

POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION:
THE BRAZILIAN CASE

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Introduction

A Case of Underdevelopment of Political Parties

In comparative perspective, Brazil is a notorious case of the underdevelopment of political parties. If we start from the presupposition that parties that are strong and well-rooted in society are indispensable to democratic consolidation, our discussion should be centered on this long history of party weakness and discontinuity.

There are abundant references to the "artificiality" and lack of "authenticity" of parties in social consciousness and journalistic language, to the point that an anti-party tendency must be considered as a trait of Brazilian political culture. Foreign observers have frequently made similar observations, reflecting, by and large, the same viewpoint. Although we cannot discard the hypothesis that one is dealing with a distortion and even an anti-liberal anti-pluralist survival of the period between the wars, it is not only this. As we have said, comparative perspective makes evident the instability of party formations in all periods of Brazilian history. Contrary to what is observed in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, none of the present Brazilian parties can claim continuity with political organizations before the Second World War. Even in relation to the multiparty experience of 1945-1964, a claim of this type would be valid, if at all, only in terms of the great split between those supporting and those opposed to the policies of Getulio Vargas, never as a specific continuity between organizations, leaders or palpable ideological proposals. Consequently, it is not surprising that the military-authoritarian experiment initiated in 1964 was successful in the attempt to dissolve party identifications and in establishing parameters for the formation of new parties during the process of abertura (political opening). Finally, to further underline our point of departure: there is no guarantee that the present party system will survive the political changes underway, despite its indisputable impact on the electoral alignments of the 70s, which resulted, in the indirect election of a civilian, opposition leader, Tancredo Neves, to the Presidency of the Republic.

These preliminary indications suggest the utility of a revision, on the historical and comparative plane, of the general notion that strong political parties are necessary and inevitable in complex polities. Although it is true that only the Estado Novo of Vargas completely dispensed with party mediation, what one finds is that the Brazilian political system has always had loosely organized political parties, and indeed often prevented or made difficult the strengthening of this institution.

This essay, however, has a more modest objective, which is to propose preliminary responses to the following questions: 1) How does one explain the fragility of the Brazilian party system in the democratic, multiparty period begun at the end of the Second World War? 2) Is Brazil now living a different experience, characterized by the strengthening of the institution of political parties? If so, how to explain this strengthening under authoritarian rule? 3) Will it be useful to undertake deliberate measures aimed at strengthening parties as protagonists of the democratic transition and of new standards of political action to confront the crisis? What measures would these be?

I. Conceptual Presuppositions

The study of political parties has been done from contrasting focuses. Although the evidence makes it increasingly difficult to sustain the conceptualization of political parties as a natural social formation, or as a necessary political expression of a class or well-defined social group, this clearly continues to be the preferred understanding in the Marxist literature. At the other extreme we have the "Schumpeterian" view, according to which parties are organizations deliberately created by political "entrepreneurs," who notice areas open for action in particular conjunctures. Such "entrepreneurs" clearly are aware that they act within social and institutional parameters that both limit and facilitate their choices and actions, but this does not remove the "artificial" character from their work. In this view, the organizational and electoral growth of parties, their greater or lesser rootedness in social groups, the fact that they do or do not become a focus of subjective identification for the mass of the voters, become posterior events, to be explained. They are not elements included beforehand in the conceptualization of parties. This is, in consequence, a rigorously minimalist conceptualization, according to which parties are organizations that form from the formal monopoly of representation, or, from the exclusive or quasi-exclusive right to select candidates to elective office in competitive political systems.²

Without considering it indisputable in general, it seems to us that the second view, the Schumpeterian, is the better adjusted to Brazilian party history. Party movements of consequence emerging from extracongressional or extra-state bases were few. Even these were often immobilized, coopted or repressed by the central power. The "minimalist" conception of the political party therefore constitutes a useful shortcut. It suffices to recall that two of the three principal parties of the 1945-1964 period -- PSD (Social Democratic Party) and PTB (Brazilian Labor Party) -- were organized from the top down by Vargas himself to adapt the political and administrative machine of the Estado Novo to the competitive conditions that began with the redemocratization of the country in 1945. Consider, on the other

hand, the destiny of the parties most clearly tied to ideological movements in this period: on the right, PRP (Party of Popular Representation, continuing the "integralism" of Plinio Salgado), was completely unmade, becoming only a small patronage party (partido clientelista); on the left, PCB (Brazilian Communist Party) had between 1945 and 1947 its only years of legal existence since its founding in 1922. Prevented from acting as an autonomous protagonist in electoral competition, its influence was clearly reduced and diffused.

After 1964, the formation of parties occurred within the terms adopted in our conceptualization. Once the multiparty system was abolished by Institutional Act no. 2, in October of 1965, the new legislation established that new parties were to be formed as "provisional organizations," that is, as organizations permitted only insofar as they were necessary to the operation of the representative mechanism. ARENA (Alliance of National Renovation), of the government, and MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement), representing the opposition, emerged in this way. In the same way, the party reform of 1979 established strict conditions for the formation of new parties, starting with the obligation to put the word "party" in party names, which forced MDB to rename itself PMDB (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement). Of the six associations that then organized, one was shown inviable even before running in an election: PP (Popular Party), which joined PMDB owing to changes in the electoral legislation imposed by the government in November, 1981. Another, Workers' Party (PT), while possibly capable of persisting even without congressional representation, no doubt benefitted from the suspension of the minimum requirement of 5% of the vote nationally and 3% of the vote in nine states, which assured its presence in the House of Representatives (Camara Federal) after the 1982 elections. The examples of PP and PT are interesting precisely because they involve parties with a marked "class" connotation: the first seen as an association tied to modern business interests, the second as the voice of the new unionism and of some independent sectors of the left.

II. Brazilian Party Weakness in Historical Perspective

Throughout its history as an independent nation, from 1822 to 1984, Brazil has known no less than six distinct party systems: liberals versus conservatives from 1837 to 1889; single state parties in the Old Republic, until 1930; a germinal multiparty system, polarized at the extremes by the "integralist" and communist movements, from 1930 to 1937; a better delineated multiparty system from 1945 to the military coup of 1964; a guided two-party system (ARENA and MDB) during the authoritarian regime, from 1965 to 1979; and finally, since this last date, a controlled return to a multiparty system, having as its principal organizations PDS and PMDB, respective successors to ARENA and MDB. This is why Sartori (1982) refers to the Brazilian case as a succession of intermittent systems, without structural consolidation. Hippolito (1984, p. 11), writes: "The configuration of parties in a given historical period does not repeat itself in the next, making the observation of longer periods impossible."

It is only now that a systematic investigation of the reasons for this weakness or intermittence has begun. Until recently there was a clear tendency to subsume this investigation -- that relates specifically to the succession of party systems -- under two other, wider questions. These are the bureaucratic-patrimonial character of the Brazilian state, and "privatism" (or "clanic familism") as a fundamental trait of Brazilian political culture. In this way, the analysis of parties and their evolution was excessively tied to the use of these large interpretive constructs, which apply to almost the totality of Brazilian history.³ The instability of parties, their lack of organizational cohesion, their weakness in aggregating interests, and formulating policies, or as sustainers of a civilian political order, in short, the personalism of leaders and their lack of ideological commitments, all were considered as a "Brazilian" singularity. This was attributed -- in various ways from one author to another -- to the colonial history of the country, to the patrimonial traditions of the Portuguese Crown, to the continued predominance of "bureaucratic stagnation" and last but not least, the historical pattern of the occupation of the land, based on the latifundio and the predominance of local interests.

