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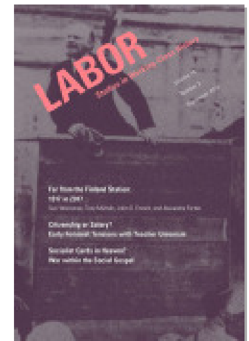

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Jacobins, Bolsheviks, and the Dream of Revolution: October 1917 in the Trajectory of a Brazilian Metalworker of African Descent

John D. French and Alexandre Fortes

Bloody massacres, cruel killings, and monumental suffering are inextricably bound up with the world historical revolutions that defined the trajectory of global modernity: the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. The image of Jacobins and Bolsheviks, revolutionaries with hard hearts for dark times, symbolized the subversive ideologies of the two movements: the radically antifeudal "rights of man" liberalism of the former and the anticapitalism and anti-imperialism of international communism. As the centerpiece of the Age of Revolutions, the dramatic events in France and Haiti were above all a phenomenon of the Atlantic and Mediterranean worlds encompassing the western portion of the Eurasian land mass and its near periphery (the Americas). After 1917, European colonialism, an increasingly integrated global market, and the communications revolution allowed the Russian Revolution, on a planetary scale, to attract hundreds of thousands of sympathizers and followers—as well as rabid opponents—while giving rise to the most ambitious organized international political movement in world history.

What can we learn from the Brazilians who embraced a revolutionary vocation in the wake of the October Revolution in Czarist Russia? To answer, this article reflects on the trajectory of Eloy Martins, a skilled metalworker from southern Brazil, who has been studied by Alexandre Fortes, coauthor of this essay. Born in 1911 in the state of Santa Catarina, Martins was the grandson of an enslaved African who grew up in the port city of Laguna, which Anita Garibaldi and her husband Giuseppe proclaimed the capital of their short-lived "República Juliana." As the son of a carpenter and a seamstress who were unable to sustain their four living children (of seven births), Martins departed in 1925 for the city of Porto Alegre in the neighboring state of Rio Grande do Sul, bringing his family a few years later. Rio Grande do Sul was

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the base from which he built a sixty-year career as a union leader, a communist politician, and a professional revolutionary.

At the age of seventeen, Martins was employed in the Alcaraz and Company shipyard doing work he described as "terrible, heavy, and brutal" while active, with his brothers, in the anarchist Group of Apolitical Workers. The "good news" of the October Revolution reached him through the boilermaker Ramão, his immediate superior, who belonged to the tiny illegal Communist Party of Brazil (PCB) founded in 1922. Brazil at the time was an overwhelmingly agrarian and authoritarian society, the first to have established a slavery-based plantation economy in the sixteenth century and the last in the New World to abolish slavery in 1888. It is not surprising that anarchists were the most influential ideological tendency within the small urban labor movement that developed after 1906. In a highly unequal oligarchical nation, socialist-style reformism found little space to thrive because existing parliamentary forms, liberal political rhetoric, and elections were belied by boss rule, the exercise of arbitrary power, and the absence of both the secret ballot and mass voting.

The anarchist milieu in which Brazilian communism emerged had gained national visibility between 1917 and 1919 with general strikes in several major cities experiencing expanded industrial production and a soaring cost of living because of World War I. While international anarchist circles increasingly criticized the direction of the Russian Revolution, their persecuted counterparts in Brazil were founding ephemeral communist entities[1] leading to the official founding of the PCB in 1922, which was eventually accepted as the Brazilian section of the Communist International.[2] The social composition of its founders—seven manual workers from artisanal sectors and two intellectuals—did not include workers from the burgeoning textile, metalworking, food production, or furniture making industries. It was the successful drive to recruit young workers from these sectors—through mass agitation during the Comintern's sectarian Third Period[3]—that launched the PCB on its way to becoming the principal organization of, and hegemonic influence on, the Left for the following half century.

