning intellectuals. Respected legal scholar Miguel Reale was a former integralist who had helped Costa e Silva write his proposed amendments to the constitution in 1969. Yet now he wrote that in contrast to old conceptions of liberalism, which focused on individual rights and the right of citizens to elect their leaders, a new “liberalism with participation,” should recognize that, “the right to participate socially and culturally in the wealth of the community, both in the realm of making decisions and in access to better forms of distribution of wealth, is inherent to every citizen.”

Severo Gomes, a cabinet minister under two military presidents, insisted on “a political framework that guarantees political expression for workers, unions, and parties – in a word, democracy.” And opposition senators Montoro and Quércia attended 1978 May Day festivities in Santo André, where Montoro blasted the government’s wage policy, called for direct negotiations between unions and employers, and affirmed that Brazilian history was not one of wars or generals, but was a “history of the workers’ struggle.” Montoro further promised that wage policy would be the centerpiece of the MDB’s electoral campaign.

Yet many unionists, despite having voted for the MDB in 1974, were unimpressed with the politicians and intellectuals embracing their cause. As the Folha explained in a series on so-called “autêntico” union leaders, “They have in common […] a markedly critical view of the Brazilian political class. […] When they […] criticize a party, they

15 “Severo defende a livre expressão para trabalhador,” Folha de S. Paulo, 10 May 1978, 7.
talk about the opposition. They do not waste their time with ARENA.”¹⁸ As Arnaldo Gonçalves, president of the Santos metalworkers union, explained, “If a bill favorable to workers arrives in Congress but will harm the class of politicians, they’ll vote in favor of their class. Most politicians are businessmen, landowners, bankers.” As for intellectuals, he said, “My impression is that intellectuals discovered the Brazilian workers just now. If they want to help the worker, great. What is not possible is for them to want to command the working class.”¹⁹ Jacó Bittar, the outspoken president of the Paulínia oil workers’ union, criticized Quércia for not fulfilling his promises to the working class. He argued that the workers did not need another labor party like Vargas’s old PTB, because it would end up dominated “not by workers, but by the middle class on up.”²⁰ And Pedro Gomes Sampaio, president of the Santos oil workers’ union, pointedly explained, “The opposition should take note that the working class is changing and could join together to itself become the opposition. […] If the MDB does not take note, it is going to be left on the outside.”²¹ For all three, the argument was the same – workers should unite with other social groups to oppose the regime, but workers must represent their own interests.

May Day brought this latent discontent with politicians to the fore. When Montoro and Quércia arrived in Santo André, they received boos from the assembled

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¹⁸ “Sindicatos e política no Brasil hoje,” Folha de S. Paulo, 7 May 1978, 10.
¹⁹ “Sabemos que só votar no MDB não resolverá,” Folha de S. Paulo, 7 May 1978, 10.
²⁰ “Participação operária e segurança nacional,” Folha de S. Paulo, 7 May 1978, 10.
²¹ “Sindicatos e política no Brasil hoje,” Folha de S. Paulo, 9 May 1978, 7. In the final installment of the Folha’s series on the “new unionism,” Santo André metalworkers’ president Benedito Marcílio expressed a different point of view as he praised senators like Montoro and Rio Grande do Sul’s Paulo Brossard and pointed out that the threat of cassação prevented politicians from doing as much as they would like for workers. He called the congressional opposition “true heroes” and argued, “They deserve to esteemed.” Marcílio, however, had already announced his intention to run for the Chamber of Deputies in November, and he could have hoped for no support from the MDB leadership if he had publicly insulted them as his fellow unionists had. “Sindicatos e política no Brasil hoje,” Folha de S. Paulo, 10 May 1978, 6.
workers, who cheered as one shouted, “We don’t need well-dressed and well-fed deputies and senators going to Congress to pretend like they are defending our interests.”22 Zé Maria de Almeida, a metalworker who was imprisoned 30 days in 1977 for passing out pamphlets for the Trotskyist student group Liga Operária, called on workers not to support the MDB, but to form their own political party. “The bosses have organizations, they have legislation that protects them. […] And the workers – how will they defend themselves? […] Let’s organize ourselves and form a party that will construct a more just society – a socialist party.”23 The boos for the politicians turned to cheers, however, when Montoro gave a heated speech blasting the regime’s wage policy and calling for direct salary negotiations between unions and businesses. Quércia agreed that workers might need their own party, but he argued that it should be more a labor (trabalhista) party than a socialist one, in order to “avoid deformations.”24

This year May Day was different, as workers demonstrated “unmistakable impatience” with economic policies and statistical manipulation that steadily ate away at the value of their salaries.25 Up to 100,000 workers appeared at a festival featuring a soccer game and concerts, sponsored by the state government and attended by Geisel and state political leaders. Yet even at this event, intended to demonstrate the government’s paternalistic concern for workers, there were signs of discontent. As he introduced Geisel, the president of the state chemical and pharmaceutical workers’ union said, “Mr. President, you know that we would be failing to fulfill our duty of loyalty if we affirmed

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22 “Em Santo André, debate livre e entusiasmado.”
23 “Discursos pedem justiça e liberdade.”
24 “O MDB chega a Santo André sob vaias. E sai aplaudido.”
25 Celso Ming, “Por que este 1o de Maio foi diferente,” Jornal da Tarde, 2 May 1978, 10.
in public, before this multitude, that everything is going well for our working classes. […] Only free unions can contribute decisively to the government achieving the structural changes the nation demands.”

That evening, when Egydio and Geisel held a banquet for labor leaders at the governor’s mansion, reporters asked Egydio to explain why some of the most outspoken leaders, like Lula and Santo André metalworkers’ union president Benedito Marcilio, had ignored his invitation. Gomes Sampaio commented from afar, “If President Geisel were going to alter the union structure that we have, we would go, but [as it is] I don’t see any reason to go. […] I won’t go participate in a commemoration whose purpose is to serve as a political trampoline.”

Even some of the most conciliatory union leaders sounded combative notes. São Paulo state metalworkers’ union president Joaquim dos Santos Andrade demanded not only the right to strike and changes to wage policy, but also “union freedom, […] the return of the rule of law, and […] full democracy.” “Brazilian unionism has been distorted,” he lamented, “just like the political parties, […] which are submitted to the same situation that has obliged the unions to be what they are today: entities under the total tutelage of the government.” In attendance were 800 metalworkers and state deputy Alberto Goldman, outspoken MDB autêntico and former member of the PCB.

More militant unionists were even more critical. In the São Paulo suburb of Osasco, 2,500 workers and students gathered at a rally “without rulers, bosses, politicians, or pelegos,” to unite workers dissatisfied with what they saw as unions’

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26 “Geisel admite que os salários são baixos,” Jornal da Tarde, 2 May 1978, 8.
27 “No Palácio, só 40 minutos com líderes sindicalistas,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 May 1978, 19.
28 “Metalúrgicos protestam e traçam próximas metas,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 May 1978, 16.
29 “800 operários participam de um ‘ato cívico,’” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 May 1978, 18.
excessively conciliatory leadership. Special scorn was reserved for union leaders attending the banquet at the governor’s mansion. “The minimum wage we receive won’t even buy a bottle of wine at the dinner they’re going to hold today.”

The MDB was surprised to discover the disregard in which unionists held their party and scrambled to find an explanation. Quércia and Montoro claimed that the jeers had originated from a few leftist students mixed among the workers, and Montoro pointed out that even Lula had been criticized. The boos must have particularly stung Montoro, who thought of himself as highly engaged with labor issues. Only three days later, he gave a lengthy Senate speech decrying falling real wages and proposing as solutions direct negotiations between unions and employers, an immediate 20% raise for salaried workers, and the establishment of a “democratic political model and the participation of the sectors of the community in decisions that have to do with them.”

Still, Folha editorialist Samuel Wainer pointed out that the boos were a natural response to “the timidity with which the MDB has faced the social problem,” and the fact that the party had taken the workers’ support for granted, “instinctively orienting its political behavior toward liberal sectors, intellectuals, and […] the urban middle class.”

Several MDB deputies also interpreted the situation as a sign that the MDB needed to increase its focus on workers’ interests. Federal deputy Alceu Collares took advantage of the opportunity to urge his party to strengthen its labor department. The autêntico federal

30 “Em Osasco, a manifestação das oposições sindicais,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 May 1978, 15.
32 Melhem, Política de botinas amarelas: O MDB-PMDB paulista de 1965 a 1988, 163. As a member of the PDC, Montoro had spearheaded legislation establishing a “family salary” (salário família) that paid a small monthly supplement to certain low income workers.
33 Franco Montoro (MDB-SP), Diário do Senado Federal, 5 May 1978, 1908-1915.
34 Samuel Wainer, “Um alerta para o MDB,” Folha de S. Paulo, 4 May 1978, 2.
deputy José de Freitas Nobre admitted that the MDB had not carried out a “coordinated effort aiming at the defense of workers’ demands,” though he pointed out that the party had proposed abundant legislation on behalf of workers – the problem was that the ARENA majority in Congress invariably prevented their bills from passing.\(^\text{35}\)

On May 12, 1,600 metalworkers at the Saab-Scania automobile factory in São Bernardo concluded that they could not count on politicians’ promises and negotiations mediated by the labor court system, and they launched Brazil’s first strike in a decade, demanding a raise on top of the inflation-based adjustment they had received for 1978.\(^\text{36}\) By May 16, the strikes had grown to 20,000 participants in suburban São Paulo, at the Volkswagen, Ford, and Mercedes Benz plants, among others.\(^\text{37}\) Significantly, rather than making their demands through the union to the labor court system, as the law required, workers directly negotiated with their employers. Even when the Regional Labor Court (Tribunal Regional de Trabalho – TRT) ruled by a 15-1 vote, two days later, that the strikes were illegal, the number of strikers grew, and they were joined by 15,000 workers in Santo André.\(^\text{38}\) Meanwhile, the state secretary of security confirmed that a unit of military riot police had deployed to São Bernardo to “impede eventual agitators from taking advantage of the moment to infiltrate the working classes [and] sabotage peaceful negotiations.”\(^\text{39}\) And labor minister Prieto stated that though the government would not

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directly repress them, employers had every right to call police.40 Yet Egydio insisted that he would only order police intervention if he received a written request from the federal government.41 As one foreign diplomat pointed out, the insistence on a written request equaled an admission that he would do nothing, because “in terms of Brazilian bureaucracy, [the time required to wait for a written request] could mean inactivity for some time.”42 And regional labor delegate Vinícius Ferraz Torres stated that there was no need for force, since this was “the most peaceful strike ever seen in São Paulo.”43

For politicians, officers, and regime officials, emboldened workers on strike could be either thrilling or disconcerting. General Dilermando Gomes, the Army commander for São Paulo, stated that the strikes did not worry him much, but they were “bringing a certain apprehension, because I am feeling that something is beginning in this sector, and it could escalate and damage the security situation.”44 Still, workers were striking peacefully, and their leaders, above all Lula, appeared honest and responsible. Torres said, “We in the Labor Ministry are very happy to be able to deal with a union leader as enlightened as Lula.”45 Geisel spokesman Col. Rubem Ludwig added that the strike was “a sign of the times we live in” and that labor legislation “recognizes all these rights.”46

For most of the military and its civilian allies, although the labor mobilization of the early 1960s had been a sign that Brazil was sliding toward social disaggregation and communism, Lula’s dynamic leadership and the workers’ peaceful approach to making

42 M. F. Daly to M. G. Macdonald, Esq., South America Desk, 23 May 1978, BNA, FCO 7/3471.
43 “A greve mais pacífica que já se viu em SP, diz DRT,” Folha de S. Paulo, 24 May 1978, 23.
46 “Greve é sinal dos tempos,” Folha de S. Paulo, 22 May 1978, 22.
their demands meant that these strikes were less threatening. A few went so far as to endorse them. Cláudio Lembo, state ARENA president, admitted, “The workers may indeed be breaking the law,” but added, “The truth is that the current labor arrangement is obsolete, the government’s wage policy does not satisfy, and all of this will necessarily have to be replaced by something new.” 47 Three days later, when the federal police attempted to block the state public broadcasting channel TV Cultura from airing their recorded question and answer session with Lula, Lembo and Laudo Natel intervened, and the interview aired as scheduled. 48 Even the notoriously anti-labor O Estado, in an editorial in the Jornal da Tarde, argued, “Everything we have seen in […] ABC, until now, has been positive. […] The demands are reasonable, and the behavior of the workers could serve as an example to priests and students.” 49 For the labor ministry, ARENA politicians, and the press, the strikes, while illegal, were not a “subversive” threat to stability. In the deteriorating economic context, it was reasonable to expect workers, whose decline in real wages was beyond dispute, to be discontented.

Members of the MDB publicly supported the workers without exception. After workers’ manifestations against the MDB on May Day, the strikes represented a fortuitous opportunity. Montoro and Quércia acted immediately to express solidarity. Quércia insisted in the Senate that what mattered was not whether the strikes were legal, but whether they were just. “The strike that some businessmen want to classify as illegal – and perhaps is [illegal] – is a legitimate strike, because it originates with human beings

47 “Que dizem o líder da Arena, o empresário, o deputado,” Jornal da Tarde, 18 May 1978, 11.
48 “O governo pede aos operários que voltem ao trabalho,” Jornal da Tarde, 22 May 1978, 12.
49 “O que há de positivo neste movimento grevista,” Jornal da Tarde, 22 May 1978, 4. Janguista is an adjective for João Goulart, whose nickname was Jango.
who [...] have the right to demand better days, better salaries.” The strikes were a sign that workers too longed for democracy. “This strike [...] is a demonstration that popular longing [...] cannot remain subordinated, limited by the rigid structure imposed by our legal organization,” Quêrcia argued. “It shows the urgent necessity of our obtaining a democratic opening that the Brazilian people dream of.”\(^5^0\) Montoro argued that even if the strikes were illegal, was it not illegal to manipulate inflation data? Was it not illegal to fail to adjust the minimum wage to keep pace with inflation? Either way, the strikes’ “illegality” did not change three facts: The cost of living was rising, real wages were falling, and the government had based 1973 salary adjustments on falsified statistics.\(^5^1\) In an op-ed, Montoro made the same points, tying the workers’ struggle to the MDB’s program. “The best tool for the just distribution of wealth is called democracy.”\(^5^2\)

In the Chamber of Deputies, a few emedebistas with union ties defended the strikes. Frederico Brandão, a former president of a bank employees’ union who had been removed by government intervention in 1971, went to São Bernardo to speak with Lula and workers and gave speeches begging the government not to repress the strikes.\(^5^3\) His fellow paulista Ruy Brito, ex-president of the National Confederation of Workers in Credit Businesses, blasted ARENA for blocking the installation of a special committee to investigate manipulation of inflation data.\(^5^4\) Yet Ulysses Guimarães limited himself to admitting to the press, “I know there are strikes, and it is the worker’s right. [...] Profits

\(^{5^0}\) Orestes Quêrcia (MDB-SP), *Diário do Senado Federal*, 19 May 1978, 2293
\(^{5^3}\) Frederico Brandão (MDB-SP), *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, 16 May 1978, 3615; *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, 17 May 1978, 3691.
have never flat-lined. Wages have.”" The party’s federal deputies released a tepid statement calling for a “just solution so that the workers can return to their activities.”

If other than Montoro and Quércia MDB politicians hesitated to actively support the strikes, the workers found other allies, as clerics, civil society movements, and intellectuals rallied to their cause. Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, the progressive archbishop of São Paulo, stated, “We cannot restrict ourselves to the law when Justice demands more. The workers […] should fight for wage justice.” Economist Eduardo Suplicy blasted the government for forbidding radio and television from reporting on the strikes, hesitating to meet with union leaders, and refusing to provide the formula it used for calculating salary adjustments. “What will determine the legitimacy of this strike will be the workers themselves, not […] the government, to which one cannot easily credit demonstrations of excessive attention to labor’s demands.”

One of the most eloquent defenses came from Cardoso, who wrote in an op-ed for the Folha that the strikes were vastly significant because with their use of direct action and their challenge to the “tutelage of the labor ministry,” they constituted a forceful challenge to authoritarianism and a call for a truly democratic society.

It is democratization on the march, […] from the feet of the people, from each one of us, from all those who are neither callous right-wingers nor ignoble exploiters. The union movement is reborn. Hope for better days is reborn. Eagerness to organize, speak, propose alternatives, negotiate is reborn. Now we can begin to speak of democracy without adjectives. It comes from below […]. Everyone […] who does not limit himself or herself to thinking of democracy as a crystal birdcage to make the interests of oligarchies and elites glitter, salutes the

55 “O general Dilermando não está preocupado.”
movement of the paulista workers as the sign of a more promising tomorrow. May it arrive soon, for we all want democracy – now.\footnote{Fernando Henrique Cardoso, “Os trabalhadores e a democracia,” Folha de S. Paulo, 28 May 1978, 3.}

Despite Cardoso’s praise for the union movement and his argument that workers needed “relative independence” from parties, what was most striking was the projection onto workers of his position. The workers Cardoso imagined were responsible centrists engaged not in a fight to transform longstanding social relations, but in a benign struggle for just wages and political democracy. Although unionists had demonstrated little interest in party politics, he insisted, “[Workers] know that […] there is a moment for politics. Without it, the poorest workers […] end up being highly exploited when there are not strong unions and national political parties that support them.”\footnote{Ibid.} Even a renowned leftist academic was unable to conceive a political system in which workers did not rely upon a “national party” dominated, in all probability, by career politicians.