Clearly, one should not go to the other extreme and completely ignore this classic scheme of reference for Brazilian state and social formation. The theme of "privatism", for example, points to a fundamental dimension, which is the hypertrophy of private power, its tendency to absorb public functions in the absence of the power of the state and above all to impede the development of wider forms of association, without which the type of aggregation of interests effected by modern parties is inconceivable.⁴ Similarly, the centralist and patrimonialist organization of the State transforms it into virtually the only prize of political contests, "into the fortress which it is necessary, first to take, and afterwards to reconstruct in another form."⁵ In the 19th century when strictly speaking there was no such notion of reconstructing the State, it was still the great dispenser of favors, jobs and rank; and above all was the nascent military and police force that the great landlords were engaged in neutralizing or suborning.

These factors do go some distance in explaining why Brazil did not have modern parties endowed with a certain bureaucratic organization and some ideological orientation. But they do not explain why we have not seen, as in Uruguay, a direct passage (although by degrees) from the old oligarchic clans to the present national parties. As Gonzales (1984) shows, the present Blanco and Colorado parties are uninterrupted evolutionary extensions of the same private armies that fought one another in the 19th century. In imperial Brazil, what one sees is not just the central power directly impeding, by pressure or by violence, the embryos of doctrinary parties, such as the radical republicans, proto-socialists, and the ultramontane Catholics. This is perhaps the most visible and superficial aspect of the question. One sees a cautious strategy of state building, which based itself in a de facto federalization of political disputes -- a strategy immensely facilitated by the continental

dimensions of the country and by the precariousness of communication and transport. Manipulating the alternation of liberals and conservatives in the court, the Crown prevented the confrontation from becoming rigid and articulating with clanic rivalries in the interior of the provinces. In this way, the "crowned democracy" for almost 50 years maintained a parliamentary consensus at the apex of the pyramid, and at the regional bases consolidated a hardly doctrinaire, or even personalist, conception of political struggle. Impeding the permanent exclusion of one faction of the elite, it also impeded the early foundation of national parties based in the interconnection of the excluded with regional kindreds or quasi-armies. When the Republic installed in 1889 was confronted with a much higher level of dissension between groups of the elite and even among the urban middle classes, it would formally adopt federalist empire decentralization, taking this praxis of the to its final consequences.

The decisive politico-institutional mechanism of the First Republic was the so called "policy of the governors", started by President Campos Salles (1898-1902). This expression meant that the President of the Republic would take as valid and would employ the weight of the Presidency to implement only those agreements reached by the state governments, which is to say, the dominant scheme of forces in each state. The opposition forces were thus forced into an accommodation within the dominant party in each state (always designated with the name of the republican party, but which were in fact state parties without inter-state links). What alternatives would these opposition forces have? Taking their suits to the federal legislature was futile, since the Executive, supported by the oligarchy of the two largest states, Minas Gerais and Sao Paulo, exercised unrelenting control over the Congress. For its part, the Congress went so far as not to give legal recognition to candidates occasionally elected by undesirable dissident groups from the states. There remained, as in the Empire, the possibility of a horizontal articulation of these dissident groups, in the form of one or more alternative parties of national scope. The history of the First Republic is a chronicle of these intentions, always abortive. The presidential succession, with the innumerable dissensions to which it gave rise, was the initial moment of these attempts. It is worth emphasizing that they were impeded even when initiated by leaders imbued with the values and interests of the dominant oligarchy. This was the case for Francisco Glicerio and his Federal Republican Party (1893-1902) and for Pinheiro Machado and his Conservative Republican Party (1910-1915), not to mention the wider effort at mobilization undertaken by Rui Barbosa through the so-called Civil Campaign (1910), or by Nilo Pecanha with the Republican Reaction (1922).⁶

Comparison with Uruguay is once again instructive. In Brazil, although the principal bases of politics were clanic or familistic, the horizontal linking of these bases in the form of national parties did not occur. In Uruguay the nearly perfect equilibrium of forces between the Blancos and Colorados had the effect of reducing fraud early on, and of creating an electoral system that practically excluded the possibility of a third contender. In Brazil, the federal Executive and the state oligarchies excluded the possibility of a second contender organizing into a party. Rancorous disagreements mounted up and among other things, the "moralization of electoral practices" -- an independent Electoral Court, and an end to fraud were demanded. This demand gradually unified the immediate political interests of oligarchic dissidents, sectors of the urban middle classes, of dissatisfied intellectuals and young officials. The reform was not to come under the constitutional purview of the First Republic, but with the Revolution of 1930, the first sign of the Vargas era.

The principal objective of this historical recapitulation has been to indicate in broad outline the politico-institutional factors underlying the discontinuous and intermittent character of Brazilian party history. The indications made so far suggest that the kalaidiscope has an underlying logic. At this level of abstraction, this logic can be described as a cautious strategy of state-building a basic posture that supported the predominance of the federal executive power. This basic posture did not result, before 1930, from the effective strength or the sum of the resources at the disposal of the central power. To the contrary: it resulted from its weakness. Confronted with a continental country without transport or communications, with an immensely dispersed population marked by the extreme inequalities of slavery and plantation agriculture, the small governing elite devoted itself above all to avoiding an articulation of forces that could become competitive with the central power itself. Preventing the articulation of a party force that might escape from its control, and forcing coopted forces to take turns, the center imposed a basic pattern of functioning on the national political system, which was accomodation among individual or at most factional leaders. The invariably denigrated phenomenon of personalism, then, reflects this flexibility that was deliberately imprinted on the system, and that would certainly not have existed if a broader articulation had occurred among the dissident factions of various states and if they had acquired the doctinary and symbolic features of formally constituted parties in this period.⁷

The challenge to the center would come, finally, in the decade of the 30s, and in various ways. The intellectual and military mobilization that had come before the Revolution had transformed the electoral reform into a programatic committment. The armed rebellion of the state of Sao Paulo against the central power, in 1932, forced the reconstitution-alization of the country and precluded the hypothesis of a "republican dictatorship" headed by young reformist officials (the so called "lieutenants"). Finally, the rapid growth of the integralist (inspired by Italian Fascism) and communist movements created at least the pretext for the implantation of the Estado Novo.

It is unnecessary for the objectives of this essay to examine in greater detail the events of the thirties.⁸ It is only important to recall that discontinuity in the evolution of parties was once again imposed, from the top down, as a systematic objective of the central power. Once having discarded plurality of parties, the Vargas dictatorship did not undertake to create a single mobilizing party, in the fascist or para-fascist manner. One of the reasons for this decision was candidly expressed as early as 1939 by one of the ideologues of the regime: "this Single Party would lack a mystic capable of justifying before public opinion, that is, before the opinion of the by-standers, of those on the outside who would be almost the whole Nation, the monopoly of public offices conferred on the members of this Party", (Oliveira Vianna, 1939, p. 202).

A demobilizing regime, without parties, the Estado Novo would accomplish nonetheless a new "cooptative inflection" (Campello de Souza, 1985, pp. 189-90), a new and vigorous bureaucratic centralization of power, with profound effects on the party experience to be initiated with the redemocratization of 1945. This is therefore the initial point for us to respond to one of the questions of this essay: how to explain the continual weakness of the Brazilian party system even under formally pluralist and democratic conditions and in a context, as was that of 1945-1964, of growing social mobilization?