Martins's recruitment to the PCB was the result of the proselytism of Ukranian Jewish immigrant Jacob Koutzii,[4] a shoe salesman and eventual merchant in this sector. Active in the legal Worker Peasant Block, Koutzii was the leader of the Federation of Proletarian Sports at a time when factory soccer teams were challenging what

1. Bartz, "Partido communista do Brazil."

2. See the articles by the anarchist journalist and PDB founder Astrogildo Pereira, "Problemas de reorganização"; and Hall and Pinheiro, *O movimento*, 254–55.

3. "O III Congresso."

4. Jacob is the father of Flávio Koutzii, who in the early 1960s became the leader of one of the first ruptures within the PCB, the Leninist Dissidence of Rio Grande do Sul. Going into exile in Argentina, Flávio was active in the Revolutionary Workers Party–Revolutionary People's Army and was jailed between 1975 and 1979 when he returned to Brazil, where he participated in the foundation of the Workers' Party (PT), in which capacity he served as city councilman, state deputy, and chief of staff during the governorship of the PT's Olívio Dutra, 1999–2002.

was an upper-class pursuit in Porto Alegre. Working as a coach, Koutzii established relations with young workers like Martins, who signed a membership card in 1929 after undergoing rudimentary training in self-defense and the handling of guns.[5] The PCB's class-against-class rhetoric in this period is suggested by the Federation's call for a celebration of the twelfth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Proclaiming itself the "centralizing organ of the proletarian sports movement," it claimed to lead the struggle "against the influence of bourgeois sport, which is one of the means used by the bourgeoisie to derail workers from the terrain of class struggle."[6] Sixty years later, Martins was still comfortable expressing himself in such class rhetoric when describing the party he joined as a youth: "The party had a revolutionary and proletarian position. It did not hide its character as a class party and openly presented itself as an organization struggling for socialism. Solidarity with the October Revolution in czarist Russia was a duty and a matter of honor and none of us hid our internationalist sentiment."[7]

The clarity of such communist rhetoric provided a satisfying coherence for militants, especially perhaps for some workers like Martins. But it was limited in guiding the PCB as it navigated the complexities of Brazilian politics while the country moved toward the overthrow of the oligarchical First Republic (1889–1930). While the PCB preached class war, the state's ex-governor Getúlio Vargas was moving toward regime change with the support of a small group of radicalized young military officers who had led antigovernment barracks revolts since 1922 (known as *tenentismo*, the lieutenant's movement). After a presidential election that Vargas denounced as fraudulent, the leader from Rio Grande do Sul conspired with the surviving tenentes, including Luis Carlos Prestes, a military cadet from Rio Grande do Sul (known as gaúchos) much lionized for leading a rebel column that ranged through the interior of the country between 1925 and 1927.[8] Although part of the Vargas conspiracy in 1930, the radicalized Prestes had adhered to Marxism, if not yet the PCB, in exile through contact with the South American Bureau of the Comintern.

Demanding national liberation and social revolution, Prestes declined to support the Revolution of 1930[9] and went into exile in the Soviet Union in 1931 before being placed in the leadership of the PCB by the Comintern in 1934. He would hold

5. Martins, *Um depoimento político*, 27–28, 41; Eloy Martins, interview by author (Fortes), March 18, 1997.

6. "Viva 7 de novembro! Comemoremos o 120 aniversário da Revolução Russa! Desportista proletário!" In "Processo de expulsão de Marcos Piatigorski, Leon Piatigorski, Nicolau Artzvenco, Simão Brodin, e Pelayo Gil Ribas," 1930, MJNI, Caixa IJJ7/172, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

7. Martins, *Um depoimento político*, 34.

8. Contact as an actor in the 1920s with the Prestes column would be the key to later involvement with the Communist Party on the part of "Jararaca" (pit viper), a pioneering mid-century radio personality, humorist, and founder of *música sertaneja* (country music) in Brazil. Fortes and Veras, "No rastro de Jararaca."

