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Pino, Julio Cesar

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Maria Helena Moreira Alves. State and Opposition in Military Brazil. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985. xiv + 352 pp.

Maria Helena Moreira Alves' book State and Opposition in Military Brazil seeks to demystify the rhetoric of the so-called national security state and provide background to the dramatic events of January 1985 when Brazil returned to civilian rule. The coup d'etat that brought the military to power in Brazil in April of 1964 was a watershed in the recent history of Latin America. The significance of this event was recognized first and foremost by the foreign sponsors of the overthrow of President Joao Goulart: the Pentagon, the State Department, and the American multinationals operating in Brazil. U.S. Ambassador Lincoln Gordon spoke of the coup as "one of the great turning points of the twentieth century: congratulating dictator Castello Branco on his ascension to power. A glance at the political map of South America just ten years later would reveal that what had occurred in Brazil was no fluke. From the Amazon to the Southern Cone the continent was in the grip of military regimes dedicated to the "doctrine of national security."

Alves' work concerning military Brazil stands in the shadow of two trends that have dominated the literature on authoritarian Brazil. One school of thought depicts the generals as a behemoth: a totalitarian monster sitting atop civil society. In the writings of Brazilian scholars such as Nelson Werneck Sodre (Vida e Morte da Dictadura, 1984) the Brazilian dictatorship is described as a form of "tropical fascism." Carried away by political passions the proponents of this school fail to note the crucial distinction between the military regimes of Latin America in the seventies and European fascism. The latter movement represented the last attempt by the German and Italian bourgeoisie to prevent the collapse of capitalism through the institutionalization of a terroristic regime bent on the extermination of the organized working class and all forms of representative rule. By contrast the military coups in South America of the sixties and seventies took place

at a time when the elites of the continent were immersed in economic crisis but during an epoch in which the proletariat posed no immediate threat to the capitalist system. Consequently, the military had a stake in preserving the facade of democratic practice so as to rally the middle class to the side of the dictatorship. As political scientists Alfred Stepan and Guillermo O'Donnell have argued in their respective works the national security state forged by the military in Argentina and Brazil, as well as elsewhere in South America, was designed as a stopgap measure to provide temporary relief for the South American bourgeoisie suffering from the latest round of the perennial crisis of legitimacy that plague dependent capitalist societies.

The doctrine of national security as applied to Brazil is analyzed by Alves through a careful reading of General Golbery do Couto e Silva's book Geopolitica do Brasil (1981) the Mein Kampf of the Revolution of 1964. The main tenets of the doctrine may be summarized as follows: (1) The nuclear standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union makes a conventional war pitting the two superpowers improbable, for such a conflict would escalate into a nuclear exchange; (2) Communism, understood to be monolithic and centered in the USSR, seeks to expand through the export of revolutionary warfare; (3) Revolutionary warfare involves not only armed struggle but also psychological and ideological subversion aimed at weakening the West i.e. the U.S. and its allies like Brazil; (4) To counter the threat of Communist subversion the states of the West must assume extraordinary powers, even at the cost of representative democracy and human rights. The national security state itself ultimately determines who constitutes the internal enemy, and which opposition activities constitute antagonisms or pressures. Thus responsibility for the control of subversive or revolutionary activities gives the military forces practically unlimited power over the population; finally (5), National security requires economic development, but development is defined by the military as exploitation of the nation's productive resources, not an improvement in the living standards of the population. If the doctrine of

national security bears a chilling resemblance to the pronouncements of certain members of the Reagan Administration during the Iran-Contra hearings this is not surprising. The essential elements of the doctrine can be found in the strategy of containment of communism as practiced by every American president since Truman. Alves is convinced that by 1964 the Brazilian military leadership and its North American allies had decided to put an end to civilian rule and reshape the nation as a garrison state serving as the regional policeman for the United States. The actual implementation of this policy, however, was a slow, jerky process as the military confronted dissension within its own ranks (nationalists vs. pro-Americans, hardliners vs. legalists) and opposition from those sectors of Brazilian society that did not profit from the generals' drive for economic growth.