III The End of the Estado Novo and the Multiparty Period, 1945-1964

Clearly, there is not a consensus of interpretation of the crisis of the beginning of the 60s, which had in the resignation of President Janio Quadros in August of 1961 its first dramatic signal, and which would result in the beginning of 1964 in the breakdown of the representative regime. A basic distinction can be established between those who see the crisis as a more or less direct product of economic contradictions and those who attribute greater importance to the disintegration of the party system. For the first, of the economic inclination, what was essential in the crisis was the exhaustion of the model of development based on import substitution, which had opened an unbridgeable chasm between the social sectors that would allow and those that would not allow structural reforms. The disintegration of the party system is seen in this scheme as a reflex process, or at most, as identical and concomitant with this wider social crisis. It is seen as a polarization between progressive and conservative interests, the former represented by the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) and by the illegal left parties, and the latter by the National Democratic Union (UDN), by the Social Democratic Party (PSD), especially at the end of the period, and by various groupings of the smaller parties. The proposal of agrarian reform of the government of Joao Goulart (1961-1964) is seen as a drop of water, the issue that opened the chasm irreversibly.

The rejection of this model, not as wrong but as too simple, is growing in the literature. We pass, then, to those who give more weight to the party system or who, at any rate, consider that the crisis would not have been irreversible if there had been a party system minimally capable of autonomously negotiating conflicts. Among these there are distinct focuses, but there is also reasonable agreement as to the empirical characterization of some basic processes. They all show the occurrence, throughout the period, of a flagrant tendency to decline in the major parties and of growth in the smaller and more clearly urban parties. This growing equalization of forces was parallel to the weakening of the system as a whole, put in question or constantly overtaken by the increasing presence of union and student demands, and by the extra-party organization of conservative interests. The result of these processes can be seen on three distinct levels, which are simultaneously present in the final rupture:

1. The fracture of the civilian elites, which appeared in growing disagreement as to exits from the crisis, ways to restart growth and control inflation, and also with regard to the nature of the political crisis in its more conjunctural level;
2. The scope of political polarization was broadened, with wider involvement of the middle class, the working class, and even the peasantry in some regions;
3. These tendencies are exacerbated, instead of mitigated by party representatives in the legislature, which visibly approached paralysis, under the simultaneous impact of "polarized pluralism" and internal disintegration of the different confederations.⁹

The difference of focus to which we referred pertains to the analysis of this process of disintegration, the ultimate stage of which has been characterized in Sartori's terms as a situation of 'polarized pluralism'. On one hand, some give more weight to what might be called the congenital weakness of the party system of 1945; that is, to initial postures and distortions owing to the previous conditioning represented by the Estado Novo and by the moderate character, without profound ruptures, of the redemocratization of 1945. On the other, there are those who give more emphasis to the process of structuring itself and to the disintegration of the parties. The first approach results in a more detailed study of the initial space in which the parties of 1945 were formed (see, for example, Campello de Souza, 1976); the second, in the study of the internal organization of the principal parties, of the formal and informal rules of relation among factions within them, and the specific decisions and crises that they had to confront. (for example, Benevides, 1981 and Hippolito 1984).

Let us look first at the question of the initial space in which the parties were formed after the fall of the Estado Novo. On first sight, one might say that the general character of the Constitution of 1946 and of the electoral and party legislation adopted then was more favorable to the formation of a dynamic and competitive party structure than in any other period of Brazilian history. The Constitution of 1946, as is known, had a strongly liberal orientation, reflecting not only the resistance of a part of the civilian elite to the Estado Novo, but also the climate of public opinion formed with the defeat of the Axis and the anti-fascist posture of the part of the military that had fought in Italy. One therefore can understand the amplitude of the prerogatives given to the legislative power, the relatively loose requirements for the formation of political parties and the legalization for the first time of the Communist Party. The adoption of proportional representation, which offered the smaller associations greater security in relation to those that had significant organizational resources from the outset, was a step in the same direction.

At least insofar as the constitutional structure is concerned, it then seems that the conjuncture in which the parties of the 1946 were formed seemed amply favorable. This characterization requires some examination, even if we remain at the institutional level and at the level of conjunctural political processes. Tolerance for the broadening of the ideological spectrum to be represented by the party system appeared sooner than expected by 1947, when the internal repercussions of the Cold War resulted in the cancellation of registration and annulment of tenure of the representatives elected on the Communist Party slate. Aside from this, the constitutional disposition against parties that were openly class-based or that called for ethnic or religious divisions seems to have inhibited, from the beginning, any intention of more differentiated organization. Finally, the electoral system then adopted, although based in proportional representation within each state, was coupled with devices that dulled its edge, notably the distribution of seats in the House of Representatives (Camara Federal) between the states, which had the clear intent of underrepresenting the more populous and urbanized states.¹⁰ The literature presents two other factors as strongly limiting this political space: the bureaucratic centralization of the political system accomplished between 1930-1945 and the depth attained by anti-party conceptions in the political culture of the period.

The decisive institutions of the Brazilian State were built between 1930 and 1945 and this means that they emerged at the margin of, or were deliberately installed against any attempt at control on the part of party tendencies. If the period from 1930 to 1937 is eminently unstable, without the crystallization of a defined party structure, the Estado Novo (1937-1945) is conspicuously dictatorial, a bureaucratic State without elections and without parties. The restraint of representation through parties is then inseparable from the implantation

of a centralized state machine in these 15 years. The intervention of public federal power in the economy and administration of the states increased decisively. The union structure, of a corporate character and which has continued until today was established. There developed in the Armed Forces a well defined doctrinal conception that the military should politically mold civilian forces, instead of being controlled or manipulated by them.¹¹

As to political culture, the period from 1930 to 1945 saw an enormous accentuation of the idea of a unitary power, not mobilizable and not assimilable to a political market based on competitive organizations. One can affirm that a diffuse anti-party sentiment became the doctrinal nucleus shared by the most diverse political currents from the left to the right: in the Marxism of the period (of Soviet cut) as much as in the thought of the right, indebted to Fascism and to Iberian authoritarianism. The defense of the political party as an institution, or of a competitive system of parties, remained the task of the privileged notables that commanded these organizations, who often lacked conviction and intellectual authority.¹²

One should add to these negative factors, Brazil's extremely low degree of social mobilization in 1945. If we admit that the test of full party development occurs only when the majority of the population is available for participation, exposed to full political information and communications in contact in one way or another with the machine of the State on its different levels, and incorporated into the formally registered electorate, it is very clear that this was not the situation of Brazilian society at the beginning of the period considered here. Only 20% of the population lived in cities of 20 thousand or more inhabitants, according to the census to 1950, and only 1 of 5 inhabitants (in contrast to 1 of 2 at present) was a voter. This poor population, highly dispersed in small municipalities and rural areas, in a vast territory, lived with power structures in their most fixed and immediate form, and not with properly political institutions.