Despite the attempts of politicians, students, and intellectuals to offer assistance, they found that unions were hesitant to accept anything beyond moral support. Indeed, when politicians called Lula asking how they could help, he refused to take their calls, stating that politicians should simply give legislative speeches in support of the workers’ struggle – speeches that he knew no one paid attention to.\footnote{“Um juiz votou pela absolvição da acusada. Um só,” Jornal da Tarde, 19 May 1978, 12.} As for students, who had participated in the May Day rally in Osasco and were known to have “infiltrated” factories in order to instruct workers about class struggle, Lula said, “I think that the students, if they really want to help workers, should stay in the universities.”\footnote{“O povo perguntou a Lula. Aqui estão as suas respostas,” Jornal da Tarde, 22 May 1978, 24.} For Lula,
independence for the labor movement meant not only independence from state intervention, but also independence from anyone who sought to speak for them.

By May 30, the metalworkers had successfully negotiated raises with their employers and returned to work. For the first time since 1968, workers had defied the regime’s laws restricting strikes, and they had won. Although union leaders like Lula and Marcílio had played an important role in assisting with mediation, the strikes had arisen spontaneously, without direct union involvement, and victory had been surprisingly easy. Despite the adverse TRT ruling, the strikes faced no significant opposition from the government. The regime was likely so hesitant because the generals and labor ministry acknowledged that in a climate of political détente, as once-a-year salary adjustments were quickly lost to accelerating inflation, the workers’ demands were not unreasonable. Why couldn’t the “Revolution” accommodate a labor movement that appeared to accept the basic rules of a capitalist economy, avoiding any hint of leftist subversion? In addition, the strikes were relatively small and restricted to two cities in one state. If employers were willing to negotiate, why should the regime step in?

For arenistas, publicly supporting the strikes was out of the question. The TRT had declared them illegal, and the official government position was that the workers should immediately return to work. At the same time, with elections only six months away, no one was going to risk their electoral future attacking working class demands for better living conditions. It had been precisely ARENA’s failure to connect with the working class that had led to the fiasco of 1974, and it was unthinkable for the party to make the same mistake now. The safest strategy, as always, was silence.

While Quércia and Montoro were eager to improve their credentials with workers, most MDB politicians, with the exception of a few ex-unionist deputies, were also silent. With upcoming elections, hopes that Geisel might soon repeal AI-5, and the debate over whether an MDB presidential candidacy, strikes may not have been a priority. Yet it is more likely that MDB support was lukewarm because opposition politicians were uncertain how to respond. For unlike the workers aligned with the old PTB, these union leaders (except for Marcílio) were not interested in merely incorporating their goals into an elite-dominated party that promised to represent their interests. Rather, leaders like Lula, Gonçalves, Bittar, and Sampaio were suggesting that workers might require their own party, one that they would manage on their own. As Brazil faced its first strikes in a decade, most MDB politicians found themselves unprepared for mobilized, politically articulate unions and perplexed by workers’ ambivalence toward them.

The remainder of 1978 saw an enormously significant development. After a decade, Geisel permitted the repeal of AI-5, as Congress approved a constitutional amendment replacing it with “safeguards” designed to preserve the “defense” of the regime against subversion. Yet despite their claims of progress toward political opening, Geisel, Golbery, Figueiredo, and the generals allied with them had no intention of relinquishing power. Although the revocation of AI-5 received the enthusiastic support of ARENA, in one of the great ironies of military rule, it garnered only one MDB vote, as the rest of the party protested that the new “safeguards” were no less authoritarian than the act. For although the amendment restored immunity (except in cases of an “attack on national security”) and habeas corpus, it also created a “state of emergency” that suspended civil liberties for 180 days, and, unlike a state of siege, could be decreed
without congressional approval. The reforms, said the MDB, constituted nothing more than the institutionalization of a decade-old state of exception.

When the reform package was proposed in June, Lula blasted it for ignoring the interests of workers. Where were the reforms to labor legislation, the freedom to strike and negotiate with employers? “I see once more that we cannot expect that reforms that heed our interests will originate with the government. They should come from the working class itself, which is ready to demand that it be listened to, not just keeping asking.”

Two days later, 32 union leaders demanded a reform to “liberate us from the AI-5 that weighs on the worker – the Consolidation of Labor Laws [Consolidação das Leis de Trabalho – CLT].” As smaller strikes began to spread across the country, Geisel issued a decree law in August expanding the list of professions forbidden from striking under any circumstance. Though metalworkers were not specifically included, it permitted its extension to “industries defined by decree of the president.”

In September, as the final vote on the reforms neared, Lula and nine other union leaders traveled to Brasília, where they lobbied Congress to include labor reforms in the reform package. Guimarães met with them but argued that the MDB already supported workers’ initiatives and that in the case of the reform package, “The MDB does not want to aggravate or take advantage of tensions.” When they met with ARENA president Francelino Pereira, the Minas Gerais deputy told them that now was the time for political

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65 “Líderes sindicais pedem liberdade com as reformas,” Folha de S. Paulo, 26 June 1978, 4. The CLT was the authoritarian, corporatist labor code instituted under Vargas. See French.
reforms, not labor ones, and parties, not unions, were where labor legislation should be debated. “The political parties have a fuller view of socioeconomic problems and are thus better equipped than the unions to decide. Parties should thus be esteemed and valued.”

A frustrated Lula said ten days later, “It was disappointing for us to verify politicians’ distance from our problems.” Only by founding their own political party, he argued, could workers hope to exercise influence in Brasília. “The journey of a few union leaders to Brasília was a first step, but the ideal would be the presence of our people there, to immediately take the positions adopted by the bases. […] The unions […] should exercise an influence over the entire political class.”

![Figure 10: Lula and Other Union Leaders at a Congressional Committee Hearing](image)

**Figure 10: Lula and Other Union Leaders at a Congressional Committee Hearing**

Source: *Folha de S. Paulo*, 13 Sept. 1978, 5 (Lula center right)

Leftist intellectuals and leading opposition figures agreed that workers had suffered under the regime’s wage policy and endorsed direct salary negotiations. They toyed with the idea of increasing the visibility of MDB’s “labor department,” which had

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no more than 200 members in any city and scraped by on a shoestring budget. More significantly, party leaders invited Lula to a meeting at Cardoso’s apartment in hopes of convincing him to join the party. Quércia argued that the workers’ struggle could be incorporated into the MDB, “Everything [union leaders] hope for […] can be found within the MDB. […] We think it’s important for the union leaders to participate in the MDB, where they can apply pressure for the realization of projects that interest them.” And when General Monteiro, the MDB’s presidential candidate, met privately with Lula and “autêntico” union leaders, he begged them, “Don’t let your organization be characterized by political behavior, don’t let any type of outside forces distort your principle objectives, but continue being a instrument of struggle specifically for labor problems.” For opposition leaders, the workers’ struggle for better wages and fairer labor laws was legitimate, but it should be incorporated into the broader struggle against the regime; workers themselves must remain apolitical. Lula and his allied unionists, however, were formulating a vision of politics in which workers would not merely participate in party politics, adding their voice to those of competing interest groups, but, rather, challenged a socioeconomic system that marginalized workers. As Lula told Monteiro, the most effective way to accomplish this would be “the formation of their own political party.”

Nevertheless, in a two party system the MDB was the only route to political influence for workers or anyone else dissatisfied with the regime. The 1978 elections saw

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69 “Departamento Trabalhista do MDB quer maior apoio,” Folha de S. Paulo, 5 March 1979, 4.
70 Cardoso and Setti, A arte da política: a história que vivi, 85-86.
71 “Quércia quer que Lula seja filiado ao partido,” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 April 1979, 9.
72 Report from SNI to Ministério da Justiça, 23 Nov. 1978, AN-RJ, DSI-MJ, 8078, GAB 100.445
73 Ibid.

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several unionists and leftist allies on the MDB ticket, and many other leftists entered electoral politics for the first time to support the Senate candidacy of Cardoso, running in an MDB sublegenda to garner more votes for Montoro. Benedito Marcílio, president of the Santo André metalworkers’ union, was elected federal deputy. Aurélio Peres, a São Paulo metallurgical unionist and militant in the Communist Party of Brazil (Partido Comunista do Brasil – PCdoB) who had been imprisoned and tortured and was now an activist in the Movement against the Cost of Living (Movimento Contra a Carestia), had run with no hopes of winning, but merely to gain attention for communists. In fact, by law, he was ineligible to run – he had not belonged to the MDB long enough to run, and he had a pending criminal case from his communist militancy. But Quércia presented him with an undated party registration form, which he then backdated before submitting. When his criminal case was dismissed just before the registration approval deadline, Peres became a candidate. He was elected with nearly 50,000 votes.74

The 28-year-old Geraldo Siqueira Filho was a former Trotskyist student activist who had been arrested in 1970 for passing out pamphlets to workers on May Day; one of his comrades was tortured and killed in DOPS custody. In 1978, he was elected state deputy for São Paulo.75 His colleague in the legislative assembly, Irma Passoni, was the daughter of merchants, a former nun, and an organizer of ecclesiastical base

75 Siqueira became involved in student activism as a high school student in 1968. Though he continued his militancy after the decree of AI-5, he opted not to join the armed struggle, instead tying himself to the followers of Argentine Trotskyist Juan Posadas, who eschewed armed struggle in favor of efforts to mobilize the working class. He was imprisoned while passing out pamphlets on May Day 1970; one of the activists arrested with him, Olavo Hansen, was killed while in DOPS custody. See Ricardo de Azevedo, "Memória: Geraldo Siqueira," Teoria e Debate, no. 65 (2006). http://www2.fpa.org.br/o-que-fazemos/editora/teoria-e-debate/edicoes-anteriores/memoria-geraldo-siqueira.
Communities; she recalled that when she joined the state legislature, more conservative politicians grumbled that she welcomed working class people (who they called “tie-less ragamuffins”) to her office.76 Eduardo Suplicy, the economist who had defended the workers in the press during the strikes, was also elected state deputy. These new deputies would play a key role in supporting workers’ mobilization in 1979 and beyond.

1979: “It Is up to the Workers to Change the Rules of the Game”

On March 15, 1979, Figueiredo, chief of military staff under Médici and head of the SNI under Geisel, was inaugurated as Brazil’s fifth consecutive general-president. Born in Rio de Janeiro, he came from a military family. His father, an ardent anti-getulista, had commanded troops for the paulista rebels in the Constitutionalist revolution and, after the fall of the Estado Novo, was elected federal deputy from the UDN; two of his brothers also became generals. As early as 1976, a foreign diplomat noted that he was Geisel’s most likely choice as his successor.77 When Geisel designated him in December 1977, despite a thwarted plot by General Sylvio Frota to pressure Geisel into naming him, it appeared that there had been little consultation of the Armed Forces and virtually none of civilian politicians; Figueiredo was Geisel’s personal choice. All indications were that he intended to maintain Geisel’s project of détente and even expand it to abertura – political opening, a project in which he would enjoy the continued collaboration of Golbery, who remained on as chief of civilian staff. In the evaluation of the British embassy, Figueiredo believed in “less repression, some more liberty, and, indeed, more democracy within the limits set by the revolutionary framework, the concept of ‘relative

76 Interview with Passoni in Marieta de Moraes Ferreira and Alexandre Fortes, Muitos caminhos, uma estrela: memórias de militantes do PT (São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2008), 313-317.
77 Stanley Duncan to A. J. Collins, Latin America Department, 6 Aug. 1976, BNA, FCO 7/3405.
democracy,’ and the accepted need for the State to maintain protective mechanisms in its own defence.”78 While he, like Geisel, professed devotion to “democracy,” he was adamant that party (that is, MDB) “intransigence,” signified by “attempting to impose the victory of its ideas,” could delay abertura.79 Like under Geisel, some sort of relaxation of the regime’s authoritarian measures could be expected, but never to the point where the generals lost control of the process.

Although politicians speculated feverishly about the reforms Figueiredo might permit, such as amnesty, a switch to a multi-party system, or direct gubernatorial elections in 1982, these changes would have limited immediate relevance for workers, who in 1979 faced the same government tutelage of unions and declining real wages they had faced a year earlier. For 1979 the salary inflation adjustment was to be 44%. While the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo – FIESP) offered raises ranging from 0 to 16% (depending on pay level) above the inflation rate, the state federation of metallurgical unions demanded a 29% increase above inflation, to help make up for the decline in real wages since 1965.80 Meanwhile, rumors arose that Geisel, before leaving office, might issue an executive order adding metalworkers to the list of professions forbidden from striking.81 FIESP increased its proposal to 0 to 19%, which was accepted by most paulista metallurgical unions, but the ABC unions rejected the offer, and on March 12, three days before

78 Norman Statham to J. B. Ure, South America Department, 17 Jan. 1978, BNA, FCO 7/3471.
79 “O que eu sou e o que eu penso,” Veja, 12 April 1978, 27.
80 “São Bernardo fica fora de novo acordo salarial,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 March 1979, 25; “Fiesp propões reajustes de 44 a 58%,” Folha de S. Paulo, 9 March 1979, 29; “Metalúrgicos do ABC decretam greve geral,” Folha de S. Paulo, 10 March 1979, 10.
81 “Lei antigreve pode incluir os metalúrgicos,” Folha de S. Paulo, 11 March 1979, 16.
Figueiredo’s inauguration, over 150,000 metalworkers went on strike.82 Two days later, workers in several unions in the interior held assemblies in which they forced their union leadership to withdraw their acceptance of the FIESP proposal.83

When the strike began, Maluf, sworn in the same day as Figueiredo, reacted sanguinely, affirming, “ Strikes are a right in democracies.”84 Delfim Neto, Figueiredo’s agriculture minister, stated, “Strikes are a part of the way things are, they are part of the evolution of the capitalist system. It is a mistake to always want to view all the pressures that arise from society as something destructive.” Labor minister Murilo Macedo, a career banker who had just served as São Paulo business and finance secretary, promised that he would only take a hard line if all other solutions failed. “[I will] maintain dialogue until it breaks down. I will continue until every option has been exhausted.”85 ARENA president José Sarney, senator from Maranhão, admitted, “All classes have the right to manifest their demands,” but added that it was important to remain attentive, in order to make sure that “people who wish to exploit [the workers] politically” did not take control of the labor movement.86 Indeed, this would remain the great fear of government officials and ARENA politicians alike – that under-educated, gullible workers might allow radical students or communist agitators to co-opt what should be an apolitical movement.

Regime officials and allied politicians were so calm because of the placid nature of the 1978 strikes. Yet their tolerance evaporated as it become clear that 1979 would be

83 “No segundo dia, a greve ganha novas adesões,” Folha de S. Paulo, 15 March 1979, 35.
84 “Maluf: parar é um direito democrata,” Folha de S. Paulo, 13 March 1979, 22.
85 “Novos ministros acham normais as manifestações,” Folha de S. Paulo, 16 March 1979, 37.
86 “Greve é assunto para o próximo governo,” Jornal da Tarde, 13 March 1979, 26.
very different. In contrast to 1978, this strike was not a set of spontaneous occurrences in which workers in each factory negotiated directly with employers; rather, the three local ABC metalworkers’ unions voted to strike, and their leaders entered into negotiations with FIESP, authorized by the businesses to negotiate on their behalf. This time, striking workers, instead of sitting at their stations without working, went to the streets and organized picket lines to make certain the factories remained closed.\textsuperscript{87} In São Bernardo, the union organized daily assemblies in the Costa e Silva Municipal Stadium; up to 80,000 workers came to hear Lula and other union leaders report on negotiations and vote to continue the strike as FIESP continued to reject their demands.\textsuperscript{88} And this time, the workers, who usually lived paycheck to paycheck, were able to avail themselves of food banks organized by their wives, the Association of Women Against Poverty, and, above all, the Catholic Church, led by Cláudio Hummes, the bishop of ABC.\textsuperscript{89} MDB federal deputies launched a relief fund; within a week, 120 of 189 deputies had donated a total of 150,000 cruzeiros.\textsuperscript{90} As the strike entered its second week, the São Bernardo union issued a note soliciting support, arguing that theirs was “a struggle of all Brazilians and


\textsuperscript{90} “MDB já arrecadou mais de Cr$ 150 mi,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 21 March 1979, 23.
democrats, of those who, in the most diverse areas, struggle for [civil] liberties, amnesty, a constitutional assembly, for the establishment of […] the true rule of law.\textsuperscript{91}

Yet scale of the mobilization combined with the ABC unions’ disregard for the letter of labor law rendered this strike more ominous for the regime. To the surprise of no one, within three days, the TRT ruled that the strikes were illegal; Lula dryly noted that while a worker could take two years to resolve a worker’s complaint against a business, the TRT had been able to rule in favor of the bosses within a matter of hours.\textsuperscript{92} Like in 1978, the unions refused to halt the strike, despite the ruling against them. With the TRT decision, the position of regime officials and ARENA politicians shifted markedly – they

\textsuperscript{91} “Campanha nacional para sustentar o movimento do ABC,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 21 March 1979, 23.
now had the pretext they needed to criticize the strike. Bahia senator Antônio Lomanto Júnior argued, “The truth is that [the strike] is considered illegal by the justice system. Not by the executive branch, not by the government itself […] but by the labor justice system, […] which has conducted itself with complete […] impartiality.” Jarbas Passarinho, the Pará senator who had served as labor minister under Costa e Silva, framed his critique as a defense of the rule of law. “We want to make it very clear that at this moment of democratic opening, when all of us are struggling for the implantation […] of the rule of law, you cannot […] just completely ignore a law, disregard it, disobey it and, contrary to the law, accept illegal practices.” Yet it was Maluf, inaugurated governor only a few days before, who put it most famously, as he cited the infamous quotation attributed to First Republic president Washington Luis. “It’s no longer an economic matter – it’s become a police matter.”