9. Prestes, *Luiz Carlos Prestes*, 117–27.

that position until 1979, whether as a prisoner after a failed barracks revolt (1936–45), as an elected senator (1946–47), or living in clandestinity (1947–58, 1964–71) and exile (1971–79). Dubbed "the cavalier of hope," his national appeal always extended beyond that of his party, which is reflected in the ambivalence of Martins's retrospective judgment in 1992: "With the entry of Prestes, the party came to have two tendencies. One worker-ist and the other tendency . . . [which was] not reformist but petty bourgeois." Yet he admitted that the entry of Prestes had helped turn the PCB "into a central political force in the country," even if at the cost of "diminishing its ideological potency and the firmness of its principled class position."[10]

The prominence of the legendary Prestes, the object of an international communist campaign after his 1936 imprisonment, reminds us that the Russian Revolution was not about a radical workers' party taking power. It was about the seizure of power by a vanguard party composed of professional revolutionaries of diverse origins, including the most conscious workers and peasants, but with a major role for radical intellectuals and military rebels. Moreover, the proven asceticism and militant Marxism-Leninism of Prestes, till the day he died, combined with his years in prison and clandestinity to make him the epitome of the professional revolutionary, the masculinized "man of steel" who sacrificed all. That Prestes, the austere revolutionary "machine," possessed a preexisting appeal beyond the PCB's ranks was the true peculiarity in the Brazilian case.

Showing steadfast loyalty to the PCB, Martins experienced repression across all of the conjunctures, both before and after 1930, in a country where the "social question was a police matter."[11] When the military handed power over to Vargas in 1930, the nineteen-year-old had joined with other members of the popular classes to celebrate the "revolution" even if not a fan of the state's wiley ex-governor. Most immediately, the new regime created a body of labor law, including government financed and controlled unions, that provided a vehicle used by the communists—following Lenin's orientation in *Left Wing Communism*—to build a mass union movement among workers in Porto Alegre and the rest of Brazil. In the wake of the 1935 Prestes-led revolt, Martins retreated into his first extended period of clandestinity to reemerge, with the democratization of 1945, as a skilled machine builder who helped retake the leadership of the union, worked as the party's state union secretary, and even served a term as a much-arrested city councilman (elected on another party line, since his party was again outlawed in 1947).[12]

10. Eloy Martins, interview by author (Fortes), Janurary 17, 1992.

11. See French, *Drowning in Laws*, chap. 7, "The Politics of Aphorism: The Social Question as a Police Matter (Caso de Polícia)," 122–50.

12. Martins, *Um depoimento político*, 99. "Frustrada a greve do abono de natal de 1947—Serviço de Informações-Diversos—Porto Alegre. Espécie: Relatório elaborado por Hélio Carlomagno, diretor estadual de Segurança Social e Economia Popular," Aperj, Fundo DOPS, Seção DPS, cx. 481, fols. 1–12; "May Day in Rio Grande do Sul," V. Lansing Collins Jr., cônsul norte-americano em Porto Alegre, Porto Alegre, ao Departamento de Estado, May 9, 1950, NARA, Departamento de Estado.

Although virulently anticommunist and allergic to democracy, Vargas had won great popular support with government rhetoric and programs that promised and, to a certain extent, met popular needs and grievances while affording a level of symbolic recognition of those on the bottom. In 1950, the self-declared populist returned to the presidency, in a valid vote with mass participation, before ending his life in a spectacular suicide in office in 1954. He left behind a "carta testamento" (letter-testament) in which he denounced his military and civilian opponents for serving the antinational and antipopular interests of the international trusts and the domestic oppressors of Brazil's common people.[13] At the time of the crisis, the persecuted PCB was in the grip of a semi-insurrectionary political line—it had called for an electoral boycott in 1950—in which it campaigned for his overthrow from the left. The massive popular protests and riots that swept the country after news of his death forced communists, including Martins, to undertake a profound self-criticism. The chastened PCB, soon weakened by the Stalin revelations, would adopt a more moderate policy over the next decade based on the acceptance of a peaceful road to socialism and an alliance with nationalist forces and the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) identified with Vargas's legacy. "The letter-testament of Vargas," Martins observed, "mobilized the getulista masses, making it easier to achieve unity between communists and laborites and, by accusing hidden foreign forces, helped to promote the nationalist movement."[14]