The analysis of Maria de Carmo Campello de Souza, summarized in the last four paragraphs, does not explicitly elaborate the model of "polarized pluralism" of Sartori. Nonetheless, it is possible to extend it and reinterpret it in this sense. The element of continuity with the political and bureaucratic structure of the Estado Novo would be, in the 1946 regime, chiefly the PSD (Social Democratic Party), the major party of the new system, which quickly secured an absolute majority in the Constituent Assembly, and always had, until the collapse of 1964, the largest number of seats in the House and the Senate. The organization of PSD directly benefitted from the "interventions" of the Estado Novo, which assured its strength in all the states, and the human resources of the Vargas dictatorship, which had considerable experience in government. The PSD became a party extension of the Estado Novo, with an extensive electoral base. There were two parties counterposed to PSD. On the right was UDN, the liberal opposition formed by those opposed to the Estado Novo that continually attempted

to promote coups in conspiracies with conservative elements of the military, precisely owing to the hegemony of PSD. On the left, especially at the end of the period, was PTB, a labor party also created by Vargas, but that would progressively assume a more aggressive, nationalist, and reformist position. In contrast to both, PSD defined itself as a party of the center, moderate and moderating, dedicated to seeking equilibrium.¹³ This is just the point at which Campello de Souza's analysis becomes compatible with Sartori's model. The existence of an important party that designates itself as the center is fundamental in this model, since it is in relation to this center that the tendency of the rest to flight is established. They are forced by the logic of competition to radicalize their positions and in consequence the global mechanics of the system becomes eminently centrifugal. In Brazil this flight was attested first on the right, by 1950, with the return of Vargas, to the extent to which UDN was dissatisfied with the rules of the game and began conspiring. In the second half of the 50s the radicalization of the left began, insofar as growing social demands pressured PTB and smaller groups to distinguish themselves from the center, occupied by PSD.

Hippolito (1984) explicitly adopts Sartori's model, but disagrees with him on this essential point. For her, moderate pluralism becomes polarized pluralism precisely when the center is evacuated, or, when the party that occupies it disintegrates or for whatever reason loses the initiative and authority that formerly permitted it to function as a guarantor of equilibrium. Her research is concentrated on PSD and particularly on two questions central to the operations of that party. The first was the emergence within it of a group inclined to conduct its activities in more ideological terms, with a progressive-reformist position: the so called "Ala Moca." This fact put the internal capacity of PSD for adjustment and accommodation in check, since the party was always disposed to assimilate electoral divergences and conflicts around immediate interests, but was incapable of doing this in relation to ideological dissidence.¹⁴ The second question was the Goulart government's proposal of agrarian reform, which became still more disruptive considering that, in this moment the PSD was already rigidified by the necessity to contain or expel its left flank, the Ala Moca. It was, according to Hippolito, by the disintegration of the center, that the movement to polarized pluralism took place.

In spite of different emphases, one on the antecedents, the other on the process of disaggregation. the two approaches discussed here complement one another.

Beyond this, they complement and make more intelligible these five points typically indicated when the fragility of the party experience of 1945 to 1964 is discussed:

1. insufficient organizational rootedness: they were still, clearly parties of "notables";

2. a very reduced rate of subjective identification with the parties at the level of the masses, and of recognition of them as ideologically differentiated entities at the level of the more educated voters;

3. growing internal fragmentation of the parties, divided into ideological factions with their own denominations;

4. high vulnerability of the system to destabilizing forces tied to socio-economic inequalities between regions and, in particular, to the accelerated process of urbanization;

5. a progressive blurring of the parties owing to frequent recourse to electoral alliances, facilitated by legislation that was very permissive in this regard.¹⁵

The breakdown of this system in 1964 resulted from a military intervention that altered the historic pattern of civilian-military relations. In this moment the Armed Forces assumed control of the government in a conspicuous and corporate manner, practically inverting the terms of the problem, since now it is the military who undertake to contain and control civilian intervention. In the period starting in 1945 there are innumerable episodes of military pressure, but there are also marked moments of the containment of this pressure: in 1954, with the suicide of Getulio Vargas; in 1955, when Juscelino Kubitschek reaffirmed his candidacy for president, won and was inaugurated, against the attempted veto of sectors of the military and civilians linked to UDN; during the Kubitschek government, with demonstrations of rebellion in the Air Force, controlled without great difficulty; and finally in 1961, when the Armed Forces' veto of Joao Goulart's inauguration to the Presidency, after the resignation of Janio Quadros, was resolved by installing a parliamentary system.¹⁶

There was, therefore, some capacity to contain military intervention, but it would be equivocal to attribute it entirely to the organizational force of the parties or the prestige of the party system as a whole. Civilian institutions, especially the legislature, had a certain prestige, There was also a certain esteem for constitutional legality, and a certain authority invested in this or that individual leader, but none of this adequately translated into the importance of the party as an institution, or into effective capacity for control on the part of parties then extant. The strongest of them, which was PSD, had in its favor an extensive experience of government and strong ties with the developmentalist technocracy, but its ties with the Vargas tradition, with the Estado Novo and with PTB, to say nothing of its aura of corruption and patronage became a frequent target of attempts at military intervention. UDN, on the other hand, benefitted from what could be called a military base, of conspicuous adherents in the Armed Forces, but there were frequent attempts to use this base for the purpose of coups, that is, to legitimate military intervention rather than to contain it within constitutional limits. This element was present in the actions led by Carlos Lacerda against Getulio Vargas in 1954, against Juscelino Kubitschek in 1955, and against Janio Quadros in 1961.

The expression coined by Tancredo Neves, by which the post-1964 regime would be the Estado Novo of UDN, has something more to it than simple literary charm.

IV. The Two Party Experience, 1965-1979

The multiparty system of 1945 was not immediately extinguished by the forces that seized power in April of 1964. Although proclaiming itself revolutionary, the new regime maintained the electoral and party legislation then in force, as well as the Constitution of 1946, modified where it conflicted with the Institutional Act issued by the so-called Supreme Command of the Revolution. The 13 parties then extant continued their activities. Two of them, UDN and PSD had even already chosen their candidates for the presidential election planned for October of 1965 (Carlos Lacerda and Juscelino Kubitschek, respectively). The extinction of this system and the passage to a two party system is, then, inseparable from the tensions that emerged between the old civilian leaders and the military-technocratic elite of the new regime; inseparable, also, from the constantly renewed pressures among the officials of lesser rank to prevent a premature return to "normality," perceived by them as a probable return of the left, of populism and corrupt politicians.

The rupture came at the end of October of 1965. Its immediate cause was the direct election of governors in 11 states, which resulted in a crushing defeat of the candidates supported by the government in two important states, Rio de Janeiro (then Guanabara) and Minas Gerais. In both cases the victory of traditional politicians of the old PSD, supported by a coalition of the center-left and tied to ex-president Kubitschek, was perceived as a dangerous coalescence of "anti-revolutionary" forces, unleashing a new radicalization of the hard line in the barracks. The outcome was Institutional Act no. 2, which in return for allowing the elected candidates to take office, substantially cut back President Castello Branco's intentions for a civilian government. The name of General Costa e Silva as candidate to succeed him was virtually imposed. The Act also gave rise to a new cycle of annulments and suspensions of political rights, made future elections for the state governments and for the Presidency of the Republic indirect, and extinguished the old multiparty system, directing that in its place be created two organizations, which would function provisionally as parties.¹⁷

The above indicates how exiguous the political space for the formation of parties in the first years of the post-1964 regime was. The legal and constitutional coordinates and conjunctural climate still marked by the imminence of new military radicalizations made the recovery of representative mechanisms very difficult. It should be added that the legislature had lost its principle prerogatives and that the revolution could call, in the beginning, on substantial support in the middle classes and among businessmen. This complex of circumstances would become even

more negative, from the view considered here, in Dec, 1968, when to confront student and congressional opposition, and the beginning of the guerrilla struggle, the Government published Institutional Act no. 5, more drastic than the previous acts and with no limit on the time of its validity. In this moment, the legitimation of the regime consisted not only in the invocation of the Goulartian past and therefore of the fight against communism and corruption, but also in the positive terms following on a vigorous resumption of economic growth and modernization.