Montoro retorted, “The strike […] is not a police matter; it’s a question of justice. […] It is necessary to see in these movements manifestations of inconformity with an unjust situation. Attempting to solve the problem through police measures would be to close our eyes to reality.” The law did say that the strike was illegal, but justice superseded the law. Quércia, in a speech that used the words “just” or “justice” 16 times, argued that the law arenistas defended was “an arbitrary law, a law of force, a law of violence. The workers stripped this law of its power last year, just as they are doing in the current strike, because what motivates the spirit of this strike is justice, and this law is not

93 Antônio Lomanto Júnior (ARENA-BA), Diário do Senado Federal, 21 March 1979, 337.
94 Jarbas Passarinho (ARENA-PA), Diário do Senado Federal, 22 March 1979, 357.
95 “É assunto policial, diz Maluf,” Folha de S. Paulo, 20 March 1979, 32. The paulista Washington Luis, president from 1926-1930, was widely claimed to have stated, “The social question is a police question.”
96 Franco Montoro (MDB-SP), Diário do Senado Federal, 22 March 1979, 356-357.
just.” If the strike was illegal, it should not be repressed; rather, the law should be brought into line with justice, so that workers could strike in order to achieve their legitimate goals.º⁷ Marcos Freire commented that ARENA did not have the moral standing to demand respect for the law. “In this country, laws have been systematically disrespected, violated, beaten down, without these voices, who want to speak up now, […] ever having defended the highest law, the Constitution.” Labor laws, particularly the CLT, “which imposes an odious tutelage upon unions,” were the problem, not strikes.º⁸

Yet for the regime and its ARENA allies, the problem was not simply that the strikes were illegal; there was also evidence that they were subversive. Otávio Gonzaga Júnior, the new state secretary of public safety, claimed that the workers had been infiltrated by the leftist student-worker group Convergência Socialista and remarked that the pickets reminded him of “an old communist tactic.”º⁹ DOPS director Roméu Tuma added that his officers had caught Convergência members distributing to workers a newsletter dedicated to the strike.¹⁰ No one seemed certain who Convergência members were, but they were apparently passing out leftist literature and participating in pickets. What could it be other than a plot to infect workers with a radical, possibly “subversive,” agenda? Senator Aloysio Chaves leapt upon the claim of leftist infiltration, which proved, he argued, that the strike was not simply an attempt to gain better salaries for workers.¹¹ Instead, the presence of Convergência Socialista showed that the strike had “political”

º⁷ Orestes Quércia (MDB-SP), Diário do Senado Federal, 21 March 1979, 336-338.
º⁸ Marcos Freire (MDB-PE), Diário do Senado Federal, 24 March 1979, 402.
º⁹ “Lula refuta infiltração ideológica no movimento,” Folha de S. Paulo, 18 March 1979, 50.
ends, perhaps to discredit the Figueiredo government, perhaps to sow disorder and weaken the regime. The workers’ legitimate struggle had been infected by politics.

Some MDB politicians responded by denying that infiltration was possible. Rio de Janeiro’s Roberto Saturnino insisted, “There is nothing political about the movement, nothing of ideology, nothing of infiltration. It is a legitimate movement, sprung spontaneously from the breast of the working class.”

Again, the implication was that a legitimate workers’ movement had no “political” or “ideological” goals, but devoted itself solely to wages and labor law. Quércia, on the other hand, argued that if there was a leftist faction in the strike, it was surely made up of workers, who had a right to hold to any political philosophy. Strike leaders in ABC, cognizant that “infiltration” would serve to justify repression, also dismissed these claims. At one of the stadium rallies, Lula denied “any influence of any group foreign to our class.”

Almir Pazzianoto, an MDB state deputy and the lawyer for the São Bernardo union, told workers that if they were “radical,” it was radicalism in defense of a better life. “Yes, we are radicalizing. We are radicalizing so that we can bring food to the worker’s table, so that he can give the minimum condition of survival to his wife and children.”

Yet despite spirited MDB defenses, not only in the Senate, but also in the Chamber of Deputies and legislative assembly, the regime, invoking its defense of legality and struggle against leftist subversion, turned its repressive force on striking workers. The São Paulo military police sent its riot force, with 2,000 officers, 80

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102 Roberto Saturnino (MDB-RJ), _Diário do Senado Federal_, 20 March 1979, 300.
103 Orestes Quércia (MDB-SP), _Diário do Senado Federal_, 21 March 1979, 337.
104 “Lula refuta infiltração ideológica no movimento.”
105 “Lula nega possibilidade de infiltração no movimento.”
transport trucks, 40 bulletproof cars, and weapons ranging from electric truncheons to AR-15 rifles.\textsuperscript{106} Though repression was not universal, it was widespread, and there were daily reports of violence. On the first day of the strike, even before the TRT ruled it illegal, military police officers appeared at a demonstration outside a factory in São Bernardo, where striking workers sang a song calling on workers inside to join them. The police cursed the unionists, beat them with clubs, and pulled out their firearms, threatening to shoot.\textsuperscript{107} Over the coming days, riot police were actually housed inside the nearly vacant Volkswagen factory, from which they made periodic sorties, some on horseback, some with water cannons, to harass workers and disperse picket lines.\textsuperscript{108}

By the third day, rifle- and machinegun-wielding police stood guard outside some of the factories, preventing workers from forming pickets.\textsuperscript{109} In Santo André, police threatened picketing workers with arrest and promised they would “take a beating” at DOPS headquarters.\textsuperscript{110} Gonzaga Júnior promised that police violence would continue as long as workers persisted in “violent and illegal” picketing, “the same way as violent demonstrations are broken up in the entire world.”\textsuperscript{111} The situation became so tense that the government, only a week into Figueiredo’s term, considered activating the “safeguards” that had replaced AI-5 by declaring a state of emergency.\textsuperscript{112} As violence escalated, Lula protested, “Just to defend the boss’s sidewalk, the police beat up workers,
the main ones responsible for the greatness of the country. I hope that the police realize that they, like workers, are in a difficult situation and quit protecting the employers.”

Police violence produced another of the novelties of 1979 – MDB politicians intervening to protect workers. For the most part, the politicians who took to the streets in 1979 had few ties to the traditional political class. Instead, they were the former student activists, Catholic community organizers, and communist sympathizers who had entered politics the year before. New federal and state deputies like Siqueira Filho, Suplicy, and the nine-month pregnant Passoni drove to São Bernardo almost daily in their black official vehicles, attempting to use their presence to deter violence against picketing workers. They were joined by federal deputies like Alberto Goldman (who had just moved from the state legislature to the Chamber of Deputies), journalist Audálio Dantas, and the autêntico Airton Soares, a second-term deputy who previously served as a lawyer for political prisoners. With Lula’s blessing, they joined picket lines as early as 4:00 a.m. to report any incidents of police violence to state officials. Strikers waiting at bus stops to convince their fellows not to go to work were only saved from violence when MDB deputies, journalists, and Cláudio Hummes, bishop of Santo André, joined them.

It was not only MDB politicians who rallied to workers’ defense. Intellectuals and cassado leftist politicians were eager to support the workers, and they produced a flurry of newspaper columns justifying both the strike and broader popular political participation. The economist José Serra, a former Catholic student activist and president

113 “Trabalhadores revoltados com ação policial.”
114 “Parlamentares e Igreja vigiam ações policiais.”
116 “Parlamentares e Igreja vigiam ações policiais,” Folha de S. Paulo, 22 March 1979, 31.
of UNE who had spent the better part of thirteen years in exile after the coup, denied that the strike was a threat to democratization, that raises for workers would provoke inflation, or that comparatively well-paid metalworkers comprised a privileged elite within the working class. Almino Afonso argued that the workers’ struggle would not simply influence salary policy and labor law, but also had a political role, even if that was not workers’ intention, for their fearlessness was draining the regime of its authoritarian, repressive power. Finally, without mentioning the strike directly, Plínio Sampaio, a leftist PDC federal deputy who had been cassado in 1964, argued that even as restricted as it was, abertura was providing unprecedented opportunities for popular participation in solving local problems. “It is necessary to emphasize forms of political negotiation on

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117 Of the four men who approach the police, the youngest is almost certainly state deputy Geraldo Siqueira. A second identifies himself as a worker. A third’s face is not visible. I have not been able to identify the fourth, but the fact that he wears a suit is telling, and after speaking with the police officer, he pats him on the shoulder. It is difficult to imagine anyone without a politician’s immunity behaving in such a way, as superior to inferior. If you are unable to play the clip, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6LiLKTMzbnV2ZSW8/edit?usp=sharing.
118 José Serra, “A greve e as críticas,” Folha de S. Paulo, 23 March 1979, 3.
rational, objective confrontations between various conflicting interests in Brazilian society,” he insisted. In order for this to happen, it was vital that personalism be replaced by “leaders open to direct dialogue with the people” through “structured, living parties, where the presence of the citizenry is not a mere fiction.” However, “this program should not be bestowed upon the people by an enlightened elite. To acquire realism and strength, it should proceed from the people themselves.”120 The strong implication was that the strike of the ABC metalworkers was accomplishing this.

On March 21, Macedo flew to São Paulo to broker an agreement.121 Yet the next day the unions rejected FIESP’s counter-proposal because it failed to budge on the amount of the salary adjustment. Although FIESP called it a “lofty and patriotic solution,” Lula retorted that it did not deserve “even 50 votes” from the crowd of workers in the stadium.122 Hours later, Macedo, with the authority granted by the CLT, decreed intervention in the ABC unions. Lula, Marcílio, and the São Caetano union president were removed from their posts, disqualified for life from union leadership. “The members of the directorates of the afore-mentioned unions participated actively in the incitement to disrespect the judicial verdict in question, leading public gatherings and picket actions to induce the classes represented by their organizations to continue the strike movement,” the intervention order read. “The defense of professional interests by resorting to a strike is only justified inasmuch as said right places itself within the framework of legality. […]

120 Plínio Sampaio, “Para que serve a abertura,” Folha de S. Paulo, 27 March 1979, 3.
121 “Murilo Macedo em SP tenta acordo que suste a greve,” Folha de S. Paulo, 22 March 1979, 30.
122 “Operários recusam resposta e mantêm a greve,” Folha de S. Paulo, 23 March 1979, 30.
The tolerance of disobedience to what has been judged implies the acceptance of juridical disorder, which is incompatible with social peace and citizens’ rights.”

Macedo insisted that the interventions would have no affect on abertura, ignoring the fact that for workers, the intervention demonstrated how hollow a promise abertura was. As a Minas Gerais metalworkers’ union president bitterly noted, “We have witnessed a demonstration of the promised abertura. [...] There is no way to deny that we live in a military dictatorship [...] The group that has placed itself in power does not intend to loosen its grip.” And indeed, the intervention looked like nothing less than a military invasion. Police secured the streets around the unions’ headquarters early in the morning of March 23, arresting any workers who got in their way, throwing them, battered and bleeding, into police vans. For the first time, workers fought back with kicks, rocks, and sticks, and several police officers had to be taken to the hospital. When the young MDB deputy Geraldo Siqueira tried to stop an arrest, a punch in the face from a DOPS agent knocked him to the ground – an act of disrespect remarkably similar to the beating São Paulo deputy Santilli Sobrinho had taken at UnB a decade before. The police then moved into the unions’ buildings, holding hundreds of workers inside for hours; those inside the São Bernardo union were only freed when state deputy Wanderlei Macris made a phone call to Maluf to intervene. A Maluf spokesman promised that the police would free all the workers arrested that day, as long as they had not been “inciting

123 “Governo diz que líderes incitaram,” Folha de S. Paulo, 24 March 1979, 16.
124 “Macedo garante que abertura não será prejudicada,” Folha de S. Paulo, 24 March 1979, 16.
125 “Sindicalistas reagem lembrando promessas de abertura no país,” Folha de S. Paulo, 24 March 1979, 18.
126 “As tropas chegam no ABC. E começam a bater nos operários,” Jornal da Tarde, 24 March 1979, 6.
demonstrations,” and assured the press that the governor only wished “to defend the tranquility of the populace and ensure the rights of those who wish to work.”

São Bernardo was in an uproar. Up to 20,000 infuriated workers gathered around the city hall, since the police had blocked off their usual meeting place in the municipal stadium a block away. One thousand riot police arrived and launched tear gas into the crowd, seeking to break up the demonstration, but the workers threw the canisters back and refused to leave the plaza. Fearing an imminent battle, Tito Costa, the MDB mayor, came down from his office, joined the workers, and was interrupted repeatedly by cheers as he gave a speech endorsing the strike but begging the workers to return home. The police commander joined Costa, taking the microphone to say that he too was the son of a worker but begging them to leave before he had to resort to force. The workers responded by singing the national anthem, and the teary-eyed commander withdrew to call his superiors. After receiving orders to withdraw, the riot police marched away, to applause. Bishop Hummes then led the workers in the Lord’s Prayer before they left the plaza.

The next day, March 24, under a steady rain, 25,000 slogan-chanting workers again filled the plaza. Cardoso and several MDB deputies stood watch, not only to express their solidarity, but also to make sure that a restless crowd of working class people did not get out of control. “Where is the mayor?” Cardoso asked. “If he doesn’t arrive soon, someone’s going to have to take charge and calm this crowd down.” He pulled aside union treasurer Djalma Bom, the highest-ranking union official around, and

asked him to “talk to the people, in order to avoid provocations.” Bom then gave a speech reminding the workers that their battle was with the bosses and asked them to go home.\textsuperscript{131}

The next day, Sunday, Hummes held a “metalworkers’ Mass,” attended by 4,000 workers in a church designed for 1,500. On the first row sat Lula, Marcílio, and several MDB deputies. An additional 15,000 workers packed the surrounding streets, listening via loudspeakers.\textsuperscript{132} After the Mass, Hummes invited Lula and Marcílio to speak. Despite their banishment from union leadership, they re-took command of the strike, urging the workers to continue the strike, but to avoid confrontations with the police.\textsuperscript{133} That afternoon, Lula and fellow union leaders spoke to a throng of workers. Djalma Bom emphasized that the struggle belonged to workers alone. “It’s not that we don’t want students,” he said. “We want the help and solidarity that we have been receiving from various classes, but we will not allow them to participate in our struggle.”\textsuperscript{134}

On Monday, however, the strike grew smaller. Though the workers before the São Bernardo city hall may have been disposed to maintain the strike, the intervention in the unions and two weeks of repression had taken their toll, and for many bills would be due April 1.\textsuperscript{135} The unions and FIESP thus reached an agreement on March 27. The strike would end immediately, a tripartite commission of union leaders, businessmen, and labor ministry representatives would negotiate a salary adjustment within 45 days, and Lula

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} “No ABC 25 mil aclamam a greve,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 25 March 1979, 39.
\item \textsuperscript{132} “A volta na Missa dos Metalúrgicos,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 26 March 1979, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{133} “Lideranças mantém o comando da greve,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 26 March 1979, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{134} “Metalúrgico reafirma que a luta é só de trabalhadores,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 26 March 1979, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{135} “Greve persiste mas é menor e anima a Fiesp,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 27 March 1979, 20.
\end{itemize}
and the other deposed leaders would be restored to their positions, also within 45 days. In a new assembly in the municipal stadium, 70,000 workers approved the agreement.\footnote{“Operários voltam, sob condições,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 28 March 1979, 18.}

One month passed, and no deal had been reached on the salary adjustment. On May Day, the possibility of a new strike loomed. One year ago, May Day had demonstrated paulista workers’ restlessness. This year, May Day showcased a mobilized, angry working class in open rebellion against recalcitrant employers and government tutelage. Fifty thousands workers attended an open-air mass in front of the São Bernardo city hall, where a church choir led the workers in a Portuguese rendition of “We Shall Not Be Moved.” “United in this struggle / United in hope / United in victory / We shall not be moved.” In place of the usual penitential rite, they prayed, “Christ, the workers were forced to go on strike, to seek a small raise in their salaries, while the multinationals have enormous profits. Christ, help us to correct injustice.”\footnote{“A Igreja pede justiça,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 2 May 1979, 10.} They continued, “Jesus Christ freed all men with the labor of his sacrifice. In the same way, the entire working class will only be free when it offers to God the sacrifice of its struggle for better living conditions. So that the workers do not wait for this liberation to fall from heaven, but remain united to achieve this gift from God, let us pray to the Lord.”\footnote{Leon Hirszman, \textit{ABC da Greve} (Brazil: 1990).} At the same time, the state held its official May Day festivities in Pacaembu Stadium near downtown São Paulo. About 5,000 workers milled about the near-empty stadium, surrounded by banners reading, “Workers, the Labor Ministry is always on your side.”\footnote{“O 1o de Maio no Pacaembu vazio,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 2 May 1979, 12.}
That afternoon, an astounding 130,000 workers completely filled the municipal stadium and the walls, buildings, and streets surrounding it for an unprecedented “United May Day” rally that brought together workers, politicians, and a cross section of a

140 If you are unable to play the clip, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6i1KdG5iMjNTYlQzXzQ/edit?usp=sharing.
burgeoning civil society. Tito Costa proclaimed ABC “the social capital of Brazil” and read a message from Ulysses Guimarães. “Only your organization and struggle will enable the workers to have an effective participation in the fruits of the nation’s economic development, opposing themselves to an authoritarian and unjust regime that enables the scandalous enrichment of few to the detriment of the whole of the Brazilian nation.”