In 1961, the country's gaúcho Vice President Jango Goulart of the PTB rose to the presidency, which contributed to a deepening reformist ferment that some enthusiasts called the "Brazilian Revolution." Yet this moment of maximum PCB influence in national politics would come to an abrupt end with a military coup on March 31, 1964, that met no resistance. The coup once again plunged communist leaders like Prestes and Martins into stressful cat-and-mouse lives as clandestine communist revolutionaries. In 1966, the entire top leadership of the PCB—most of them underground—were condemned to long prison terms for violating the National Security Law first passed under Vargas; the fugitives Prestes and Martins were condemned to fourteen and five years in prison, respectively.[15]

In 1971, Martins was dispatched at the age of sixty to São Paulo where his key assignment was to work in the suburban industrial region of greater São Paulo known as ABC, long studied by French. Named for three of the region's *municípios* (Santo André, São Bernardo, and São Caetano), this Brazilian Detroit would become famous in the late 1970s for a sequence of massive metalworker strikes that launched trade union president Luis Inácio Lula da Silva on the path to the Brazilian Presidency (2002–10). The mission of Martins was to rebuild the Communist Party's strength in the region's metalworking industries with a particular focus on Santo

13. Rogers, "'I Choose This Means.'"

14. Martins, *Um depoimento político*, 115–16.

15. "Pena de 14 anos para Prestes," *Folha de São Paulo*, June 7, 1966.

André, whose union had been founded and long led by his communist counterpart Marcos Andreotti.[16] Equipped with false documents, Martins arrived during a period of heightened repression aimed at "revolutionary" New Left organizations—also based on Marxism-Leninism, albeit Cuban, Chinese, or Trotskyist variants—that had opted strategically, unlike the PCB, for armed struggle against the regime, whether immediately in practice or in the near future. Bombings, robberies, and spectacular kidnappings—including a large-scale assault on Mercedes-Benz in ABC—had intensified after the radicalization of the military regime with Institutional Act #5 (AI-5) of December 13, 1968, which initiated a regime of exception with the closure of the Brazilian congress, the establishment of prior censorship, suspension of habeas corpus, and a systematic and routinized use of torture against political opponents.

Having found a place to live in Mauá, a small ABC *município*, Martins had the bad luck to have landed in the wake of a systematic campaign aimed at Ação Popular (AP), a Catholic organization of ex-students and priests turned Maoist revolutionaries. Working with local priests, the AP had been conducting open agitation in Mauá after AI-5, which was linked as well to their ambitious commitment to "proletarianizing" their student and ex-student cadres by sending them to learn from peasants and workers. In Mauá, they stood out like a sore thumb, and the whole operation—documented in long mimeographed reports—came tumbling down between December 1970 and January 1971. The most egregious casualty was an eighteen-year-old black machinist who was dragged from his hospital room to the torture chambers where he died.[17]

Yet the bad luck that resulted in Martins's imprisonment was due less to the foolish radicalism of the young than to the classic problem of all revolutionaries. There had been police infiltration in the cell of communist metalworkers at the local Pirelli factory—the primary suspect, Martins realized retrospectively, was a communist guard who worked there—and Martins was swept into police hands.[18] Thus began the trials and tribulations that marked his odyssey through the hands of the military, a specialized interagency torture operation, the political social police, and a variety of prisons in São Paulo; from there, he was sent back to Rio Grande do Sul for interrogation, back again to São Paulo, and finally returned to his home state where he was released on conditional liberty in November 1973 with the requirement that he report on a weekly basis to the police. His military court charges were dismissed in 1974, and two years later he regained the political rights he had lost with his 1966 conviction. In 1979, negotiations by the opposition with the military led to an amnesty law that not only put an end to another case initiated against him in 1976 but allowed the return of exiles, including Prestes. The same law, however, also amnestied the state agents who had tortured thousands of Brazilians and disappeared half of the PCB's internal central committee leadership in 1975.