It is difficult to say whether the military government simply did not know what path to choose, in terms of party structure, or whether the two "provisional organizations", ARENA and MDB, were seen as the germ of a more consistent project. Some claim that the installation of a two party system derived from an ingenuous admiration for the British model on the part of President Castello Branco. Others see in this experiment an attempt at Mexicanization, with ARENA being the Brazilian prototype of a future PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). Certainly, the government sought to combine the advantages of the legal existence of an opposition (MDB) with the practical and symbolic exclusion of this party. The hypothesis of Levite and Tarrow (1983) concerning the delegitimation of opposition parties is relevant in this context. This does not hold, however, in the case of Israel, where delegitimation of Likud was based, according to these authors, on the charisma of Mapai as founding party and protagonist of the heroic times; and contrary as well to the Italian case, where the exclusion of the Communist Party was based on the profound rootedness of Christian Democracy in Italian society. In the Brazilian case, ARENA did not by any means constitute a party on which a similar process of delegitimation of the opposition could rest. ARENA was as recent, artificial, and impotent as MDB, with the difference, only, that it found itself closer to patronage advantages and to that which the regime defined as legality. The attempt to delegitimize MDB, the behavior of which was often described as barely tolerable or quasi-subversive, therefore, had no wider symbolic meaning, but originated instead from the military clique itself and from the more docile civilian leaders who carried out its will on the congressional level.

In order to produce substantial effects, this attempt to delegitimize the opposition would have had to cultivate effective support within the electorate and in public opinion, which was quite unlikely within the political and institutional coordinates of the Brazilian military regime. In the first place, the regime was clearly affiliated with the bureaucratic, impersonal tradition of the Army, reinforcing it in an accentuated form in order to prevent populist or nationalist dissension in the military milieu. It is indisputable that it received considerable support in the period of the "economic miracle" (1967-1973) but this support was subject, as we can see in retrospect, to instability, dispersal, and subsequent frustration, which are inherent to all attempts at legitimation purely through economic performance.

In the second place, the structure of electoral competition in the second half of the 60s became much more favorable to urban opposition parties than that in vigor in 1945, or even in the 50s. The high rates of demographic growth, the speed of urbanization, and especially the formation of gigantic metropolitan areas, made it extremely improbable that the majority of the electorate would come to share in an enduring manner the symbology, in any case fragile, of this attempt at delegitimation. Even at the height of the "miracle" the electoral victories of ARENA could not do without heavy doses of coercion in the form of legal constraints on election campaigning, or more directly, by the restriction of candidacies, by the annulment of tenure and by the suspension of political rights. If MDB until recently remained "illegitimate" in the sense of Levite and Tarrow, this occurred only in the military institution and the government elite, not in the political elite in general; and certainly not with the masses of voters, since it was the government and ARENA (later PDS) that became illegitimate, witnessing an erosion of their base without precedent in Brazilian electoral history.¹⁸

The turning point was the election of 1974, already in the midst of the policy of political opening begun by President Ernesto Geisel (1974-1978). In that year, while it did not defeat ARENA in the vote for the House of Representatives MDB raised its representation from 28% to 44%. It became aside from this the focus of a crushing demonstration, clearly on the order of a plebiscite, in the vote for the Senate, electing 16 of the 22 seats at stake (in an election for 1/3 of the representation, which was then composed of 66 seats). This was without doubt the decisive event of the political opening on the politico-electoral plane, since it is from this point that the growth of a peaceful opposition became definitely viable, provided from this point with a considerable organizational potential even in the small municipalities. Although one cannot speak of institutionalization of the two-party system as a system, given that it was always tied to the institutional frame of the 1964 regime, one can no doubt speak of an extraordinary deepening of new party identifications, practically extinguishing, at the level of the mass of the voters, the vestiges of the multiparty system before 1964. This "adoption" of the two-party structure by public opinion, from the 1974 elections, showed itself consistent in the following years, prefiguring the prospect of an impasse between the government and the opposition. Accepted as an electoral option in the large urban centers and in the process of visible organizational expansion in the interior of the states, MDB could then realistically count on the possibility of forming a majority in the Senate and the House, and of conquering various important state governments, in the elections planned for Nov. of 1978. This prognosis caused the government to have systematic recourse to casuistic manipulation of the legislation, from 1976 and 1977 on, and in 1979, to reformulate the party structure itself, permitting the return of a multi-party system.

An adequate comprehension of the Brazilian political opening and of the process by which the present parties were formed requires a more or less detailed recapitulation of these events. The political situation that we are analyzing, characterized by the formation of a peaceful opposition to an authoritarian regime, through electoral means, calls for this minute examination. The creation of new parties and their subsequent action present themselves as inextricably linked to the conjuncture.

V. The Party Reform of 1979

With the April "package" (pacote de abril - "pacote" here means a series of legislative measures imposed by the government) of 1977 the government had strengthened its position for the elections of 1978, suspending direct elections for governor and creating the position of indirect Senators (the so called bionic senators, 1/3 of the Senate, of which 21 were of the government and only 1 of the opposition, since MDB had a majority in only one state assembly, that of Rio de Janeiro). This permitted the Government to adopt other liberalizing measures (notably the revocation of Institutional Act no. 5, in Dec. of 1978) since it preserved an absolute majority in both houses of Congress. There remained, nonetheless, the risk of more serious defeats in the following elections, (municipal in 1980, and general, including gubernatorial in 1982), given the growth of MDB and the clear decline of the government. It was in this picture that the party reform of Dec. of 1979, was inscribed, the central traits of which are the following:

1. return to pluralism, but including severe requirements for minimum vote (5% of the total in the country and 3% in 9 states) in order to attain representation in the House of Representatives;
2. also, severe requirements for the mechanics of party formation, whereby parties would only be authorized after demonstrating substantial organizational infrastructure in the states and at the local level.

Although demanded by some sectors of the opposition and especially by leaders who returned from exile in the amnesty finally conceded in August of 1979 (notably Leonel Brizola), the party reform of December of that year was a new chapter in the strategy of controlled liberalization of the ministers Golbery do Couto e Silva and Petronio Portella. Its wider objective was to fragment the opposition; the most immediate, to put off the municipal elections planned for Nov. 1980. Once the reform was approved, six new parties were immediately formed:

1. PDS - Democratic Social Party, of the government, successor to the extinct ARENA;
2. PMDB - Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement, successor to the old MDB, the abbreviation of which it retained through the clever stratagem of adding the "P," since by the new legislation all parties were obliged to have the word "party" in their designation;

3. PP - Popular Party, which, it was said, had been created by the Minister Petronio Portella. It was an attempt to unite the liberal center, with reasonable participation of businessmen, in a party that was seen as in opposition to the regime, but which was clearly prepared for the role of trustworthy interlocutor, with a view toward a future government of transition;

4. PT - Workers Party, strongly focused on the figure of Lula and the new unionism of the Sao Paulo metropolitan area. PT presented itself as a rupture with the familiar patterns of party organization in Brazil. It intended to maintain close relations to its grassroots organizations and with the workers milieu, giving greater emphasis to social struggles and consequently, less importance, compared to the rest of the parties, to the congressional and electoral struggle.