The workers listened to speeches by representatives of the Brazilian Amnesty Committee UNE, and the women’s movement, as well as federal deputy Aurélio Peres, speaking on behalf of the Movement against Poverty. A worker read a “Manifesto to the Nation” signed by all the unions and civil society groups participating in the rally. “Because workers have acquired consciousness,” it read in part, “this May Day is a historic moment. It proves that the workers have begun to recover their own voice, to incorporate themselves into the national political scene, and to demand their effective participation in the economic, social, and political development of the country.” Moreover, it stressed that the strike had proven that unions were vulnerable to government repression if they acted alone. What was needed now, the manifesto argued, was “a joint organization capable of giving direction to the common struggles of all the workers.” The implication was that this “joint organization” would be a workers’ political party.

Finally, Lula and the other former union presidents spoke. To thunderous applause, Lula said, “Today workers aren’t deceived like they were in the past. […] They understand that only uniting around their common cause will allow the class as a whole to achieve its political

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141 For “the social capital of Brazil,” see “130 mil pessoas no 1o de Maio no ABC,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 May 1979, 9. For Guimarães, see “Marcílio defende autonomia,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 May 1979, 10.
142 “130 mil pessoas no 1o de Maio no ABC.”
emancipation. [...] It’s up to us, the workers, to change the rules of the game, and instead of being ordered around like we are today, to start giving the orders around here.”

Here was a speech that threatened the status quo, nearly a call for a revolution, if a peaceful one. The normally sympathetic *Folha* blasted Lula in an editorial, calling his speech “as hard as granite and as incompetent as a high school student writing a paper about a topic he or she doesn’t understand.” The worst part was the call for workers to “give the orders,” which, in addition to being “excessively fervent and sullied with a strong dose of romanticism,” was utterly foolish. “[Such a] pretension has been frustrated over the course of history even [...] in countries that have had deep social revolutions.”

For its part, the *Estadão*, in the *Jornal da Tarde*, directed an editorial specifically to Lula, who they accused of “growing Manichaeism” in his speeches. “ABC is not the Sierra Maestra, Brazil is not Cuba, capitalism has 300 years of experience, and the Brazilian people do not want some other regime that they do not know.” The paulista press could accept workers mobilizing for better salaries, but mobilization on behalf of a transformation of social relations was more than the papers’ owners could accept.

On May 11, at the end of the 45-day negotiation period, the ABC unions and FIESP reached an agreement, which the workers ratified in an assembly two days later. Finally, on May 15, Macedo revoked the federal intervention in the ABC unions and authorized the return of Lula and the other union leaders. After a two-and-a-half-week strike and two months of mobilization, the unions ended up with exactly the salary

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143 Todos do nossa lado, diz Lula, *Folha de S. Paulo*, 2 May 1979, 10.
adjustment FIESP had offered to begin with. In terms of salary, the strike was a failure. Moreover, for the first time the ABC metalworkers’ movement, with its heightened militancy and nascent challenges to long-standing social relations characterized by paternalistic tutelage and patronage, faced the repression of the police and the open hostility of the government. Macedo threatened in late April, “ Strikes for the sake of strikes are inconceivable in modern unionism, [which] is and must be apolitical. […] There is no place among us for class struggle. […] Thus [the government] will act against movements that are offensive to the law, peace, and the national common good.”148 When a bus strike shut down public transportation in the state capital in May, Maluf commented that “liberty is being used as an excuse for licentiousness,” and “many people are confusing democracy with anarchy.”149 And an unnamed ARENA leader, pointing at his neck, told the press that Figueiredo “has had it up to here with these strikes.”150 The vision of the generals and their ARENA allies for workers was not so different from the one the generals had had for the political class for so long – limited freedom to criticize and offer “constructive” suggestions, but never to “contest,” and, when push came to shove, to always accept the government as the final arbiter of conflicts.

Still, some of the strike’s effects on the labor movement were positive. In contrast to the year before, when Lula had rejected the overtures of politicians and other social movements, this year he acknowledged that the workers’ struggle was occurring in the context of a broader struggle against the regime’s authoritarianism in all its forms. As a result, the strike received the steadfast solidarity not only of leftist students, but also of

148 “‘Sindicalismo deve ser áполитico,’” Folha de S. Paulo, 24 April 1979, 27.
149 “Maluf: greve ameaça abertura,” Folha de S. Paulo, 5 May 1979, 15.
the amnesty movement, the cost of living movement, and, above all, the progressive Catholic Church. For the first time since defending students in Brasília in 1968, elected politicians rushed to protect demonstrators from police repression. At the same time, however, the politicians supporting the workers in the streets were almost invariably unionists, student activists, communists, or representatives of civil society organizations with few or no ties to established personalities like Montoro, Guimarães, or even Quércia. Politicians like these three refrained from joining their militant leftist colleagues at the factory gates, instead remaining in Brasília or São Paulo, where they gave speeches and proposed changes to labor law. Yet barely hidden from public view was a latent tension between MDB politicians and workers fed up not only with military authoritarianism and government tutelage, but also with an entire set of social relations in which the traditional political class was profoundly implicated. Opposition politicians sympathized with the workers’ struggle to cast off government supervision, and some of them were eager to protect the workers from violence, but how would they react if Lula and the labor movement attempted to “start giving the orders around here”?

Over the next year, the political situation would change more dramatically than at any time in a decade. It had been ten years since over 300 politicians had been cassado in the wake of AI-5, and men like Mário Covas were eager to re-enter politics. In late August, Congress finally approved an amnesty law proposed by Figueiredo that pardoned everyone who since 1961 had committed “political crimes,” had their political rights suspended, or, with a basis in institutional acts, had been purged from the civil service, judicial system, military, or unions. Significantly, the amnesty excluded those convicted of “terrorism, assault, kidnapping, and personal attacks.” Moreover, by offering amnesty
broadly to anyone who committed “crimes of any nature related to political crimes or practiced for political motivation,” the measure conveniently pardoned military or police officials who had tortured or murdered guerrillas or political prisoners. The MDB strongly opposed both of the latter measures, arguing that amnesty should be “broad, general, and unrestricted,” but an alternative bill proposed by ARENA deputy Djalma Marinho (re-elected to the Chamber in 1978 after losing the Senate race in 1974), failed to pass by only 5 votes, after 18 arenistas crossed party lines to vote for it. Instead Figueiredo’s bill passed, excluding the guerrillas who had suffered the worst of the regime’s violence but pardoning the soldiers and police who had tortured them.

Within weeks and amidst much fanfare, politicians in exile since 1964 had begun to return. The two most significant were former Rio Grande do Sul governor (and Goulart brother-in-law) Leonel Brizola and former leftist Pernambuco governor Miguel Arraes, who had been imprisoned for eleven months after the coup. The returning exiles, along with cassado politicians like Covas, would shake up the party system, but especially the opposition, where they would have to compete for influence with the leaders who had replaced them. Who should lead the opposition’s struggle – the ones who had fought in the trenches all these years, or the ones who had had been unjustly removed before they could fight? Thus, as the MDB rejoiced at the return of old friends (and in many cases rivals), it faced the difficult task of creating space for a host of competing interests.

The situation only became more difficult in October, when Figueiredo unveiled the next step in abertura – party reform. While politicians nearly universally abhorred the ARENA/MDB binary, the MDB was incensed by a key provision in the law – it would abolish the existing parties as a pre-condition to the formation of new ones. The party
argued that the measure constituted a naked attempt to divide and conquer the opposition, since it was taken for granted that opportunistic ARENA legislators would be eager to join the government party, while the MDB’s moderate-autêntico divide and the return of amnestied politicians would cause the party to splinter. Despite spirited MDB opposition, the ARENA majority approved the bill in November, and Figueiredo signed it in December. Over the following months, politicians feverishly scrambled to form and join new parties. ARENA was reconstituted as the Party of Social Democracy (Partido da Democracia Social – PDS). ARENA “liberals” like former São Paulo mayor Olavo Setúbal and state party president Cláudio Lembo joined MDB “moderates” like Tancredo Neves to form the centrist Popular Party (Partido Popular – PP). The majority of MDB politicians, including all the most powerful paulistas, joined the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro – PMDB), which, like its predecessor, billed itself as a broad front where differences should be subsumed beneath the goal of restoring democracy. Brizola and Ivette Vargas were locked in a bitter dispute to found a Brazilian Labor Party (Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro – PTB) with the same name as the Vargas-founded labor party dissolved in 1965.

1980: The Republic of São Bernardo

The smallest and most openly ideological new party was the Workers’ Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT), formed by Lula and a coalition of leftist politicians, progressive Catholic activists, and Marxist intellectuals. The party’s founding manifesto crystallized the political consciousness that had developed among unionists through the strikes of the last two years. “The great majorities who construct the wealth of the nation want to speak for themselves. They no longer expect that the conquest of their […]
interests will come from the dominant elites.” The party would give voice to the struggle of the masses – “industrial workers, retail and service employees, civil servants, residents of the periphery [of the cities], independent workers, people from the countryside, rural workers, women, blacks, students, Indians, and other exploited groups,” not through speaking for them, but by allowing them to speak for themselves. It was “born from the will for political independence of workers, who are tired of serving as a pawn for the politicians and parties committed to the current economic, social, and political order.” This independence, above all, meant that workers must participate in “all of society’s decisions,” not simply debates about labor or wages. “[The workers] understand that the Nation is the people, and thus they know that the country will only be truly independent when the State is directed by the working masses. It is necessary for the State to become the expression of society.”

While the other parties had arisen through negotiations between factions of the political class, the PT proposed something radically different, something unprecedented in Brazil. The PMDB proposed incorporating workers into a struggle against authoritarianism, and labor parties proposed to speak on their behalf; the PT boldly asserted that the mobilized masses should speak for themselves.

Intellectuals like political scientists Francisco Weffort and José Álvaro Moisés, economist Paul Singer of CEBRAP, and historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda were founding members of the new party. They were joined by politicians like federal deputy Airton Soares, former deputy Plínio Sampaio, and São Paulo state deputies Marco Aurélio Ribeiro, Suplicy, Siqueira, and Passoni, all of whom followed up on their

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solidarity with workers the year before. Yet the bulk of opposition politicians joined the PMDB, while many long-time allies of unions, including Santo André union president Marcílio, went to one of the labor parties. Certainly they had legitimate reasons to spurn a small regional workers’ party that focused almost exclusively on labor issues in favor of a well-organized, electorally successful party. Yet the rejection of the PT by figures like Montoro, a former labor minister and long-time workers’ advocate in Congress, or Cardoso, a socialist who had long argued for the integration of workers into national politics, showed that many politicians and intellectuals were deeply uneasy with the profound sociopolitical changes that Lula and the PT espoused.

Cardoso’s failure to join the PT was especially striking, as the Marxist sociologist had been an enthusiastic ally of the strikes. In 1978, when he ran for the Senate, he received the unconditional support of Lula, who he said told him, in a jab at Montoro, “You don’t do what those others do, who spend their time giving lessons to workers, telling them what to do, and you don’t call yourself the workers’ senator.”152 Yet when Lula founded a workers’ party with socialist tendencies, Cardoso was absent. In part, this was due to ambition. Cardoso had finished second to Montoro in the 1978 Senate race, and if Montoro won the governorship in 1982 and left the Senate, Cardoso would serve the remaining four years of his term – but only if he remained in Montoro’s party.153

Yet more fundamentally, resistance to the PT stemmed from an abiding suspicion of mass mobilization, evidenced in Cardoso’s work as a sociologist. In a 1972 article for New Left Review, he argued that “progressive social integration” could not originate from

152 Cardoso and Setti, A arte da política: a história que vivi, 85.
“the State or bourgeois groups,” but neither should the “marginalized sector” (i.e., the working class) be seen as “the strategic (or revolutionary) side of dependent industrialized societies.” What was necessary to achieve greater social equality and participation was “denunciation of marginalization as a consequence of capitalist growth and the organization of unstructured masses – indispensable tasks of analysis and practical politics.” What was left unsaid was who would denounce marginalization and organize the masses. But if the state, bourgeois industrialist and business classes, and “unstructured masses” were all untrustworthy, that left only intellectuals like Cardoso and like-minded progressive politicians. When Cardoso worried in front of São Bernardo’s city hall that workers would get out of control without a steady hand to guide them, this merely repeated views he had espoused since at least 1972. Despite his progressive politics, his socialization in a military family and as a professor at an elite university left him doubtful that the working class was capable of directing its own destiny.

The PT, then, would have to be built without the support of some of its most natural allies. Moreover, Lula placed himself in the precarious position of having two roles – in addition to being the founder of a new party serving, he remained head of the country’s most militant union. As the annual salary negotiations approached, Lula’s dual roles would add a new dynamic to the labor movement. For 1980, the unions demanded a reduction from a 48- to 40-hour workweek, union representatives in factories, and a “productivity raise” of 15%. FIESP flatly rejected the first two proposals and offered only

a 5% raise above inflation.\textsuperscript{155} (A new wage policy the year before had mandated raises when productivity increased, but the formula to determine productivity was unclear.\textsuperscript{156}) Even government sources were said to believe that the FIESP offer was stingy.\textsuperscript{157} At the last moment, the unions reduced their offer to 4-7% raises above inflation, depending on workers’ salary level, but FIESP rejected it because the unions also demanded a 12-month moratorium on layoffs.\textsuperscript{158} On March 30, over 60,000 São Bernardo workers again voted to strike, a decision also reached in Santo André; the next day, metalworkers in São Caetano joined them.\textsuperscript{159} Several unions in the interior also voted to join the strike.\textsuperscript{160}

The opposition parties in the legislative assembly announced that they would have a team of deputies by telephones 24 hours per day, ready to assist workers.\textsuperscript{161} In the press, \textit{Folha} columnist Alberto Dines praised the workers for “totally renovating our social landscape, offering not only options for political behavior, but also a new vision of social responsibility,” in contrast to an ossified regime that “has not been able to renovate its repertoire of ideas and behaviors.”\textsuperscript{162} Yet other media voices were ambivalent. \textit{Folha} columnist Luiz Alberto Bahia wondered if “strikes decided by acclamation in soccer stadiums, […] with the main speaker the leader of a recently-created political party,” were advisable.\textsuperscript{163} The suggestion was that the strikes were not as democratic as they

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\textsuperscript{155}\textit{“A última proposta, de 5%, será levada às assembléias,” Folha de S. Paulo, 29 March 1980, 22.}
\textsuperscript{156}\textit{Eduardo Suplicy, “Media a produtividade é um tema ainda polêmica,” Folha de S. Paulo, 29 March 1980, 22.}
\textsuperscript{157}\textit{Juárez Pires, “‘Patrões também são duros,’” Folha de S. Paulo, 30 March 1980, 35.}
\textsuperscript{158}\textit{“Não houve acordo,” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 April 1980, 17.}
\textsuperscript{159}\textit{“Metalúrgicos entram em greve,” Folha de S. Paulo, 31 March 1980, 1; “São Caetano também pára,” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 April 1980, 17.}
\textsuperscript{160}\textit{“E veio a greve,” Jornal da Tarde, 31 March 1980, 8.}
\textsuperscript{161}\textit{“Oposição unida em apoio ao ABC,” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 April 1980, 17.}
\textsuperscript{162}\textit{“Bê-a-bá no ABC,” Folha de S. Paulo, 2 April 1980, 2.}
\textsuperscript{163}\textit{“Aclamação ou sufrágio,” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 April 1980, 2.}
\end{flushright}
looked; perhaps a politicized union leadership was manipulating workers into emotional decisions. The *Jornal da Tarde* was openly critical. “Thwarted were the efforts of everyone, including us, who tried with the best intentions to turn the workers away from the siren’s song that was leading them toward a dangerous adventure.” FIESP’s offer was generous, and a strike would harm workers and business alike, but none of this mattered to Lula, who had “exchanged his union career for a political career.”

On April 1, the TRT met for the formality of declaring the strikes illegal. Yet in an astounding decision, the labor court ruled 13-11 that it was legally unqualified to rule on the strike’s legality and set the productivity wage adjustment at 6-7%, depending on salary. The ruling, however, did not address the question of union representatives or the moratorium on layoffs. The next day, Lula presented the decision to the stadium assembly and asked the union lawyer, state deputy Pazzianoto, to explain the ruling. Yet as Pazzianoto attempted to speak, military helicopters (probably sent by the regional Army commander) began making low passes overhead. The rotors blew a gale over the stadium, the noise was deafening, and soldiers aboard pointed their machine guns at the throng below. Cardoso had accompanied Pazzianoto and recalled, “When the helicopter accelerates like that, it’s terrible. You don’t know what will happen.” It was a naked attempt at intimidation; as Lula pointed out, if the crowd had grown panicked and attempted to flee, a tragedy may have ensued. As the helicopters continued to roar overhead, Lula put the continuation of the strike to a vote, and despite their court victory, the workers raised their hands to signify that the strike would continue until they received

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165 “TRT dá 7% e não julga a greve,” *Folha de S. Paulo*, 2 April 1980, 1.
a concession on the layoff moratorium or the question of the union representative.\textsuperscript{167} Pazzianoto recalled that he warned Lula that he was making a mistake; an appeal could overturn the TRT decision at any time, and, if the businesses would agree to accept the ruling, it would be best to quit while he was ahead.\textsuperscript{168} Yet the strike continued.