16. For a biographical portrait of Andreotti based on oral histories, see French, "How the Not-So-Powerless Prevail."

17. Portuense de Carvalho. "Experiências de solidariedade e política."

18. Martins, *Um depoimento político*, 171.

Two years and two months after amnesty, Martins published a memoir of his saga between 1971 and 1979.[19] *Tempo de cárcere* had some of the features of the classic genre of communist *testimonio* exemplified by Julius Fučík's *Notes from the Gallows*, which was based on writings, smuggled out of a Nazi prison, by a Czech Communist Party Central Committee member who was executed in 1943 at the age of forty.[20] While Martin's book models exemplary revolutionary behavior, it mostly escaped the genre's weaknesses as propaganda through a rigorously empirical and humanistic type of storytelling. Offering nothing about his past, the book focused on a step-by-step account of his odyssey in which he recounted absurdities, crimes, and horrors but never with great explicitness as to torture, unlike some other accounts. It is also a story about his own role as odd man out—an "ancient" revolutionary over sixty—in the midst of mostly young university students, overwhelmingly non–working class, who were his fellow sufferers and partners in solidarity. He paid particular attention to a cellmate from an armed struggle group as he made the transition from rationalization to abject public betrayal while Martins, with pride, explained how he deflected inquiries to avoid bringing grief to his contacts even when confronted with them in person.[21]

His book is unusual in other ways as well. For one thing, it is one of the few prison memoirs of this period of Brazilian history—of which there are dozens and dozens—not written by a university-educated person in a society where, in 1960, only 1 percent of adults had received any higher education. Like most workers in São Paulo in 1960, Martins had finished only three grades and part of the fourth and thus had not graduated primary school. Yet his political militancy had made him an autodidact with a vast breadth of written knowledge and a capacity to use words, even in their most alienated written form.[22] It is a very personal book, full of slang, humor, and wry observations about human strengths and weaknesses.

Fair minded and not harshly judgmental, *Tempo de cárcere* is very much the expression of a new desire—perhaps reflecting an imagined audience or Martins's life stage—to provide an account of his self as he experienced these events. It deviated, in other words, from the more classically "communist" book he published in 1989, four years after the end of the dictatorship. *Um depoimento político (55 anos do PCB)* is oddly impersonal and distant in tone and full of rote communist political "analysis." In his jail memoir, by contrast, he had stepped away from the explicitly political by offering unusually rich and self-conscious reflections. The writing of his prison memoir may have even been a welcome break from a hectic half-century career as a

19. Martins, *Tempo*.

20. Fučík, *Notes from the Gallows*.

21. Martins, *Tempo* (49–50) provides a delicious account of how a director of the Santo André metalworkers, brought in to be questioned in Martins's presence, maneuvered his way through the interrogation with Martins; in Martins, *Depoimento* (171), he explains that he had in fact been in contact with the union's leaders on three occasions before his arrest.

22. One thinks of the famous poem "Praise of Learning" by Bertolt Brecht: "Hungry man, reach for the book: it is a weapon. You must take over the leadership" (*Selected Poems*, 93).

local and national leader of metalworker unions, a politician, and a communist with significant international travel—including the Soviet bloc—who had faced down a never-ending barrage of police persecution, arrests, and beatings.

Along with a few others,[23] Martins's book is a neglected Brazilian classic in a genre where it seems that every radical intellectual of a certain age feels the need to put his experience on paper. Moreover, they often do so with a sense of outrage at what was done to them—this is especially true for those who took up arms—that can seem both class-inflected and at odds with the revolutionary politics they claimed to embrace at the time. In this regard, we might contrast professional revolutionaries from the amateurs of the student New Left of the late 1960s. This can be seen in a 2012 interview with a working-class communist from ABC. Derley José de Carvalho joined the PCB as a young machinist before breaking away, with his three brothers, and embracing armed struggle after 1964 (he is the only survivor). Talking about his travails at the hands of the police, he observed that "I don't much like to say 'I was tortured, this or that happened.' For me, this is very unfair (*sacana*). I didn't enter the movement by following a piper's call (*de gaiato*). I knew what I wanted. I wanted a revolution and I still do, even today," not the "liberal democracy of the capitalist system."[24]