Finally, 5 and 6, two others that were formed disputing the old abbreviation PTB, Brazilian Labor Party, the real or supposed repository of the labor symbolism of Getulio Vargas. Control of the abbreviation ended up in the hands of Ivete Vargas, by all indications by influence and under the inspiration of the government, a supposition reinforced by the negotiations of this party with the government after the 1982 elections. PDT, Democratic Labor Party, had its origin in Leonel Brizola's refusal to share his political project, which looked toward European democratic socialism, and the PTB abbreviation, with the group of Ivete Vargas.

Only PDS, PMDB, and PP, if those, were able to form local directorates, according to the requirements of the electoral legislation and the new legislation on parties, to stand in elections in the majority of the 4 thousand Brazilian municipalities. One can therefore speculate that the delay of the 1980 election was in reality inscribed in the party reform of 1979. So the postponment and the consequent continuation for two years of the municipal tenures (prefects and mayors) were imposed by the government, through its Congressional majority, against little more than rhetorical resistance on the part of the opposition parties.

The period 1979-1981 was very different from the period 1974-1978 with respect to the dynamic of the political opening. The fundamental characteristic of this latter period is that the electoral process lost importance as a unifying focus for opposition to the regime. In part this was a direct consequence of the postponment of the elections of 1980 and of the fragmentation of the parties. But one is also dealing with an ebbing, since the difficulties normally encountered by civil and professional entities in integrating themselves in the so-called opposition front were accentuated in this new context. There occurred, especially in 1981, a segmentation of the political activity of the opposition, which often looked toward the specific themes of each sector.

It was in this context of hesitation and wear that various crises would occur in 1981, forcing the government into a still greater extension of its already excessively gradualist strategy. The first, and most serious, had its origin in the failed terrorist incident that occurred in Rio-Centro, where a show was being held on the occasion of the first of May. By all indications, officials of the Army were involved in the incident, the official explanation of which failed to satisfy the press and public opinion. It is said that this result was one of the major causes of the resignation of General Golbery do Couto e Silva (strategist of the extension and all-powerful Chief of the Civil Cabinet of the Presidency), formalized in August. Replaced in the position by the lawyer Leitao de Abreu, the resignation of the General left a political vacuum in the immediately following period. In September, the President of the Republic had to absent himself from office owing to heart problems. During his absence, the congressional opposition (with support from PDS dissidents) defeated the majority in two projects of vital importance for the government. One of them was a proposal to increase the contributions of wage-earners to finance the enormous deficit in Social Welfare. The other concerned the so-called sublegenda, that is, the possibility of each party nominating up to three candidates for governor in each state, an artifice through which the government hoped to accommodate the factions that were fighting within PDS. Once this proposal was defeated, the electoral prospects of the government for 1982 became still less encouraging.

With the return of General Figueiredo to the Presidency, the response was not long in coming. On Nov. 25, 1981, in menacing tones, the government forced its congressional majority to start proceedings on the so-called pacote de novembro (November package), an electoral reform project that would drastically alter the situation, seeking to "reestablish the equilibrium" between the government and the opposition.

The consequences of the November "package" must be analyzed on two different levels, the extrinsic and the intrinsic. From the first viewpoint, it corresponded to a brusque interruption of the optimistic atmosphere that had formed as a result of the presence of a civilian (Vice-President Aureliano Chaves) in the Presidency, for the first time since 1964, replacing General Figueiredo during his infirmity. It was, then, a relapse, a reaffirmation of the rhetoric of the "revolution of 1964", showing for the nth time the unwillingness or incapability of the government to close the gulf that separated it from even the moderate opposition forces. As to the project, its major objective was to impose obligatory voting of a single party slate (vinculacao total dos votos), on all levels, that is, to make null all votes given to candidates of different parties on the same ballot. With this measure, all parties, even the small ones, were pressured to present candidates for all offices, including that of Governor, in the states where they planned to run. The fragmentation of the opposition front was thus taken to its final consequences. Any kind of alliance, even tactical, among these parties became impossible,

since such alliances would have had as their touchstone the support of the smaller parties for PMDB (or PP) candidates for executive offices at the state level, in exchange for support for the candidates of these parties for the rest of the offices. The "package" reinforced the position of PDS in various states, strengthening the effects of using the state machinery, (through public works and the concession of jobs) and increasing the importance of the party bases in small municipalities.

The November "package" made the Popular Party, which was preparing itself for the role of loyal opposition, inviable. Commanded by then-Senator Tancredo Neves, PP reincorporated itself into PMDB. This measure reduced the excessive advantage the "package" initially gave the government. But this gain, or reduction of disadvantage on the part of the opposition, on a more general level was equivalent to one more lost opportunity in relation to the fundamental impasses of the political system. It is as though excessive gradualism had fallen into its own trap. Events pointed, once again, to little more than a two-party election, as in fact was attested in 1982. The phantom of a plebiscite which the party reform of 1979 had tried to exorcise had returned, but now in a context of sharp recession, growing unemployment and clear aggravation of social tensions. Beginning the process of a moderate transition, such as PP had conceived, would have to wait another two years.

VI. The Election of 1982 and the Crisis of Succession of 1984

Let us look first at the numerical parameters of the politico-institutional situation that emerged from the 1982 elections. In strictly electoral terms, the two-party scheme in force since 1965 was not really unmade by the reform of 1979 and by the subsequent electoral legislation. The strong regional conditioning that operated in Brazilian politics limited the impact of these measures on the election of 1982: in only four states (Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, and Acre) did the sum of the votes cast for the three smallest parties (PDT, PTB, and PT) exceed 5% of the total. In the rest, there remained a dualism of forces, in reality a mere exchange of names of ARENA versus MDB for PDS versus PMDB. Nonetheless, the opposition parties' conquest of 10 state governments and of a majority of 9 votes in the House of Representatives, together with a profound crisis of succession, introduced powerful destabilizing factors into the picture, as we will see below.

The political structure that emerged from the 1982 elections is clearly stratified into three distinct levels:

1. Presidential Succession: preserving a majority of 38 votes in the Electoral College, formed by Senators and Federal Deputies and by 6 representatives of each state legislative assembly, the party of the Government (PDS) theoretically assured its victory in the indirect election planned for January of 1985. The alteration of the rule would have required approving a constitutional amendment reinstating direct elections, which is to say, support of two thirds from both the Senate and the House, and would have been easily vetoed by PDS. Owing to the bionic Senators, whose tenure goes until 1986, this party alone controlled two thirds of the Senate. The veto of an amendment for direct elections was then conceivable even in the unlikely event that it were approved by two thirds of the House;

2. Ordinary Legislative Process: no longer having an absolute majority, the Government found itself obliged to negotiate its proposals with at least one other party (in the event, PTB);

3. Popular Mobilization: having in the direct elections of 1982 conquered some of the major state governments, including Minas Gerais, Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro, the opposition now assumed part of the political initiative (especially considering the enormous erosion of the image of Government in public opinion in the large cities), as would be seen in the beginning of 1984 with the mobilization to pressure Congress to approve a return to direct elections.

The distinction between these three levels is indispensable to understanding the impact of the crisis of succession on the party system. Subject to the wear produced by the economic crisis, urban unemployment, and the excessive concentration of tax resources in the federal government, the opposition Governors threw themselves into the succession struggle, supporting the popular mobilization for the Dante de Oliveira amendment, finally defeated in the House on April 25, 1984.

On the side of PDS, it soon became evident that the Vice-President, Aureliano Chaves, would not have the support of the President, and would not be chosen by the convention, although much preferred in public opinion. The party machine clearly favored the ex-Governor of Sao Paulo, Paulo Maluf, and in second place the Minister of the Interior, Mario Andreazza. Both were perceived as a disguised continuation of the military regime, of the technocratic clique, and of the economic policies underway.