After a week without progress, despite Macedo’s constant presence in São Paulo pressuring for a solution, the government, arguing that the TRT ruling was flawed, appealed to the Supreme Labor Court (Tribunal Supremo de Trabalho – TST).\textsuperscript{169} Before the TST could rule, Macedo was called to Brasília, where Golbery allegedly instructed him to end the strike any way he could.\textsuperscript{170} The same day, the presidents of the PMDB, PP, PTB, and PT issued a joint statement blasting the regime for its handling of the strike.

“The impasse […] owes itself to the intransigence of the regime, the accomplice of large economic interests and the wealthy classes,” whose “true objective [is] the perpetuation of an unjust and iniquitous social order through the maintenance of power in the hands of a privileged minority.”\textsuperscript{171} The opposition was correct in its accusation of regime complicity with the employers, as Golbery and Macedo instructed FIESP, which had been inclined to accept the TRT ruling, to ask the court to reconsider.\textsuperscript{172} On April 14, by a 14-12 vote, the court ruled that it did have jurisdiction and declared the strike illegal.\textsuperscript{173} The government had clearly pressured the TRT into reversing itself; several judges issued

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{167} “ABC não aceita a proposta do TRT,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 3 April 1980, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Alves, \textit{Teotônio, guerreiro da paz}, 203. Cardoso also recounted a similar account in Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Brian Winter, \textit{The Accidental President of Brazil: A Memoir} (New York: PublicAffairs, 2006), 138-140.
\item \textsuperscript{169} “Governo recorrerá da decisão do TRT,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 9 April 1980, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{170} “Macedo prevê o fim da greve,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 11 April 1980, 25.
\item \textsuperscript{171} “Os quatro partidos de oposição acusam Governo,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 11 April 1980, 25.
\item \textsuperscript{172} “O TRT julgará novamente a greve,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 12 April 1980, 16.
\item \textsuperscript{173} “TRT decide pela ilegalidade,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 15 April 1980, 19.
\end{itemize}
opinions directly contradicting their opinions of two weeks before. In the *Folha,* Dines wrote, “Over the course of these 16 years of violence, […] laws have been used to break laws, courts converted into inquisition chambers. But few episodes have had such a weight of shamelessness like what happened Monday night in the paulista TRT.”

Macedo responded with satisfaction, commenting, “The justice system has ruled what it has ruled.” He failed to explain why he had not taken the same sanguine attitude toward the original ruling. He claimed that no intervention was coming yet and that he was only concerned with getting the workers back to work as quickly as possible, in order to minimize the wages they lost from the strike. In an attempt to improve his public image, he agreed to an interview with a television reporter who brought questions from metalworkers. “Minister, you say that the strike is illegal. Is it also illegal for the worker to go hungry?” “If you had a daughter my age, making the salary that I make working 11 hours a day, […] would you be in favor of or opposed to the strike?” “You said that the workers of São Bernardo make good money. Would you like to trade salaries with me?” Such aggressive questions violated nearly five centuries of Brazilian social norms governing how slaves should address their masters and workers speak to their employers. Upon discovering what the questions were, Macedo canceled the interview.

Lula and the unions defied the new decision, vowing that the strike would continue. The stage was set for a showdown. Two days later military police in São Bernardo arrested 29 strikers for attempting to block non-striking workers from going to

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174 “CLT e ABC,” *Folha de S. Paulo,* 16 April 1980, 2.
177 “Macedo continua negando que planeja a intervenção,” *Folha de S. Paulo,* 17 April 1980, 23.
178 “Lula acusa TRT e diz que movimento continua,” *Folha de S. Paulo,* 16 April 1980, 16.
work. Shots were fired, and workers were beaten, reported PT federal deputy Airton Soares, who arrived as the arrestees were being loaded into vans. As the unrest escalated, on the evening of Thursday, April 17 Macedo again declared government intervention in the São Bernardo and Santo André unions (the São Caetano and interior unions had all gone back to work). Once again Lula and Marcílio were removed as presidents, but this time, they would never return. Anonymous sources told the press that the order had come from Figueiredo himself, against Macedo’s wishes.

In São Bernardo that night at the union, a restless crowd of workers chanted “Lula, Lula!” and “Down with Macedo!” Lula gave a short speech: “The union is not this building; the union is each of you, wherever you are. If I go to prison and hear that the strike has ended without our victory, I’m going to be pissed off at you.” He then led the workers in a rendition of Geraldo Vandré’s protest song “Pra não dizer que não falei das flores,” better known as “Caminhando,” as they left the building, many in tears. “Come on, let’s go / Those who wait will never know anything / Those who know choose the time / They don’t wait for things to happen.” Back inside, Lula, his directorate, politicians, and assorted remaining workers stayed awake through the night, waiting for government-appointed interventors to arrive. While Lula sat on a sofa, surrounded by migrant workers from the Northeast, in an adjoining room, politicians, journalists, and academics speculated about Lula as a leader, Lula as future president of Brazil.

179 “Prisões e violência no ABC,” Folha de S. Paulo, 17 April 1980, 23.
182 “Revolta e choro na noite de vigília,” Folha de S. Paulo, 19 April 1980, 18.
In the morning, a crowd of workers gathered at the entrance to the building. PT state deputy Suplicy asked them to form a human shield to keep the interventor from arriving, but after Lula was notified by telephone that any resistance would meet with police repression, he attempted to disperse the crowd.183 The interventor entered peacefully, but after he arrived, military and DOPS police descended on the building, and 300 workers remaining outside were determined to resist. Pazzianoto and PMDB state deputy Flávio Bierrenbach attempted to persuade the police to withdraw, but Bierrenbach was knocked to the ground by the butt of a riot shield, and Pazzianoto was nearly trampled. Workers threw rocks, wood, and pieces of pavement, and the police responded with tear gas. The battle continued for hours, as more and more workers arrived and rained rocks on the police.184 In São Paulo, Maluf remarked that Lula was finished as a leader; in six month the workers would forget him.185

The following morning, Saturday, April 19, warrant-bearing DOPS agents arrived at Lula’s house and arrested him for “violating the national security law.” PT state deputy Siqueira, who had been sleeping at Lula’s house to ensure his safety after DOPS director Romeu Tuma had surreptitiously warned him that an arrest was imminent, attempted to accompany Lula but was forbidden by the arresting officers.186 Nearly simultaneously, nine other union leaders, two “political militants,” a journalist, and, most shockingly, the current and former president of the Justice and Peace Commission, the Catholic social

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183 “Lula evita tumulto à porta do sindicato,” Folha de S. Paulo, 19 April 1980, 18.
184 “Muita violência na posse do interventor,” Folha de S. Paulo, 19 April 1980, 18.
186 “Lula e mais 14 são presos por greve no ABC,” Folha de S. Paulo, 20 April 1980, 25. For the warning from Tuma, see Azevedo.
justice organization founded after the Vatican II, were also arrested. The Folha called it a “condemnable spectacle,” arguing, “Social conflicts are not resolved on the basis of violent or intimidating measures, and the labor legislation in force is anachronistic, outdated, and in demand of immediate replacement.” PT deputy Soares and the combative São Paulo federal deputy João Cunha (who had still not chosen a new party) rushed to DOPS headquarters, where they managed to see Lula and the other prisoners.

The next evening 25 opposition deputies and senators from across Brazil, including paulista autêntico Freitas Nobre and Robson Marinho, the PMDB president of the São Paulo legislative assembly, went to DOPS to see the prisoners, but DOPS chief Romeu Tuma advised the legislators that they were being held incommunicado.

At the assembly in São Bernardo on April 19, 40,000 workers listened as Siqueira communicated Lula’s last message before being taken. “No one should show up at the doors of the factories. Don’t accept provocations. Keep the movement strong, and go home after the assembly.” Hummes assured them that the Church was “on the workers’ side, until the end.” Marcílio, removed from his union presidency but protected from imprisonment by congressional immunity, said, “The bosses, the multinationals, and the government have united to shut up the worker.” The workers responded, “They’ll never shut us up!” The next day, DOPS announced that further assemblies in the stadium or in front of city hall were prohibited, so striking workers agreed to meet in churches.

187 “Lula e mais 14 são presos por greve no ABC.”
189 “Lula e mais 14 são presos por greve no ABC.”
190 “Parlamentares no Deops,” Folha de S. Paulo, 21 April 1980, 6.
The arrests and fear of violence dominated congressional debate for weeks. While most PDS politicians either remained silent or parroted the government’s message that the law must be respected at all costs, members of the four opposition parties were again unequivocal in taking the side of the workers. Henrique Santillo, the sole senator from the PT, praised workers for holding assemblies in “peace, order, and tranquility.” Senator Pedro Simon argued that the workers’ militancy was part of a broad mobilization of churches, neighborhood organizations, students, and the Church that had only positive connotations. “A society that is agitated, debating, arguing […] contributes to the future of this country and is not, as some imagine, something that creates crises and problems. […] The silence we had before was not the silence of […] willingness […], but the silence of fear and the lack of organization – that is what was dangerous.”

Tired of official explanations that the need to enforce the law justified repression, frustrated opposition senators highlighted the regime’s hypocrisy and disingenuousness in promising political and social opening. Evandro Carreira (PMDB-AM) was perhaps the most impassioned. “On the part of the government, there is not really a desire for abertura, but the exclusive intention of directing the nation as though we were a cowardly herd, a nation of slaves with necks bowed before the scourge of the foreman.” Speaking for Brizola’s labor party, Paraná’s Leite Chaves asked why the regime cast strikes as a security threat when other countries allowed them to proceed without interference. Why did the government have one standard for businesses and another for workers? “They want free initiative for economic organizations to rake in the profits that they wish, but as

193 Henrique Santillo (PT-GO), Diário do Senado Federal, 23 April 1980, 1060.
195 Evandro Carreira (PMDB-AM), Diário do Senado Federal, 8 May 1980, 1424.
soon as pertinent and just manifestations come from workers who are exploited like wild animals, the masters of power and privilege become afraid and indignant and loose the police to take charge of the repression.”

Paulo Brossard complained that when the opposition defended the strike, the PDS majority retorted that if they did not like the law, they should change it. The problem was that “in this country, it is the government that changes the law, according to its will, its conception, its mentality, and its interest.” The opposition could propose changes to the law day and night, but “they always run up against the opposing vote of the majority.”

Barely a week later, however, PDS deputies on the Chamber’s Labor and Social Relations committee sent Macedo a document proposing extensive, though qualified, reforms to the CLT, including “the strengthening of collective bargaining,” a new law regulating strikes, and a loosening of wage policy, and new restrictions on mass layoffs.

Certainly politicians saw part of their role as defending the workers from the rostrum or holding the regime accountable for its inconsistencies. Above all, however, opposition politicians sought to promote dialogue in the face of government heavy-handedness. Brossard called for the “intervention of good sense, serenity, prudence, flexibility and tolerance.”

Who more natural to facilitate negotiation than the elected representatives of the people? Even before the intervention, Marcos Freire begged the Senate leadership to send a parliamentary commission to São Paulo to help mediate.

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“This Senate should not just wait as a mere spectator for events to unfold.”\textsuperscript{200} After the arrest of his party’s founder, Santillo insisted, “In the political area we have the duty – not just as men of the opposition, but also […] the party that supports the government – […] to exhaust every possibility to solve this impasse.”\textsuperscript{201} As Senator Teotônio Vilela explained, the tense situation was rapidly heading toward a crisis, and “if we are not able to do anything, tomorrow we will be held responsible, because […] the appeal of the workers themselves, today, was directed at all of us.”\textsuperscript{202}

Before the arrests, the only politicians directly involved had been PT deputies, a few leftist PMDB politicians, and assorted intellectuals. Yet after the arrests, possessed by a belief that it was their duty to take up negotiations now that the workers’ elected leaders had been sidelined, opposition legislators made the 1.5-hour flight between Brasília and São Paulo, meeting with FIESP representatives, the police, state officials, local politicians, and unionists to broker a solution to the impasse. Perhaps without the firm hand of Lula to keep the workers in check, politicians feared they might respond to police provocations with violence. Perhaps they sensed an opportunity to earn workers’ loyalty and enhance their credibility with a vibrant social movement. Or perhaps authoritarian military rule had caused these members of the political class to shift their attitude toward popular mobilization. After living under military tutelage for 16 years, they may have had a new appreciation for workers’ experience under the tutelage of the labor ministry – or indeed under that of the elite of which they were themselves a part.

\textsuperscript{200} Marcos Freire (PMDB-PE), \textit{Diário do Senado Federal}, 18 April 1980, 994.  
\textsuperscript{201} Henrique Santillo (PT-GO), \textit{Diário do Senado Federal}, 23 April 1980, 1061.  
\textsuperscript{202} Teotônio Vilela (PMDB-AL), \textit{Diário do Senado Federal}, 23 April 1980, 1069.
Of all the politicians who supported the strikes, none was more active than Alagoas PMDB senator Teotônio Vilela. A former member of the UDN, as vice governor of Alagoas, he had supported the coup in 1964. He was elected to the Senate for ARENA in 1966, and he had signed the telegram pledging support for Costa e Silva in the wake of AI-5. Yet by the time Geisel took office, Vilela had become disillusioned with the regime, and he became an even fiercer critic than most of the MDB, as he denounced everything from torture to ARENA subservience. In 1978, he was the only member of ARENA to vote against the replacement of AI-5 with authoritarian “safeguards,” and in 1979, he finally left ARENA for the MDB.203 The morning that Lula was imprisoned, Severo Gomes, the businessman and former minister of industry and commerce under Geisel whose increasing divergence from the regime had led to his dismissal in 1977, searched desperately for an elected politician to help him jumpstart negotiations between the unions and FIESP. The first to agree was Vilela, who took the next plane to São Paulo and that afternoon commenced a dizzying succession of meetings.204

Vilela would remain in the area for most of the next three weeks, only flying back to Brasília to give the Senate updates on his efforts. In the first three days, he met with federal and state deputies; Cardinal Arns; the Commission of Justice and Peace; state security secretary Gonzaga Júnior; and Theobaldo de Nigris, president of FIESP, who promised to re-open negotiations. He also spoke by telephone with justice minister Ibrahim Abi-Ackel.205 And he met clandestinely in prison with Lula after Gonzaga Júnior

204 Alves, Teotônio, guerreiro da paz, 204.
convinced Maluf to authorize the visit, though the security secretary told him that he was honor bound to keep it secret, even to the point of crouching down in Romeu Tuma’s car when the DOPS director drove him to prison.” In the end, however, his efforts came to naught. Every federal, state, or FIESP official with whom he spoke agreed that something had to be done, but no one did anything. By April 30, Vilela fumed in the Senate, “When we searched for those who hold power, the ones who are responsible for it disappeared, and we remained without interlocutors, the opposition and that immense mass of close to 140,000 striking workers. […] The military operation launched in São Bernardo is simply a strategy to revalidate power, which has been collapsing in the eyes of civil society.” It appeared that he was correct – neither Figueiredo, Abi-Ackel, Macedo, or Maluf were in charge; a paulista paper reported that the orders to arrest the union leaders had come from the Second Army, whose commander was known to be hostile to abertura.

Though Vilela’s efforts were the most coordinated and consistent, many other politicians, including Montoro, Quércia, Guimarães, Freitas Nobre, and others effectively abandoned Brasília, making São Paulo, São Bernardo, and Santo André their base of operations and returning only briefly to the capital to offer updates via speeches. On Tuesday, April 22, for example, Guimarães, Cardoso, Mário Covas (now serving as state president of the PMDB), Vilela (before catching a flight to Brasília to update the Senate on his mediation), and assorted other politicians attended an assembly at the principal church in São Bernardo. They did not speak to the crowd, nor is there any indication that they asked to; instead, they remained behind to meet with union leaders after the

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207 Teotônio Vilela (PMDB-AL), Diário do Senado Federal, 1 May 1980, 1297.
208 “Jornal aponta o DOI-Codi como autor das prisões,” Folha de S. Paulo, 26 April 1980, 17.
assembly ended. Vilela informed them that de Nigris had advised him that he had received a call from Brasília advising him not to restart negotiations and raged, “You don’t play around with something important like this. I’m not a child. You don’t make a commitment only to break it without giving any satisfaction.”

In Congress, there was an implicit agreement that speeches should be restrained, in order to avoid aggravating the situation. Party leaders met over coffee, in hallways, or in offices, casting about for a solution but lamenting the lack of real power Congress had. Meanwhile, other politicians worried that the apparent lack of government control over the arrests or police actions meant that the “hard-line” was making a ploy to halt abertura; the possibility of the closure of Congress was openly discussed. Leaders of the opposition parties all met with Abi-Ackel in quick succession, who promised to take their concerns to Figueiredo. The government, however, was not interested in negotiation; Macedo insisted, “The government is against the reopening of negotiations. The government is in favor of the law being followed.” Meanwhile, Figueiredo blamed Arns and other Catholic clergy for inciting the strikes. In São Paulo, Maluf claimed that opposition politicians were inciting the continuation of the strike and accused striking workers of contributing to the denationalization of the economy, since large multinationals could survive a strike better than smaller national producers.