The consistency and coherence of this Bolshevik faith was clear even in unusually personal work like *Tempo de cárcere*, in which the Russian Revolution is invoked on the very last of the 208 pages: "Despite the violence, affronts, and tortures, I am now more securely convinced than ever of the justice of the noble and majestic ideas of Marxism-Leninism" that emerged from the "largest revolutionary event that shook the world" in the twentieth century: "the Great Socialist Revolution of October 1917 in Czarist Russia . . . [which was] a gigantic leap forward for humanity." In another reference to the Soviet Union, he declared that the Russian Revolution had advanced the goal of "world proletarian revolution" despite the claims to the contrary he heard from so-called revolutionaries in jail who were viscerally anti-Soviet.[25]

This declaration of faith reveals a truth that should not be ignored. It is impossible to talk about the Russian Revolution without taking "Marxism-Leninism" and "proletarian revolution" seriously.[26] These words had become the life project of tens

23. Another standout work is by a young Catholic student from Santa Catarina, where Martins was born, who administered the bureaucratic central station of Popular Action in São Paulo: Luca, *No corpo*.

24. Critical of Lula for not being a revolutionary, Carvalho was interviewed during the years of the Lula-Dilma PT presidencies, which he criticized but for which he voted. Carvalho, "Depoimento de Derly José de Carvalho."

25. Martins, *Tempo*, 208, 131.

26. A similar constancy of faith can be found in the case of the communist who, as the first president of the São Bernardo do Campo metalworkers union, recruited Carvalho and his brothers into the PCB before 1964. Condemned in absentia to two years in prison in 1966, Orrison Saraiva de Castro remained loyal to the PCB and spent many years in exile and gained broad experience in the wider world, including Bolivia, Panama, Chile, the Soviet Union, and Mozambique after independence. At the age of 86, this African-descended communist still emphasizes the importance of mastering revolutionary theory, musing in 2011, "Sometimes I ask myself what we can do so everyone will understand Marxism-Leninism." His eminently realistic answer: "Only by reaching power" (Saraiva de Castro, "Quem faz o movimento?").

of thousands of men and women who lived in oppressive societies far away from the Russian empire (7,800 miles separates Petrograd from Porto Alegre). Their revolutionary faith in the communist utopia seems inconceivable in our twenty-first-century world, but this anniversary requires us to contemplate both revolution—as in reform versus revolution—and what it meant to be a revolutionary. Revolutionaries, it is clear, are made, not born; they choose to act radically rather than merely adhere to what exists, and they are always different from those they aspire to lead or in whose name they speak. But what they did and confronted in their lives—with more or less courage (the great drama of the revolutionary prison memoir is about holding true)—required a powerful faith in a future utopia that few can believe in today in such a simple way. Their option was not to temporize, to weigh this and that, or to hold limply to a path of disapproval of the state of things or merely wish for a better or more just world. In their determination, they embraced a fight that they knew would bring more grief than happiness.[27]

Few are alive today who lived through and can recall the visceral impact of the Russian Revolution on so many, whether it thrilled or horrified them. But we might heed the words of the German writer Goethe when he insisted, as an old man, that he was glad to have lived "when the world was agitated by great movements, which have continued during my life; so that I am a living witness of the seven years' war, the separation of America from England, the French Revolution, and the whole Napoleon era with the downfall of that hero, and the events that followed." Thus, he wrote, he had "attained results and insights impossible to those who must learn all these things from books."[28]

Like many who hailed the fall of the czar, Goethe had sympathized as a young man with the France of 1789 only to recoil in horror at the revolutionary violence and the turn, with Napoleon, to the conquest of other kingdoms and peoples. In his old age, he would say, "It is true that I could be no friend to the French Revolution; for its horrors were too near me, and shocked me daily and hourly, while its beneficial results were not then to be discovered."[29] This is also true for 1917, although we do know that the colonialism of the classic imperialist age—which in 1938 controlled 42 percent of the world's land mass and 32 percent of its population[30]—would not have come to an end if Lenin had not added three words that transformed a Eurocentric nineteenth-century slogan into: "Workers and Oppressed Peoples of the World Unite." Nor would fascism have been defeated without the decisive contribution of the USSR and of communists throughout the world. And finally, it is extremely unlikely that Brazil, even today one of the world's most socioeconomically and racially unequal societies, would have come to more or less respect the forms of electoral democracy while offering a modicum of respect for the rights of working

27. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, 127–29.
28. Goethe, *Conversations*, 84.
29. Ibid.
30. Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*.

people were it not for the stubborn militancy and self-sacrifice of communists like Martins and Prestes.