The mobilization of public opinion in favor of direct elections and the choice, by the PDS Convention, of the highly polarizing candidacy of Paulo Maluf, had the effect of producing a profound and irreversible division in this party. The Liberal Front was thus formed, led by Aureliano Chaves and by various other PDS notables opposed to Maluf's

candidacy and disposed to support an opposition candidate. Convinced, for its part, of the inviability of an immediate return to direct elections, PMDB finally confronted the arduous task of internally readjusting itself to support the then-Governor of Minas Gerais, Tancredo Neves, in the Electoral College. Although PT preferred to differentiate itself from PMDB, maintaining an intransigent opposition to indirect elections, the impact of these changes was sufficient to invert the situation in a decisive manner, electing Tancredo Neves to the Presidency of the Republic. This event meant nothing less than that the regime had been finally defeated in the institution that it had itself created to ratify military successions: the Electoral College.²⁰

VII. Conclusion

One of the paradoxes of the Brazilian political opening is that the two-party structure imposed in 1965, no doubt the most artificial and most coercive of our history, became the framework for changes that may result in notable advances in party development. It attenuated anti-party elements in the political culture, facilitated greater approximation of civil society, in particular the intellectual and professional milieu, with militant party politics and in short, created grounds for a change of fundamental importance in the medium range. These processes are clearly related to the decline of authoritarian legitimacy, especially starting with the MDB electoral victory of 1974 and the exhaustion of inflated claims for the "economic miracle." They are also related to the increase of space for action of the opposition, owing in part to the policy of decompression of the Geisel government; to the growing resistance effort against continual human rights violations by the repressive apparatus; and in general to the enormous extent of the social and cultural changes produced by economic growth throughout this period. The effect of this growth in the medium range was certainly toward elevating the level of mobilization and politicization of the country.

The MDB was, as we have seen, the great beneficiary of these processes, starting in 1974, and it was these that permitted it to survive the various casuistries and the election reform of 1979, through which the government sought to fragment the opposition front. Aside from the factors mentioned above, the growth of this peaceful opposition, by electoral means, is also associated with the failure of the left groups engaged in armed struggle at the end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s, and possibly with the influence of European left, a good part of which had become disenchanted with the revolutionary path in this period.

A satisfactory explanation should nonetheless take into account some more specific parameters of the Brazilian political system, starting with the fact that the strategy of controlled liberalization relied on the support of an important part of the Armed Forces. The very weakness of the party system before 1964 must have encouraged the Geisel government to bet on this alternative. The opposition, for its part, knew that the structure of electoral competition was favorable to it, especially with respect to the inclinations of the urban vote, once adequate conditions of liberty to campaign were assured. The federalist organization of the Brazilian State, the enormous centralization accomplished after the 1964 coup notwithstanding, also offered opportunities for access to the governmental machine in the states, and therefore for the training of groups with important governmental experience. Let it be said that the exclusion of opposition politicians and persons suspected of "subversion" did not mean, even in the period of most extreme military domination, an exclusive channelization of recruitment to the government party, which was then ARENA. The training of human resources through government experience (just as in universities and the private sector) equally benefitted the opposition.

Believing in its electoral chances, and accepting the basic contours of the electoral system in force, the opposition also discovered in these 20 years that it could use various instruments created by the Government to maintain cohesion in its own party to its favor. One example is the so-called sublegenda, which allows a party to run up to three candidates for the same office in elections for prefect and senator. The winner is the candidate who individually gets the most votes in the party that has the largest sum of votes, counting all three candidates. The original objective of this clause was to accommodate different local factions within ARENA, especially those originating in pre-1964 parties, but it was used effectively by MDB to accommodate its internal factions and to run new candidates.²¹ Equally important was party fidelity, a clearly coercive instrument that the Government established in 1969 to discipline ARENA. The simple existence of this rule also served the opposition, assuring its unity in moments when the internal division between the more combative deputies (the so called "authentic" ones) and those more docile or prone to patronage, was accentuated.²² Examples could be multiplied, but the general conclusion is simple. The consolidation of a peaceful opposition line, centered on the conquest of space and on electoral contests, is as much a fruit of wider changes as it is of patient assimilation of legal instruments originally destined to consolidate the government party. Inversely, the weakness of this opposition, at least until 1982, is explained by the general weakness of parties, (even of ARENA and PDS) in relation to the executive power, by the gradual character of the transition, in short by the persistence of military tutelage over the political system.

What has been shown so far offers at least the outline of a response to the questions formulated in our introduction. The fragility, or the discontinuities and intermittence of the Brazilian party system are associated, at least until 1930, with the continental dimensions of the country, federative organization and emphasis on states (estadualismo), with widely diffused perceptions of the risks of division that national parties independent of the Executive could represent, and above all, with strategies of control put into practice by the central power. After 1964, one finds coercion pure and simple, visible to the naked eye, directly repressing party activity and legislative power, or at the least maintaining it in suspension, subject to the instability of the process of political opening and to a constant uncertainty about the rules of the game.

Nonetheless, the experience of authoritarian rule initiated in 1964, the party dualism that it imposed on the country, the recognition of democratic values and civil order presented by resistance to authoritarianism, the importance that electoral opposition acquired in this process, all paradoxically created conditions for the strengthening of parties. It is dubious that the adoption, by authoritarian means, of severely restrictive rules, such as party loyalty, could leave any positive result. But the two-party experience (ARENA-MDB) installed in 1965 and maintained until 1979, seems to have created difficulties for future caudilhismos (despotisms) and for the creation of small patronage-oriented parties, of the kind that were called in the 50s "parties for rent" (legendas de aluguel). If it did not have such effects, at the level of the elite, it at least facilitated the identification of the mass of voters with party images, as the electoral victories of MDB prove, especially since 1974.

Once the transition to a civilian government was finally accomplished, with the election of Tancredo Neves, and having in view a profound reexamination of the constitutional structure of the country, which has already started, the investigation of possible measures for institutional "engineering" becomes particularly pertinent. Is it useful to undertake deliberate measures for strengthening parties? What would these measures be?

It is important to establish a distinction between measures that aim to strengthen the legislative power and measures that directly seek to strengthen the parties. The first are clearly more objective and consensual. This means in large part recovering for the legislature attributes and prerogatives that it already had before 1964 and that were taken away through institutional acts. Economic-financial initiative, reduction of the use of the decree-law by the executive power, greater flexibility for investigation and greater resources at the disposal of the congressional commissions of inquiry, are some examples. Aside from this, the simple elimination of the repressive climate returns great prestige to Congress and its leaders, and this has repercussions on the parties' capacity for action.

Let us look, however, at the following group of measures.

In the recent Brazilian debate, the strengthening of the parties is almost always put in terms of an ample legal deregulation. The newspaper Folha de Sao Paulo, for example, expressed this line of thought in an editorial on Sept. 20, 1984:

"In Brazil, the Organic Law of Political Parties represents an authoritarian shackle on the free organization of associations, impeding their autonomy before the State. As a result, since the 30s, the Brazilian legal tradition has submitted party associations to the tutelage of the State, building them into entities of public law, in an inhibiting and restrictive legislation, the essence of which is to prescribe state control over their structure and functioning, (Sept. 20, 1984)

The major objective of this deregulation, therefore, is to permit the parties to emerge from "civil society" and preserve their autonomy "before State institutions" (*ibidem*). This means that "the concept of liberty of organization . . . must be sufficiently unequivocal and embracing to assure due space to all politico-ideological currents" including the socialist and communist parties. This perspective coincides with the concerns of the directors of PMDB and with the criticism often made of the party, to wit, that it is in reality a political "front" made up of groups that preserve their respective identities. Without disagreeing with the legalization of the left parties, we present below some questions on the global model of institutional organization with which these propositions seem to be associated.