In São Bernardo, the situation was rapidly deteriorating. Though violence against workers, who had heeded appeals not to form picket lines, was only sporadic, a strong

212 “Macedo não negociará,” Folha de S. Paulo, 25 April 1980, 16.
police presence outside church assemblies and inconsistent permission to use the plazas outside churches to accommodate the overflow kept workers off balance. On Saturday, April 26, one week after Lula’s arrest, the bombshell fell. After an assembly at the usual church, deputies and senators were giving rides to city hall to three union leaders in official legislative assembly cars. Suddenly, the car carrying Quércia, PMDB state deputy Fernando Morais, and union member Enilson Simões de Moura (called o Alemão – the German) was surrounded by four police cars and forced to stop. About 20 agents jumped out and rushed the car, machine guns pointed, and demanded that the legislators hand over Alemão. Quércia and Morais demanded that the officers identify themselves and produce a warrant, both of which they refused to do. When Quércia rolled down a window slightly to continue to argue, an agent threw a canister of tear gas into the car.215

While Quércia and Morais were arguing over Alemão’s arrest, a car carrying Freitas Nobre (the leader of the PMDB in the Chamber), Siqueira, and two unionists was also stopped. As Freitas Nobre and Siqueira hurried to lock the doors, shouting officers with machine guns stormed the car, opened the doors, removed the unionists, and sped off. Meanwhile, Franco Montoro had arrived in yet another car and, when he saw what was happening, stopped and shouted, in the middle of the avenue, “Identify yourselves and leave, because the person talking to you is a Senator of the Republic!” When they refused, Montoro excoriated them for ignoring parliamentary immunity and told them that without a warrant, no one was going anywhere. Just then, another officer arrived and identified himself as a DOPS agent, but insisted that DOPS had nothing to do with the

arrests. He attempted to take control of the situation by getting into Quércia’s car and ordering the driver to take them to DOPS headquarters. Quércia, however, instructed the driver to take them to the city hall. The car proceeded to city hall, already surrounded by cavalry, soldiers, firemen, and riot police with German shepherds.216

At city hall, the crowd of politicians and Alemão, accompanied by a dozen plainclothes officers, took the elevator to the mayor’s office.217 Vilela had arrived too, and he grabbed the first phone he could find and called DOPS chief Tuma to demand an explanation. Tuma insisted that this was not a DOPS operation. At the same time, Montoro was arguing with the DOPS agent that he could not arrest Alemão without a warrant; even after a call to Raymundo Faoro, venerable head of the Order of Brazilian Lawyers (Ordem de Advogados Brasileiros – OAB) confirmed that warrantless arrests

216 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
were illegal, the agent insisted that “in special cases like this,” warrants were not necessary.\textsuperscript{218} Finally, a call to Gonzaga Júnior revealed that the warrant was en route.\textsuperscript{219}

While the politicians argued with the officers, Alemão was locked in Costa’s office. Vilela was on the phone again, this time with Abi-Ackel, who already knew all that was happening and was only surprised that a fourth union leader, Osmar Mendonça, had not been arrested too. “He wanted to know where [Osmar] was, but I wasn’t going to tell him,” Vilela said after he hung up. Abi-Ackel apparently took offense to something, because reporters heard Vilela reassure him, “I’m just letting you know, I’m not criticizing anything. I’m just reporting to you because I judge it my duty.” Then he called the president of the national vehicle manufacturers’ association. Though his exaggerated description of the situation received laughs from some of the reporters and politicians in Costa’s office, it vividly illustrates how invested Vilela was in the events of that day.

They can take even the last worker in ABC, but you will be responsible for this national catastrophe. I also am a businessman; everyone knows this. Nothing justifies what is happening here; it is like a military operation of extermination. When they finish with the workers, next it will be us politicians. Then they’ll finish off the students, the Church, the middle class – then what will be left of this country? You will be responsible for this.\textsuperscript{220}

Costa was overheard commenting, “The republic of São Bernardo has been overthrown, but it is still a republic.” Finally, another officer arrived, warrant in hand. Alemão was arrested and hauled out through a crowd of dozens of politicians.\textsuperscript{221}

\textsuperscript{218} “Após a assembleia, incidentes e 3 prisões.”
\textsuperscript{220} “A confusão geral se desloca para o Paço Municipal.”
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid.
The reaction from politicians was immediate. Despite Figueiredo’s promise of abertura, Brazil had again moved backwards. Neither Figueiredo nor Maluf had much control over a military acting independently. Opposition deputies announced their intention to remain 24 hours a day, not at the legislative assembly, where they had held a similar vigil the year before, but at the church in São Bernardo, where they vowed to protect the workers. Claúdio Lembo, former head of the paulista ARENA but now affiliated with the centrist PP, commented, “The government needs to start to understand ABC, which is the place from whence new forms of social relations will emerge. If the government understands that democracy is, above all, an act of tolerance, it will be able to dialogue with the Brazilian people.” Freitas Nobre remarked, “The problem transcends parliamentary immunity, because what is essential is not our personal problem, but the violence committed against workers [who have been] kidnapped or imprisoned without even a judicial order. This violence sends us back to a prehistoric, lawless era.”

In response to the attacks on legislators, federal deputy João Cunha gave a speech so aggressive that even in this era of abertura it was withheld from publication in the Diário da Câmara (but preserved in a recording). He claimed that the events in São Bernardo “once again unmasked […] the democratic cynicism of Mr. João Figueiredo, sung in prose and verse by the shameless and corrupt strategy of the regime.” He blasted the regime for “oppressing, offending, marginalizing, alienating, and compromising the rights of our people” and promised that one day they would have to answer to “the people, whose harm against traitors is implacable.” “Yoked to corruption, strangled by hidden ties, controlled by the powerful, they have no explanations beyond lies, violence,

222 “Vilela relata os fatos ao Ministro da Justiça.”
and explosions of authoritarianism.” He concluded, “They turn their bayonets at the bellies of our people, and the cannons, instead of looking at foreign horizons, are pointed at our homes in the defense of friends from without against the enemies from within.”

Despite the arrests of more leaders, the strike continued. “For every leader that is imprisoned, five more climb up here to speak,” proclaimed the leader of the April 28 assembly. Three days later, May Day arrived. While the workers prepared to hold a mass, the police massed to repress any demonstrations. The military police chief sought out federal deputy Aurélio Peres: “The responsibility for what happens here, with women and children, belongs to you deputies.” When workers in the plaza outside the church unfurled banners, the police chief ordered them removed; when the workers refused, the first canisters of tear gas were thrown. Someone protested that there were children there; an officer shouted back, “A church is no place for children!” State deputy Irma Passoni called for calm to no avail, as workers grabbed the exploding canisters and threw them back at the police. Yet as the situation was nearly out of control, after a protracted conversation with Vilela, the police commander called his superiors and returned with a shocking announcement: the police would withdraw for one day. 100,000 ebullient workers marched from the church to city hall, followed by a boisterous rally in the

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224 If you are unable to play the clip of Cunha’s speech, you may download the file at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijCg6iLKRkc0QnM5UjZjeTA/edit?usp=sharing.
225 “Assembléia na Matriz vaia proposta de volta,” Folha de S. Paulo, 29 April 1980, 16.
stadium. Yet it was the strike’s final moment of glory. Hungry and lacking money to pay bills after over a month out of work, fearful that their employers would fire them for just cause after a month of absences, worn out by police violence after May Day, and discouraged with the government’s and FIESP’s refusal to negotiate or release their union leaders, workers began drifting back to work. Osmar Mendonça, who had evaded the police for three weeks, was arrested at the final assembly on Sunday, May 11, as workers voted to return to work. A week and a half later, Lula and his fellow union leaders were released but faced a charge of “violating national security” for inciting an illegal strike. Despite providing some of the most emotionally gripping moments Brazil had ever seen, the final ABC metalworkers’ strike had ended in total defeat.

**Conclusions**

Despite the defeat of the 1980 strike, the two-year metalworkers’ movement not only signaled the effective death knell for state tutelage of labor, but also set in motion fundamental changes in Brazilian social relations. A mobilized working class demanded not simply better wages, but the right to enjoy – and even define – citizenship. Although over the next four and a half years, the generals would remain hopeful that they could salvage their “Revolution,” one of its fundamental premises – a demobilized, submissive populace that passively accepted military fiat – had been dealt a punishing blow.

Yet beyond this, the strikes also placed in vivid relief – and indeed, helped spark – key shifts in the way the political class related to the rest of the Brazilian people. In 1968, courageous leftist MDB deputies had joined the students in the streets of Brasília,

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227 “Da Matriz ao estádio, passeata de 100 mil para comemorar o 1o de maio,” *Folha de S. Paulo*, 2 May 1980, 17.

offering their parliamentary protection to their children and colleagues’ children, who
Moreira Alves called “the new elite of an ignorant nation.” In 1979 and 1980, a new
generation of leftist deputies again left their legislative chambers and took to the streets to
protect demonstrators from the military regime’s repression. Yet unlike in 1968, in 1980
they were joined by cautiously combative colleagues and “moderate” stalwarts – many of
whom like Guimarães, Montoro, Vilela, and Quércia had been silent in 1968. Most
significantly of all, in 1980, when these politicians carried demonstrators in their cars,
shielded them from arrest, negotiated with police, and attended assemblies, it was not
their children or even members of their social class who they defended; rather, it was a
politically conscious working class, the very people whose mobilization most of them
had been taught to fear since they were young. Certainly politicians’ newfound support
for workers had limits, as demonstrated by the refusal to believe that they were fit to rule
the country without the political class, but nevertheless, cracks had begun to appear in
many politicians’ self-confident assurance that the power to influence all social, political,
and economic decisions should reside exclusively with people like them.

Two days before the final strike ended, political scientist and PT founding
member José Álvaro Moisés speculated, “Perhaps the ABC metalworkers’ strike of 1980
will be recognized in Brazilian history as the episode that opened the process of the
conquest of the fundamental rights of citizenship.”229 He was right.

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Conclusion

As the sun set on April 16, 1984, a multitude the likes of which Brazil had never seen marched through downtown São Paulo, demanding the approval of a constitutional amendment establishing diretas já – direct presidential elections now. Clad in yellow shirts emblazoned with the slogan “I want to vote for president,” undeterred by sporadic showers falling from a cloudy sky, 1.5 million Brazilians of every age, color, and class chanted, “Cry Figueiredo, Figueiredo cry! Cry Figueiredo, your hour has arrived,” as they converged on the Anhangabaú Valley, the park separating the two halves of the city’s historic center. From a massive stage, sports icons, TV stars, singers, and politicians launched verbal salvos at Figueiredo and the stacked electoral college that was to select his successor in January 1985. Two decades’ worth of politicians who had opposed the regime were there – from old leftists like Brizola and Arraes; to veterans of the struggle against the dictatorship like Guimarães, Montoro, Quércia, and Covas; to new leaders like Cardoso and Lula, as well as former student leaders, some of whom had now become politicians after once having hated them. As the rally ended, the multitude, arms held high, sang the national anthem as yellow confetti fell. That night “democracy was within the reach of the hands of everyone, in the fluttering of the green and yellow flags, in the heartfelt sincerity of the singing, in the joy of a people reencountering their destiny.”1

The Diretas Já movement of early 1984, which culminated in the largest demonstration Brazil had ever seen, provided some of the iconic images of Brazilian history, as crowds packed plazas, streets, and parks to demand direct elections. It

appeared that the regime’s demise was nigh, that the generals would finally have to accede to the weight of popular demand. A poll showed that 83% of Brazilians, including 75% of those who identified with the government-allied party, the PDS, supported direct elections. In an April 1984 poll, 60.5% of respondents in six state capitals believed that the “political event unleashed in 1964” had either already ended or was on the verge of collapse. After two decades of military attempts to suppress popular participation and deny, demonize, or deflect discontent, the message was unmistakable – Brazilians had rejected military tutelage en masse. As the twentieth anniversary of the “Revolution” passed on March 31, it appeared more like a funeral to most.

Figure 14: The "Revolution's" Birthday Candles Blown out by Diretas Já
Source: Folha de S. Paulo, 1 April 1984, 2.

3 “20 anos ruins que agora chegaram ao fim, revela ‘Pesquisa Folha,’” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 April 1984, 8.
4 The caption reads: “Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you,” in the first two captions. In the third, a shout of “Diretas Já” blows out the “Revolution’s” candles. In the fourth, the “Revolution’s” wellwishers complain, “Damn it, now we’re going to have to start all over.”
1984 offered a clear contrast to 1964, when a faction of conservative officers infatuated with modernization and national security ideology had inaugurated an audacious authoritarian project that would attempt to demobilize the left, engineer a lasting economic development model, and impose military tutelage on politicians and the nation as a whole. Although the first decade of military rule had witnessed resounding success on all three fronts, by the end of the second decade, the project lay in tatters. The left, after being brutally convinced of the inefficacy of armed struggle, had come to embrace the sole channel of resistance that the regime was unwilling to close – participation in parties and elections – creating a generation of student leaders, guerrillas, and returning exiles who were rapidly becoming a force in electoral politics. On the economic front, the Brazilian “miracle” had shattered under blows from skyrocketing oil prices, crushing foreign debt, and runaway inflation.

Even amidst these failures, the regime might have endured a while longer – if its leaders had been able to convince the political class of the wisdom of a tutelage that impinged upon their honor and privileges. Yet the failure of politicians as a group to accept their permanent subordination meant that the military’s political project remained fundamentally unstable. Whether intentional or inadvertent, the resistance of politicians took many forms: the principled stance of the autênticos, the ambition-driven electioneering of Quércia and Maluf, or the stubborn refusal of untold thousands of others to give up their bickering and corruption as they waited for the storm to pass. The dilemma only gradually became clear to the military, steeped in a century and a half of Brazilian liberalism, who had been unwilling to do away entirely with legislatures or elections, particularly after claiming that they were saving “democracy,” not destroying
it. Yet by maintaining these institutional spaces, by admitting that they needed civilian politicians, the military laid the groundwork for its “Revolution’s” undoing.

This dissertation has argued that the Brazilian political class played an under-acknowledged yet decisive role in preventing the generals from consolidating the political system upon which the remainder of their project was predicated. At times, this resistance manifested itself through the defense of leftist students, in many cases their own children. It could take the form of a fight to save parliamentary immunity and their collective honor. It could involve the adoption of mass appeals to voters through an electoral discourse denouncing inequality. It might manifest itself among the regime’s supporters in the refusal to accept yet another military-imposed governor. And finally, it took the form of the acceptance – enthusiastically or reluctantly – of expanded popular mobilization. The military had made a decision after the coup of 1964, maintained it amidst the radicalization of 1969, and reaffirmed it through détente in 1974 – that it would count on civilian politicians, including both pliant allies and a controlled opposition, to help legitimate its rule. When the acquiescent, selfless collaboration the generals envisioned proved unattainable, the project became impossible to sustain, particularly as resistance to the regime expanded to encompass a wider array of actors.

“I Want to Vote for President”: The People, Politicians, and the Regime’s Demise

Like the strikes in São Bernardo in 1979-1980, the denouement of the regime in 1984-1985 featured the enthusiastic support of opposition politicians – and greater tolerance among many members of the PDS (formerly ARENA) – for precisely the sort of popular mobilization that Brazilian elites for centuries had seen as a threat to “order and progress.” During the Diretas Já campaign, career politicians like Covas, Guimarães,
Montoro, and Quércia and new politicians like Cardoso, Lula, and former student activists were overcome with emotion as they spoke before enormous crowds, seeking to harness popular participation to end the regime. Yet after the amendment establishing direct elections failed to pass and it became clear that Figueiredo’s successor would be chosen by the PDS-dominated electoral college, PDS delegates dissatisfied with their candidate, Paulo Maluf, abandoned the regime and engineered a deal to support the PMDB’s Tancredo Neves. Ultimately the mobilization of the people alone was not sufficient to topple the regime; the regime only fell when popular mobilization was followed by the dissatisfaction of the rank-and-file of government-allied politicians. It is in Diretas Já and the subsequent negotiations surrounding the electoral college vote that we see both the culmination of politicians’ dissatisfaction with the regime and the complementary nature of principled opposition and factional, self-interested behavior.

Between 1980 and 1984, Figueiredo and his military collaborators stubbornly attempted to maintain control of the political system. Having failed to win politicians’ enthusiastic collaboration, no longer able to bludgeon them with the threat of cassação, Figueiredo nonetheless hoped to perpetuate military influence in order to sustain a political system that would keep the left, politicians, and masses under control. To achieve that goal, the government utilized a host of electoral manipulations to ensure that the PDS would remain in power. The “April package” had stipulated that beginning in 1982, municipal elections would be held in the same year as state and national elections. In 1981, Figueiredo sent a law to Congress instituting mandatory straight party voting, with the expectation that the usual local votes for the government-allied party would carry PDS gubernatorial candidates to victory and preserve the regime’s congressional
majority.\footnote{“Governo lança ‘pacote de novembro,’” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 26 Nov. 1981, 1.} Sensing that even government allies might not be amenable to more electoral manipulation, he sent the bill to Congress only days before the summer recess, and it passed automatically while Congress was away. (AI-1 had instituted the \textit{decurso de prazo}, by which bills proposed by the president became law if Congress failed to vote on them within a set time period.) Finally, in 1982 a constitutional amendment approved by the PDS majority over opposition objection ensured the regime’s victory in the indirect election that would choose Figueiredo’s successor. It stipulated that the representatives of state legislatures sent as delegates to the electoral college would be chosen not by the entire state legislatures, but by the largest party – a maneuver designed to keep the electoral college in the hands of the PDS, which controlled most legislatures. To add insult to injury, the amendment changed the quorum for approving future amendments back to a two-thirds majority; even if the opposition somehow took control of Congress in 1982, they would be unable to change the rules.\footnote{“O que muda na Carta,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 25 June 1982, 5.}

These efforts to perpetuate a political system engineered to favor government-allied politicians were challenged by the deteriorating economic situation, as the 1980s witnessed Brazil’s most dire economic crisis in half a century. In the wake of the Iranian revolution, the second oil shock again drove up the price of petroleum. A simultaneous rise in world interest rates dramatically raised the cost of servicing the foreign debt, which had risen ten-fold from 1970-1980. To stimulate an increase in exports, the government devalued the currency; inflation then rose too, from 55.8\% in 1979 to 223\% in 1984. Inconsistent wage policy and inflationary pressure led to a dramatic decline in
real wages, particularly as the “lost decade” wore on. Overall, after averaging 8.9% annual growth between 1968 and 1980, GDP fell by an average of 0.6% annually between 1981 and 1984. In the absence of meaningful democracy, the regime’s chief source of legitimacy during the years of the “miracle” had been its management of the economy. Yet with the economy in collapse, the generals stubbornly held on.