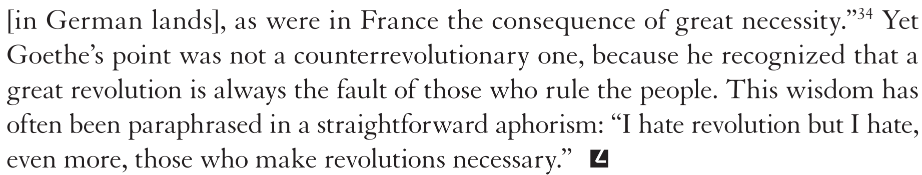
A 1938 poem by the exiled German communist Bertolt Brecht sheds light on what Martins learned from life, not books, in the wake of the Russian Revolution. To paraphrase Brecht's "To Posterity," revolutionaries emerge in times of hunger, massacres, and slaughter, where "there was only injustice and no resistance." They are from a dark age where "a smooth forehead betokens a hard heart" and "he who laughs has not yet heard the terrible tidings." They came into a world "of disorder when hunger ruled" and "came among men in a time of uprising" and "revolted with them. So the time passed which on earth was given" them. They are men and women who, when they loved, "loved with indifference" and "looked upon nature with impatience," because they ate their food between massacres, haunted by the "shadow of murder" while they slept. And the revolutionary knew, Brecht goes on, that "there was little I could do. But without me, the rulers would have been more secure. This was my hope," although "the goal lay in the distance," scarcely attainable.[31]

To recognize their contributions does not mean that one needs to accept their illusions or ignore the shortcomings of a movement that had more than its share of arrogance, sectarianism, and authoritarianism. In thinking of *Tempo de cárcere*, we might recall *Memórias do cárcere*, by Brazilian novelist Graciliano Ramos. Published in 1953, this most famous of Brazilian memoirs of political imprisonment was written after Ramos was swept up in the repression unleashed by Vargas after the disastrous Prestes-led barracks revolt of 1935.[32] At the time a noncommunist, the novelist joined the PCB in 1945 because he hated capitalism, but he did so without illusions. "He was inclined to accept the Communist Party the way it was," Paulo Mercadante recalls, because "his judgment of humans didn't permit him to imagine a brotherhood of supermen of a Nietzschean (or Leninist) sort. But it was them, the communists—narrow and ignorant bunglers [*trapalhões*]—who were fighting against capitalism, in most cases at an enormous personal sacrifice. This was enough." Despite his membership, the great writer was subject to carping criticism by communists in the late 1940s because "Graciliano was by temperament and formation anti-rhetorical." As his young disciple of the period explained, "he was a man of tragedy" for whom there "was nothing romantic or adventurous about revolution, class struggle, or political action. On the contrary, it was part of the human tragedy, . . . cruel and painful processes even though necessary."[33] In this regard, Ramos shared an insight with the more conservative Goethe. In the same interview as an old man, Goethe explained that he had always opposed those who "were endeavoring, artificially to bring about such scenes here

31. Brecht, *Selected Poems*, 173–77. The poem figures in Brecht's most important collection of political poetry, known as the Svenborg Poems, which was written in exile on the eve of World War II. (Ronald Speirs, ed. *Brecht's Poetry of Political Exile* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000]).

32. Ramos, *Memórias do cárcere*.

33. Mercadante, *Graciliano Ramos*, 21, 24.



[in German lands], as were in France the consequence of great necessity."[34] Yet Goethe's point was not a counterrevolutionary one, because he recognized that a great revolution is always the fault of those who rule the people. This wisdom has often been paraphrased in a straightforward aphorism: "I hate revolution but I hate, even more, those who make revolutions necessary."

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