Since Brazil was a designated member of the "Free World" it was important to the military to maintain the trappings of a democratic society, but the state would be purged of all elements not completely loyal to the armed forces. After the coup of 1964 the political rights of all suspected subversives, including members of congress, were suspended. Trade union leaders, university professors, and even military officers not in sympathy with the regime were dismissed. Elementary civil liberties such as habeas corpus were abolished. The use of torture against political detainees became widespread. Equally offensive, the economic provisions of the national security doctrine resulted in the impoverishment of the vast majority of Brazilians. Alves cites statistics compiled by the dictatorship to show that government economic policy from 1964-74 led to the lowering of real wages, a greater concentration of income in the hands of the top 20% of the population and an increase in malnutrition in the countryside. Yet the Brazilian people did not sit idly by while its living standards deteriorated. A fascinating aspect of Alves' work is her discussion of "the dialectic of state and opposition." The repressive measures of the state were constantly challenged by disparate elements of the population from slum dwellers to Catholic Bishops.

The officially recognized opposition to the military coalesced around the Party of the



Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), which represented the interests of the Brazilian bourgeoisie. While the middle class had initially supported the coup of 1964 Alves feels that this group turned against the military once the regime's arbitrary power was turned against "respectable" elements of society --- lawyers, doctors, clergymen, etc. But while PMDB challenged the dictatorship on constitutional grounds a second opposition front was working alongside it. The victims of the "economic miracle" of the seventies --- urban workers, peasants, intellectuals --- engaged in non-traditional forms of protests. New labor unions, born in the wake of the strike wave of 1978-79, broke free of the aegis of the state. Ecclesiastical Base Communities taught the poor to fight for their rights. In fact, the Catholic Church in Brazil is widely acknowledged to be among the most progressive theologically and socially in Latin America and indeed the world; further, probably the most important single theological and social innovation of the church in Brazil has been the formation of the basic Christian communities. With the result that the Brazilian electorate, when offered a true choice, voted against the pro-government Partido Democratico Social in every election since 1974 --- culminating in the defeat of the military sponsored candidate in the electoral college in January of 1985. The pages of this book are a stirring testimony to the Brazilian people's devotion to democracy.

Such fine sentiments, however, do not suffice to grant this tome a prominent place in the literature on contemporary Brazil. Her analysis of the national security state reveals Alves' notion of history which is to examine documents and pieces of legislation and then recount how such laws were put into practice. This method of interpretation is not dialectical but dogmatic. The author simply assumes that history begins and ends with the written word. State and Opposition fails to place its subject matter in any historical context. To cite but one example, the strength of the Brazilian working class in resisting the encroachment of the state can be traced to the long history of Anarchist and Communist agitation inside the trade unions. This development goes unnoticed by the author.

The English-speaking student of Brazilian affairs who wishes to understand the true nature of the coup of 1964 and its aftermath would do best to turn to Alfred Stepan's masterful The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil (1971), and the equally perceptive work by Peter Flynn Brazil: A Political Analysis (1978). Both authors provide the kind of in-depth research sadly missing in the present volume.

Julio Cesar Pino  
University of California, Los Angeles

Frederick S. Calhoun. Power and Principle: Armed Intervention in Wilsonian Foreign Policy. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986. xi + 333 pp. \$24.95

President Woodrow Wilson has attracted so much scholarly attention over the years that the casual observer might believe that he and his era have been thoroughly exhausted as a field for further historical research. Frederick S. Calhoun's Power and Principle demonstrates that this is clearly not the case, and that the only obstacle preventing a more profound reinterpretation of the past is a critical imagination and exhaustive primary research. Calhoun manifests a plethora of both virtues in his fascinating revisionist critique of the Wilson Administration. He writes, "to a remarkable extent, Wilson identified the goals, established the methods, and defined the terms of U.S. foreign policy in this century."

Wilson is not usually characterized as an enthusiast for things military; in fact, he is usually depicted as an intellectual with little interest in, and no patience for, the opinions of military men. Calhoun argues that while Wilson was no militarist, he understood the utility of arms as an adjunct force in resolving difficult foreign problems. Wilson was able to reconcile the conflicting requirements of power and principle, accepting the responsibilities and advantages of both, without being completely beholden to either. Wilson was more than a mere ideologue or a promulgator of pious platitudes, he was also a consummate power politician