In 1982, the opposition parties won a collective five-seat majority in the Chamber of Deputies, though due to the introduction of indirectly elected senators in 1978, the PDS retained a comfortable majority in the Senate. Moreover, the PDS won a plurality in enough state legislatures to guarantee it a scant 30-vote advantage in the 686-seat electoral college, scheduled to select Figueiredo’s successor in January 1985. At the state level, the opposition won ten governorships, including Rio de Janeiro, where Brizola was elected. In São Paulo, the PMDB – won a resounding victory. Montoro achieved his dream of becoming governor, frustrated in 1978 by the “April package,” with Quércia as his running mate. The ticket achieved 45% of the votes; together, the four opposition candidates won 77%. Cardoso, as the MDB’s runner-up in the 1978 Senate race, took up Montoro’s old seat. After debate about whether the PMDB could in good conscience nominate a mayor for the city of São Paulo (mayors of state capitals were still appointed by the governors), Montoro chose Covas, who was promptly approved by the opposition-dominated state legislature. Paradoxically, it was the PDS that protested that the mayor

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8 The PDS won 235 seats, the PMDB 200, the PDT (Brizola’s labor party) 23, the PTB (Vargas’s labor party), 13, and the PT 8. Kinzo, 214.
should be chosen through a direct election, or failing that, though a “broad popular consultation.” Montoro refused the latter option, fearing that a poll of the populace might express a preference for a non-PMDB politician.

Though straight party voting was supposed to help the PDS, it had the opposite effect in São Paulo, as voters who chose Montoro for governor also voted for PMDB mayors; as a result, the party increased the number of municipalities it controlled from 41 to over 300. The number increased as new PDS mayors began switching to the PMDB, the new “situation,” fearful that if they remained in what was now the opposition, their municipalities would lose benefits from the state government. The opposition won the mayorships in all 26 paulista cities with over 100,000 voters (except for the capital). As for Paulo Maluf, he was elected federal deputy with the highest vote total in Brazilian history. However, he had not gone to the Chamber to debate laws. Rather, just as he had traveled around São Paulo in 1978 visiting the delegates who would select Paulo Egydio’s successor, he was going to Brasília to build ties with the senators and deputies who would select Figueiredo’s. When he took his first post-election trip to Brasília, he told Nelson Marchezan, PDS leader in the Chamber, “I’ve arrived for my internship.”

As the military claimed, the “Revolution” had been necessary to neutralize a communist threat, repair the economy, and reform the political class under military tutelage. Yet by the end of 1983, no one besides the most paranoid members of the intelligence services feared a communist revolution. The only acts of terrorism in a

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14 “PMDB vai governar quase 60% das cidades paulistas,” Folha de S. Paulo, 21 Nov. 1982, 4.
decade had come from the right (most notably the botched Riocentro bombing of 1981), and former leftist guerrillas had entered electoral politics. The economy was in collapse, and Figueiredo had submitted to a humiliating International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity plan. Finally, most of the regime’s remaining politician supporters were sycophants who could abandon the party as soon as it lost an election – precisely the kind of politician the generals had claimed to revile in 1964 and 1968. And all the while, Figueiredo and his cronies continued to manipulate the rules to perpetuate what remained of a “Revolution” in crisis. It was at this moment that some in the opposition saw an opportunity to end the generals’ project. It was time for direct presidential elections.

A month after arriving in Congress in February 1983, first-term PMDB deputy and former leftist guerrilla Dante de Oliveira proposed a constitutional amendment, co-sponsored by 176 deputies and 23 senators, abolishing the electoral college and instituting direct elections to select Figueiredo’s successor.17 Throughout the year, as the amendment slowly wound its way through the Chamber, the opposition parties discussed the possibility of organizing public demonstrations in support, since public opinion polling offered evidence of widespread popular support for direct elections.

Throughout 1983, small rallies, usually spearheaded by politicians, occurred across Brazil. The opening rally drew 5,000 people in Goiânia in June, and rallies soon took place in Recife, Porto Alegre, Cuiabá, and elsewhere. The largest in 1983 was in Pacaembu Stadium in São Paulo, organized by the PT, Catholic organizations, and assorted leftist groups with the participation of 15,000 people. Yet it was only in January

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17 Domingos and Dante de Oliveira Leonelli, Diretas Já: 15 meses que abalaram a ditadura, 2nd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2004), 77-78.
1984 that most opposition politicians, particularly the governors, fully committed themselves to popular mobilization as a tool to pressure the regime. With the help of a host of paulista politicians, work began to organize a “monster rally” in São Paulo. Pamphlets were passed out across the city, mini-rallies were held in neighborhoods, with residents invited to participate in informal elections to express their opinion on diretas já. The women’s movement, civil servants organizations, and a host of other civil society groups organized their own events.\(^{18}\) The movement gained an influential ally in the Folha, which after a decade of vacillation and vacuous calls for moderation wholly committed itself, and between December and April, the paper ran almost daily editorials and op-eds demanding direct elections.\(^{19}\) Montoro, Cardoso, Guimarães and the PT’s Eduardo Suplicy, now a federal deputy, all appeared on the radio or television to urge people to attend.\(^{20}\) Two weeks before the rally in São Paulo, a rally in Curitiba gave a foretaste of what was to come. Fifty thousand people came to hear actors, singers, and politicians, including Paraná governor José Richa, Guimarães, Montoro, and Neves give speeches. “We are going to take this disgusting and repugnant Bastille that is the electoral college. […] The outstretched hand of President Figueiredo has not touched the desperate hand of unemployed Brazilians,” Guimarães shouted to thunderous applause.\(^{21}\)

On January 25, it was São Paulo’s turn. The politician organizers had wisely chosen a local holiday, the anniversary of the founding of the city, in order to maximize

\(^{19}\) There has been some debate about whether the Folha changed its posture so drastically out of ideological commitment, or because, considering the overwhelming public sentiment in favor of direct elections, its owners recognized an opportunity to increase its market share. See Carolina Matos, Journalism and Political Democracy in Brazil (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 41-79.
\(^{20}\) “Montoro dedica todo o dia ao ato,” Folha de S. Paulo,
attendance, and Montoro announced that the subway and buses would offer free transportation downtown. By late afternoon, at least 300,000 people had arrived for what would become a four-hour political rally, as politicians, athletes, and artists called for direct elections. TV sports commentator Osmar Santos led the crowd in a chant, “Um, dois, três, quatro, cinco mil! We want to elect the president of Brazil!” Actor Carlos Vereza quoted a Charlie Chaplin line from The Great Dictator. “Dictators die. And the power they took from the people will return to the people.”22 Guimarães blasted the regime for creating the electoral college, which he called “a pestilent cellar where the dictatorship has imprisoned 60 million voter registration cards.”23 Even a PDS state deputy spoke, though he was nearly drowned out by boos. Montoro told the crowd. “I was asked if there are 300,000 or 400,000 people here. But the answer is something

Figure 15: The Crowd in the Praça da Sé
Source: Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo, Departamento de Comunicação Social, 11-P-0, Pasta 3

different: Here the hopes of 130 million Brazilians are present.” As Folha reporter Ricardo Kotscho explained, “The shout stuck in [our] throats for 20 years exploded in the Praça da Sé. […] Enough of this regime. We want Brazil back so that Brazilians can decide their own destiny – that was the tone of all [the speeches].”

For three months, the demonstrations continued. 30,000 in Olinda. 60,000 in Belém. Simultaneous demonstrations in hundreds of municipalities in the interior of São Paulo. Over 300,000 in Belo Horizonte. 40,000 in Uberlândia. 250,000 in Goiânia. 200,000 in Porto Alegre. An astounding 1 million in Rio de Janeiro. Some politicians feared this unprecedented mobilization. “What are we going to with all these people in the street?” Minas Gerais governor Tancredo Neves asked Lula and Brizola at the rally in Belo Horizonte. Yet other politicians – old patriarchs like Brizola and Guimarães and working class upstarts like Lula alike – were energized. As Lula remarked in an interview 15 years later, “All we want is the people in the street, damn it! You don’t have to be afraid, do you? Put them in the street, and see what happens.” At every step, opposition politicians were at the center of the organizing and execution of the rallies. Through congressional speeches, TV and radio appearances, and interviews and newspaper columns, they reiterated their demand for direct elections now. Guimarães became a national superstar – there was little doubt that the once timid people pleaser who was now called “Senhor Diretas” would be elected president if the amendment passed

As the rallies grew in frequency and size, even powerful PDS politicians began to join the cause. Before the first rally in São Paulo, 75% of the 247 PDS mayors in the state

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24 “Na Sé, um brado retumbante pede eleições diretas,”
signed a manifesto in support of direct elections. A “pro-diretas” group of PDS politicians actively participated in organizing rallies. Marco Maciel, senator from Pernambuco, released a manifesto in support of direct elections at all levels, though without specifying when. Vice president Aureliano Chaves, considered one of the party’s best candidates in direct or indirect elections, endorsed Diretas Já. Even senator José Sarney, PDS national president, while remaining opposed to immediate direct elections, announced that he would not enforce party fidelity when the amendment came to a vote. With such staggering numbers in the streets, with public opinion polls showing near universal support for direct elections, many PDS politicians were unwilling to risk their careers by defending the status quo. Few of them had ever supported the regime for ideological reasons; their dedication to the military’s project was mere expediency. Politicians like these, above all others, knew a sinking ship when they saw it.

Before the congressional vote on the amendment, the political parties chose São Paulo for the final Diretas Já demonstration, on April 16. Once again, Montoro utilized all his power as governor to ensure the success of the rally, from publicity to free public transportation. Practically all the politicians who had opposed the regime were there, along with more than a few who had long supported it. Neves came down from Minas Gerais, and Brizola flew in from Rio, where his own rally less than a week before had drawn at least a million people – the largest demonstration Brazil had ever seen. Moreira Alves was there, as was Miguel Arraes, the former governor of Pernambuco who had

30 “Executivo não fechará por indiretas, garante Sarnei,” Folha de S. Paulo, 1 Feb. 1984, 5.
been cassado in the first days after the coup. Severo Gomes, former Geisel cabinet member who since 1982 had served as senator for the PMDB, attended with fellow senator Cardoso. Quércia was there. New politicians like Lula and his former union colleagues, now busy building their Workers’ Party from the ground up, attended. Even Teotônio Vilela, who had died in November after a battle with cancer, was there is spirit, represented by a 4-meter-tall puppet made of steel, styrofoam, paper and paint.

One and a half million people completely filled the historic center of São Paulo for a march from the Praça da Sé to Anhangabaú Valley. Covas, on his way downtown, commented on its historical significance. “I think that today will be the day that the people will demonstrate this new posture: they are no longer a passive actor, an amorphous mass who don’t know what they want and need tutelage from immobilizing forces that maintain them captive and submissive.”31 Speaking with a reporter, Brizola recalled that the military had justified its coup by claiming that popular mobilization had demanded an intervention. “Now on the same streets, multitudes many times larger are marching and gathering, also requesting the end of the present regime, through direct elections. If they were so in touch [with popular demands] in 1964, why aren’t they now?” After the rally had ended, as the crowd was slowly dispersing, Brizola, hair wet, dripping sweat, shirt unbuttoned to his chest, stood for a moment on the edge of the stage, gazing out over the multitude. He turned to former federal deputy Adhemar de Barros Filho and observed, “Brazil has changed with this magnificent demonstration.”32

Worried that the amendment was on the verge of passing after the massive outpouring of popular support and hoping to impede demonstrators from converging on Brasília, Figueiredo invoked the “safeguards” that had replaced AI-5 to impose a state of emergency in the federal district. Checkpoints along highways and at airports kept out anyone without official business in the capital. Television coverage of the vote was tightly controlled. On April 25 the amendment was defeated, falling 22 votes short of a two-thirds majority. Over 50 PDS deputies voted for the amendment, while 65 voted against it; the remaining half of its deputies, led by Maluf, simply skipped the session.

The day before, as it became clear that the amendment would not pass, Guimarães gave a moving speech in tribute to the Diretas Já campaign that revealed how far he had come in the decade since he directed the anti-candidacy at politicians and offered lofty and abstract praises to democracy while virtually ignoring the plight of ordinary people.

I saw millions of men and women, unemployed […] by the insanity of the recession, demand the right to help construct the prosperity of the Nation. I saw the workers rejecting the inhuman […] deterioration of their earnings […] I saw also the strength of the Brazilian woman – citizen, worker, and housewife, demanding equality […] I saw the students […] crying for new jobs and access to education in an economy gnawed away by the cancer of 5 million unemployed, 12 million underemployed, 40 million souls in absolute misery. […] I saw the artists, the churches, the journalists, the writers, the professors […] standing on the platforms of the people. I saw minorities determined to break the handcuffs of discrimination, blacks forcing open the doors of equal opportunity, Indians, the original owners of the land who are today without land […]

I saw yellow clothe Brazil in hope. I saw history gush forth on the streets and from the throats of the people. I saw through the omnipotence of the direct vote the resurrection of political participation and of the legitimate pressures on behalf of those who have been omitted and treated unjustly. I saw the people born from the masses. I saw the rainbow radiating the alliance between workers and democracy, I saw the disgraced, the dispossessed, and the unemployed convince themselves that there are no rights or well being without citizenship.33

33 Ulysses Guimarães (PMDB-SP), Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 25 April 1984, 2407.
Gone was the focus on the institutions of liberal democracy as a means unto themselves. Gone were the abstract appeals to a faceless and distant Brazilian people. Instead, Guimarães cited the real people he had encountered in the streets – workers, women, Afro-Brazilians, students, professionals, indigenous people – members of a mobilized civil society, conscious of their rights and responsibilities as citizens and determined to work together for the construction of a more just, participatory, truly democratic Brazil. Though the nature and depth of the transformation varied from politician to politician, Guimarães’s speech illustrated the fundamental shifts taking place in the dispositions and behavior of the political class as military rule drew to a close.

Media File 18: Clip of Ulysses Guimarães Speech, 24 April 1984

Diretas Já placed into sharp relief the significant shifts in how many politicians, including some who remained allied with the government, responded to popular political participation. While the movement had crystallized popular discontent with military authoritarianism and demonstrated profound anger with its failed economic policy, it did not lead directly to the regime’s demise. Instead, it was the behind-the-scenes politicking of the political class in the months after April 1984 that toppled what remained of the military’s project. It was not the more principled Guimarães or Cardoso who placed the final nail in the regime’s coffin, but the much-reviled moderation and caution of Tancredo Neves and the shameless self-promotion of Paulo Maluf.

34 If you are unable to play the clip of Guimarães’s speech, you may download it at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2jjCg6iLK7TNTVaVpQbnZ5S3c/edit?usp=sharing.
In the weeks following the defeat of the Dante de Oliveira amendment, the opposition parties (with the exception of the PT) quickly abandoned their insistence that direct elections were the only legitimate means of ending the regime. Guimarães’s preferred method – popular mobilization to bring about direct elections – had failed. Now, Neves set his own plan into motion – the conquest of the electoral college vote, with himself as candidate. Just as the more fiery Guimarães, much reviled by the military establishment for his forceful attacks on the regime, would never have been a viable candidate in indirect elections, the conciliatory Neves, who participated reluctantly in Diretas Já and received a lukewarm reception at most rallies, would never have won direct elections. Yet with only a 30-vote advantage for the PDS, he needed convince only 16 delegates that he was preferable to whoever the party’s candidate was.

In December 1983, Figueiredo, departing from the path of his four predecessors, had announced that he would allow the PDS to select its own presidential candidate, who would almost certainly be a civilian. “I’m not a politician, I don’t know anything about politics,” he explained in an oral history interview 15 years later. Three candidates emerged: interior minister Mário Andreazza (who had signed AI-5 in 1969), current vice president Aureliano Chaves (an old udenista “liberal”), and Maluf, coming off an audacious but undistinguished and unpopular tenure as governor of São Paulo and an even less distinguished one-year “internship” in the Chamber of Deputies. While Diretas Já mobilized the opposition, the three candidates, particularly Maluf and Andreazza, sought to convince delegates to vote for them, just as Maluf had done six years before.

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This was precisely the sort of freedom to pick their own candidates that ARENA politicians had longed for in 1974 and demanded in São Paulo in 1978. Yet the 1984 presidential succession demonstrated why the generals had chosen their own candidates all along – because their civilian allies were unable to reach consensus. By May, the PDS had reached a hopeless impasse, as none of the candidates had a clear advantage in advance of the September convention. To replace the convention, which Maluf could more readily manipulate through his less-than-savory methods of persuading delegates, PDS president José Sarney proposed a primary in which every elected PDS politician in the country could participate, an idea that Figueiredo immediately endorsed.36 Yet Maluf rebuffed the proposal, realizing that its motivation was to deny him the nomination.37

In a June meeting of the PDS executive committee called to debate the proposal, nearly 50 malufista deputies and senators packed a small conference room and did their best to disrupt the proceedings. Infuriated by the disrespect and disgusted by Maluf’s near takeover of the party, Sarney dramatically resigned as party president.38 In early July, with other disaffected PDS politicians, he formed the Liberal Front (Frente Liberal – FL) and began negotiations with the PMDB to support Neves in the electoral college. He was quickly joined by Chaves, who backed out of the PDS nomination race. On July 19, the FL formalized its support for Neves, with more than enough votes to secure his victory in

36 “Prévia escolherá candidato do PDS à Presidência,” Folha de S. Paulo, 7 June 1984, 5.
37 “Maluf não quer a inclusão do seu nome na prévia,” Folha de S. Paulo, 8 June 1984, 4.
38 “Sob pressão malufista, Sarnei deixa direção do PDS,” Folha de S. Paulo, 12 June 1984, 4.
the electoral college.\textsuperscript{39} In exchange, Sarney was awarded the vice presidential candidacy, though only after vociferous protests from many members of the PMDB.\textsuperscript{40} 

Meanwhile, Maluf and Andreazza made a deal that the loser of the PDS convention would support the winner.\textsuperscript{41} Yet after Maluf won the nomination in early August, Andreazza betrayed him, refusing to order delegates loyal to him to support Maluf in the electoral college. Figueiredo, who had resented Maluf since he embarrassed him so publicly in 1978, supported Maluf only halfheartedly. Finally, in separate rulings in November and December, the TSE ruled that party fidelity could not be enforced in an indirect election (since it was not a legislative session, which is where party fidelity technically applied).\textsuperscript{42} The Maluf candidacy was finished. On January 15, 1985, the electoral college met and chose Tancredo Neves as president by a 480-180 margin. The \textit{Folha} headline the next day screamed, “The authoritarian cycle is over.”\textsuperscript{43} It was fitting that a military regime that had begun with the support of civilian politicians and sustained itself through their self-interested, non-ideological support finally ended when many of those same politicians abandoned its candidate and supported the opposition, seizing the opportunity to rid themselves, once and for all, of military tutelage. The military regime finally came to an ignominious end in the wake of two of the things the officers of 1964 had most loathed – popular mobilization and self-serving politicking. With Diretas Já defeated, the military could have kept a vestige of its project under Maluf. Yet it was their disgust with Maluf, the unprincipled, corrupt type of

\textsuperscript{39} “PMDB e Frente Liberal fecham em São Paulo o acordo,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 20 July 1984, 4.
\textsuperscript{40} “PMDB confirma chapa Tancredo-Sarnei para o Colégio,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 13 Aug. 1984, 4.
\textsuperscript{41} “Maluf e Andreazza fazem pacto para isolar Aureliano,” \textit{Folha de S. Paulo}, 14 June 1984, 5.
\textsuperscript{43} “Acabou o ciclo autoritário,” \textit{Folhad e S. Paulo}, 16 Jan. 1985, 1.
politician they had spent two decades relying upon while they unsuccess-fully sought to reform them, that led the vast majority of the Armed Forces to accept the Neves candidacy. After arrest and imprisonment, hundreds of cassações, two imposed constitutions, and naked manipulation of the electoral system, the political class was finally free of military tutelage. Yet in the face of a mobilized civil society that had expanded their own conceptions of democracy and assuaged their fear of popular participation, never again would they rule Brazil alone. Politicians had indeed been transformed, but not in the way the officers of 1964 or 1968 had imagined.

Final Considerations

This dissertation has shown that the civilian political class exercised a decisive role in the failure of the Brazilian military dictatorship, alongside the generals and civil society. Yet politicians’ challenge to military tutelage and acceptance of popular participation have barely been noted. Several scholars have emphasized continuities in political practice, as politicians since 1985 have used patronage and clientelism to hold on to what remains of their power and prerogatives. They are partially correct. Politicians have by and large remained consumed with the pursuit of personal power, wealth, and privilege, and the promise of a truly participatory democracy has still not been fully achieved, nearly three decades later. Indeed, by definitively banishing the specter of military intervention, the post-1985 “New Republic” has, in many regards, enhanced the power of civilian politicians. Moreover, in contrast with Argentina, Chile, or Uruguay, there has to date not been one prosecution of a member of the Brazilian

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44 See, for example, Hagopian; Melhem, Política de botinas amarelas: O MDB-PMDB paulista de 1965 a 1988.
military for torture, disappearance, or murder. Yet an exclusive focus on continuities and failures misses the myriad though often-subtle ways the political class changed under military rule. In 1964, the majority of the political class had supported or tolerated a coup to stave off what was, in retrospect, fairly limited popular mobilization under a mildly reformist president. In 1980, these politicians – in several cases, the same men – rushed to São Bernardo to protect workers from repression, and in 1984 they were instrumental in organizing the largest political demonstrations in Brazil’s history.

Meanwhile, the public memory promoted by the victors of 1985 – politicians like Cardoso, Guimarães, Montoro, Quércia, Lula, and their heirs – has lionized opposition politicians for taking a stand against the regime’s trampling of democracy. As the courage of the imaturos in 1968, the autênticos in 1973, and the politicians defending striking workers in streets in 1979-1980 demonstrate, this was sometimes the case. Yet as the tireless work of Quércia to build a political machine, the stubborn, self-interested gubernatorial candidacy of Maluf, and the PDS’s near complete abandonment of the regime in 1984 also show, resistance to the regime could and did take many forms, many of which had little to do with ideological opposition to authoritarianism or dictatorship.

The regime came to power and sustained itself with the support of self-interested politicians with only theoretical loyalty to constitutional legality and liberal democracy. Though the generals long envisioned a lasting political system under military tutelage, that system came to an inglorious end in 1985 not only because heroic politicians said “No”, but because politicians with far baser motives finally said, “We have had enough.”

Finally, this dissertation questions the power of state-directed attempts to transform polities socially or politically, without a revolutionary replacement of the old
order and a consensus between the revolutionaries, sympathetic civilian elites, and a supportive society to support a new project. In Brazil, none of this happened. The “Revolution” was revolutionary in name only, for despite removing problematic politicians and attempting to impose tutelage on the remainder, it never gained anything more than expedience-driven, self-interested tolerance from civilian political elites, and, except for during a few brief years in the early 1970s, nothing better than indifference from an unimpressed civil society. By refusing to completely discard the political class, by believing that politicians were the key to lending their rule a veneer of legality and “democratic” legitimacy, the Brazilian generals left the door propped open for their eventual forced exit from politics. The failure of the Brazilian generals’ “revolutionary” project should lead us to regard with suspicion the potential for success of state-directed social or political transformations; the dispositions and behaviors they seek to transform are resistant to change, and when they do shift, they may do so in unexpected ways.

* * *

Neves was scheduled to take office on March 15, 1985. Yet in a cruel twist of fate, he fell seriously ill the night before his inauguration. In the midst of a constitutional crisis about who was next in the line of succession if the president-elect was unable to take office, Sarney was sworn in as acting president. Barely a month later, Neves died in a São Paulo hospital, and Sarney, once one of the regime’s most faithful allies, became president. Yet as he subsequently proceeded in the first steps toward a fundamental transformation of Brazil, he demonstrated not only his political pragmatism, but also how precarious his own loyalty to the regime had been all along. A 1985 amendment restored direct presidential elections and elections for mayors of state capitals and for the first
time extended the vote to the illiterate. The Congress elected in 1986 was charged with
drafting a new constitution to replace the authoritarian constitution of 1967 (as amended
by the military in 1969), and on October 5, 1988, the “citizen’s constitution” was
approved. Despite failings like the neutralization of agrarian reform, it extended
unprecedented protections for civil liberties; granted recognition to the struggles of Afro-
Brazilians and indigenous people; banned torture, secret imprisonment, and censorship;
and made the attempt to overthrow the legal order by force of arms a crime without bail.

Just how much politicians had changed was vividly demonstrated in 1992.
Fernando Collor de Mello, chosen in 1989 as the first directly elected president since
1960, stood accused of corruption. Led by students, their faces pained green and yellow,
thousands upon thousands of Brazilians protested in the streets, chanting “Out with
Collor.” Yet unlike another political crisis sparked by a controversial president in 1964,
no politicians suggested military intervention, and the military remained silent, content to
watch the constitutionally mandated process play out. Instead, on September 29, the
Chamber of Deputies gathered to vote on impeachment. Like at the Moreira Alves vote a
quarter century before, the deputies knew that they would be judged by posterity based
on their vote today. As they stepped to the microphones to vote “yes” or “no,” many of
them made oral declarations, seeking to justify their vote before the Brazilian people. Yet
unlike the politicians who voted against the military’s request to try a rebellious deputy in
1968, these deputies did not simply frame their historic vote as a defense of their honor or
masculinity, or a commitment to a distant and vaguely defined electorate.
Rather, one after another, as they voted overwhelmingly to impeach a president who had disappointed so deeply, these women and men justified their vote on the basis of their status as the elected representatives of a mobilized, conscious civil society. “In order to construct a free, just society with solidarity, yes.” “On behalf of the factory workers, port workers, and stevedores, I say yes!” “With the wishes of the people of Poço Verde in Sergipe shown through various public demonstrations, [...] yes.” “On behalf of the evangelicals of the state of Rio de Janeiro, for morality.” “On behalf of 35 million impoverished children, on behalf of the girls and boys who live in the streets.” “On behalf of the shirtless of this country, the shoeless of my municipality and my state.” “Yes, on behalf of the civil servants who have been so disrespected, for the landless [...] Without fear of being happy, out with Collor!” “Rise up, people of Brazil. Yes.”

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45 If you are unable to play the clip of the vote declarations, you may download it at: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5b2ijiG6iLKOVDON3jmx6SzQ/edit?usp=sharing.
Appendix A: 1968-1969 Cassações by State

Table 1: Federal, State, and Local Cassações by State, 31 Dec. 1968 - 30 Oct. 1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>São Paulo</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande do Sul</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanabara</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pernambuco</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio de Janeiro</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minas Gerais</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraná</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goiás</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alagoas</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Catarina</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceará</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraíba</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergipe</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazonas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mato Grosso</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pará</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espírito Santo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande do Norte</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piauí</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maranhão</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oliveira, Paulo Adolfo Martins de, *Atos Institucionais: sanções políticas*

1 Federal offices include senator, federal deputy, and substitutes for both. State offices include state deputies and substitute state deputies. Local offices include mayor, vice-mayor, and municipal councilor. “Other” includes politicians who did not currently hold office.
Appendix B: The Autênticos’ Vote Declaration, 11 January 1974

We return our votes to the ones who are glaringly absent, the Brazilian people, whose will, which has been removed from the process, should be the source of all power.

As we refuse to participate with our vote in this election, we are not preoccupied with an act of heroism.

We know that history is principally the chronicle of the gestures of resistance of those who knew how to prove themselves through time, because history is not made through concession or capitulation.

Thus, the nation does not forget the challengers of all the ages: the heroes of the Inconfidência Mineira, the builders of Independence, the defenders of Abolition, the lieutenants of ‘22 and ‘24, the revolutionaries of ’30, the constitutionalists of ’32, the mineiros of ’42, the legalists of ’45, those who were against AI-5 in ’68.

Faithful to our party program, which condemns indirect elections, we agreed to the candidacy only with the objective of enlarging the precarious area of communication, thereby attempting to re-establish dialogue with the Brazilian people.

At no point did we conceive that the anti-candidate and his opponent would be transformed into candidates.

We have attempted to exercise our mandate coherent with the democratic traditions of the Brazilian people, every day more committed to the great national themes that are the basis of a great, broad struggle of men of all beliefs and regions.

And thus we re-encountered our own conscience when we demanded the re-establishment of democratic guarantees and the prevalence of the universal principles
consecrated in the Charter of Human Rights that the world, including Brazil, signed after World War II, when the world’s peoples defined themselves on the battlefield against Nazi-Fascism, raising to the heavens the hope of a better and more fraternal world.

In the same way, we re-encountered ourselves when we made our own the anguish of the country’s working masses, who were suffocated by the unacknowledged rise in the cost of living and by the strangling of the freedom and autonomy of unions.

We also re-encountered ourselves with the students in their just revolt against [Decree Law] 477, or with the judicial system when we defended the intangibility of judicial decisions, or when, alongside the entrepreneurs of the nation, we denounced the progressive denationalization of our economy.

We would not be content today, when this privileged college of electors meets, to simply renew our positions and restate our anguish.

For this reason the gesture of our refusal to cast a vote in this ratifying electoral college constitutes the expression of inconformity of those who do not vote, who do not choose, who do not decide, and who cannot even speak.

It is possible that short-term interpretations and a conditioned analysis of our position in the face of the contingencies of the moment in which we live may not be able to display the broad perspective of our attitude, assumed before the Nation and History. But public men do not become great by the number of times they are simply present, but rather by their capacity to reflect the anguish and hopes of the people, in every age.

The Brazil that lives today in the silence of factories, offices, fields, schools, and churches will understand us, and the Pátria of tomorrow will be able to do justice to the
few who assumed the risk of combining their gesture of inconformity with the protest of their voice.

Appendix C: São Paulo 1974 Candidate Registration Data

Table 2: Average Age of São Paulo Federal Deputy Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Average Age (number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARENA</td>
<td>47.9 (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDB</td>
<td>47.6 (46)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Registros de Candidatura 1974, Caixas 2750-2759, CEMEL; DHBB

Table 3: Average Age of São Paulo State Deputy Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Average Age (number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARENA</td>
<td>45.3 (127)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDB</td>
<td>43.1 (115)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Registros de Candidatura 1974, Caixas 2750-2759, CEMEL

Table 4: Age Range of São Paulo Federal Deputy Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>% ARENA candidates in range (#)</th>
<th>% MDB candidates in range (#)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>2.7 (2)</td>
<td>4.4 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>20.5 (15)</td>
<td>23.9 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>32.9 (24)</td>
<td>23.9 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>31.5 (23)</td>
<td>30.4 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>9.6 (7)</td>
<td>15.2 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 and over</td>
<td>2.7 (2)</td>
<td>2.2 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0 (73)</td>
<td>100.0 (46)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Registros de Candidatura 1974, Caixas 2750-2759, CEMEL; DHBB

Table 5: Age Range of São Paulo State Deputy Candidates in São Paulo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>% ARENA candidates in range (#)</th>
<th>% MDB candidates in range (#)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>4.7 (6)</td>
<td>11.3 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>22.8 (29)</td>
<td>27.8 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>39.4 (50)</td>
<td>33.9 (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>23.6 (30)</td>
<td>20.0 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>8.7 (11)</td>
<td>7.0 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 and over</td>
<td>0.0 (0)</td>
<td>0.0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0 (127)</td>
<td>100.0 (115)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Registros de Candidatura 1974, Caixas 2750-2759, CEMEL

Table 6: Occupations of São Paulo Federal Deputy Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>% of ARENA candidates (#)</th>
<th>% of MDB candidates (#)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business/agriculture</td>
<td>15.8 (11.5)</td>
<td>20.7 (9.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal professions</td>
<td>67.1 (49)</td>
<td>58.7 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. employees</td>
<td>8.9 (6.5)</td>
<td>4.3 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees/workers</td>
<td>7.5 (5.5)</td>
<td>14.1 (6.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Several candidates listed more than one profession. I have included these as half professions; that is, if a candidate listed himself as a lawyer and merchant, I have added 0.5 to the total number of practitioners of liberal professions total and 0.5 to the total number of candidates engaged in business or agriculture.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>% of ARENA candidates (#)</th>
<th>% of MDB candidates (#)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business/agriculture</td>
<td>9.5 (12)</td>
<td>16.5 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal professions</td>
<td>65.1 (82)</td>
<td>36.1 (41.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. employees</td>
<td>15.9 (20)</td>
<td>20.0 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees/workers</td>
<td>7.9 (10)</td>
<td>22.2 (25.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.6 (2)</td>
<td>5.2 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0 (126)</td>
<td>100.0 (115)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Registros de Candidatura 1974, Caixas 2750-2759, CEMEL

Table 8: Average Assets Claimed by São Paulo Federal Deputy Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Average Number of Assets (#)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARENA</td>
<td>17.5 (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDB</td>
<td>10.7 (44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Registros de Candidatura 1974, Caixas 2750-2759, CEMEL

Table 9: Average Assets Claimed by São Paulo State Deputy Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Average Number of Assets (#)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARENA</td>
<td>15.6 (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDB</td>
<td>7.3 (44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Registros de Candidatura 1974, Caixas 2750-2759, CEMEL
Appendix D: 1974 Election Results

Table 10: Nationwide Results for the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, 1974

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House of Congress</th>
<th>% MDB</th>
<th>% ARENA</th>
<th>% Blank</th>
<th>% Spoiled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nery, Sebastião. *As 16 derrotas que abalaram o Brasil.*

Table 11: State by State Results for the Senate, 1974

(Winning party in bold)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>% MDB</th>
<th>% ARENA</th>
<th>% Blank</th>
<th>% Spoiled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alagoas</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazonas</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahia</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceará</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espírito Santo</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goiás</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
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