This perspective equates "strengthening" with greater "authenticity," this for its part understood as greater latitude for ideological differentiation or for differentiated expression of preferences. It also supposes that this path leads to greater autonomy and representativeness of the groups that make up "civil society". This conceptualization is clearly inseparable from the virtually unanimous preference for party pluralism and proportional representation. It seems that among the measures contemplated in this deregulation will be the attenuation of restrictions that impede leaving one party and joining another, precisely to make the search for ideological affinities easier for politicians (and also to avoid difficult cohabitation of rival factions, in the majority of the states). Along the same lines, the smaller parties and those in process of formation will attempt to reduce or eliminate the minimum requirement of 5% of the votes in the country and 3% in nine states, without which a party does not obtain representation in Congress. This clause, however, while adopted before the 1982 elections has already had its application postponed through negotiations with the small parties.

What one sees in this brief allusion to the recent debates is that the country seems to want, at the same time, strong parties that are widely representative, nationally organized, but also cohesive parties, that are ideologically homogenous, multiple, and differentiated. It is supposed that flexible rules, or no regulation, would make these objectives compatible, allowing the expression of the "true" interests of social groups. This supposition is not easily adjusted to historical experience, marked by decentralization, strong states, and by political professionalism rather than spontaneous grassroots organization.

More than the suggestion of specific measures, what is called for at this moment is a more intense debate around these questions. One has the impression that what the political actors want to avoid above all is what Arend Lijphart calls the majoritarian model of democracy -- an institutional organization based on the exclusion of large minorities. There is in Brazil a continued and almost unanimous rejection of practically all of the elements of this model: the two-party system, majoritarian (or "district") electoral system, a single Congressional body, parliamentarism, unitary State. The mechanisms that correspond to the opposite the type, the consociational -- notably, plurality of parties and proportional representation -- cannot be held directly responsible for the fragility of the parties. They do require serious thought when one is dealing with a country with little democratic experience, that until recently faced the fundamental problem of state-building and of the preservation of territorial unity, and will confront for a long time to come inescapable dilemmas of economic growth and redistribution. One can ask if the permissiveness of the party scheme, implicitly inspired by the federative model and associational values, does not come into conflict with the historical orientation of the state elites, opening a breach where imperial presidency, bureaucratic autonomy and interventionism, and in the final analysis, military tutelage itself, enters.²³

Nonetheless, specific measures, largely of organizational character, to strengthen the parties can be installed. Recent Brazilian experience is certainly modest, but the tendencies are visible in this area. The PMDB and PT, at least, have shown a concern with making their action permanent, in maintaining a minimally professional nucleus, in promoting courses and seminars, in maintaining more or less regular publications, and so on.

It is clear that these efforts are limited by the availability of resources, by inevitable factional rivalry, and, in the case of PMDB (in charge of several state governments and a member of the governing alliance at the federal level), by the massive presence of demands for patronage at all levels of its organization. But there is a more general question that is not only Brazilian or Latin American. Parties seem to be today, in comparison with European party systems of the beginning of the century, a subsystem reduced in its scope of action. Assuredly, this is not the place for a theoretical reflection on the

institution of the political party and its place in representative democracy, of the possibility or impossibility of replacing it by other mechanisms. What one can do, and which is also important for democratic consolidation in the present conditions of Latin America is to simply affirm the inadequacy of an overly ambitious model of the political party, put as a normative pattern before which reality always reveals itself precarious. For example, the advances of PMDB in the direction of establishing a party press are modest. The mainstream press is not reduced to the parties, nor are the parties capable of producing mainstream press. This reasoning applies to various other institutions that were formed before the present parties and that maintain themselves jealously independent or even hostile to them. In Brazil the institution of parties is to a certain extent a late one, and is not strictly linked to well defined social or cultural groups, as seems to have happened in European history. It remains to be seen whether this limited character of the parties, as a subsystem, is a negative or positive factor for the democratic consolidation on its present historical trajectory.²⁴ The initial presupposition of this work was that strong parties, well-rooted in society are indispensable. This does not mean however, that we should adopt a purely normative or historically obsolete pattern of what this rootedness is; or that we should ignore the obstacles that overly strong parties (if this means ideologically rigid and inflexible in their commitments) can put in the way of redemocratization and democratic consolidation.

NOTES

1. On political parties in Brazil, in general, see Peterson (1962), Soares (1973), Souza (1976), Fleischer (1981), Chacon (1981), and Brasil (1983). See also the bibliographic survey elaborated by Lamounier and Kinzo (1978).
2. Citing Gramsci, Cerroni, 1973, p. 13, writes: "The history of a party (. . .) cannot but be the history of a determinate social group." In clear contrast, Schumpeter says (1976, p. 283): "Party and machine politicians are simply the response to the fact the electoral mass is incapable of action other than a stampede, and they constitute an attempt to regulate political competition exactly similar to the corresponding practices of a trade association."
3. The large interpretative models referenced here are found especially in Oliveira Vianna (1951), Faoro (1958) and Schwartzman (1982).
4. See the discussion of the "Antigone Complex" in Sergio Buarque de Hollanda, Roots of Brazil, (Raizes do Brasil, Editora Jose Olympio, 1936).
5. The citation refers, however, to the predominance of the State over society in present-day France, and not in 19th century Brazil, which indicates that this hypothesis should be taken with some caution (see Bergouioux and Grunberg, 1985). On the political system of the Brazilian Empire, see Carvalho (1980) and Uricoechea (1978).
6. Theoretically, the presidential election was direct, but in practice oligarchic domination, and restrictions owing to poverty, the geographic dispersal of the population, and to illiteracy prevented a wider mobilization. Maurice Duverger (1984) shows how mobilization around presidential elections, nullifying in practice the power of the electoral college was a decisive factor in the strengthening of parties in the United States during the 19th century, and in Finland since the 50s of this century. On the party experience of the First Republic, see Souza (1971) and Chacon (1981). Restrictions on the expansion of the political community and of electoral participation are studied by Parahyba (1970) and Schwartzman (1970). On military discontent and the lieutenants' movement, Forjaz (1982).
7. Strictly speaking, only Rio Grande do Sul is an exception to the single party rule. There was in this state intransigent struggle against the "historic republicans" and the "federalists" (later, "liberators"): see Souza (1971) and Chacon (1981). There is an extensive literature on the so-called "colonelism", that is, relations between public power, especially state and municipal, and private power. See in particular Leal (1949) and Cintra (1977).

8. Here is the report of a historian:
 "From this remaining effervescence and the precocious disappointments, emerged the elections to the National Constituent Assembly in 1934. From these came new parties, in name, however with the habitual vices and opportunism. The innovation, the conquest, of the Revolution, was the Electoral Court, making suits formally uniform, reducing fraud in vote counting and principally extinguishing the supreme iniquity of the "recognitions" of the elected by groups of situationists who were accustomed to mercilessly cutting off the oppositionists. (. . .) The parade of parties takes place under titles that are at times grotesque: Progressive Party, in Paraiba and in Minas Gerais; National Party, in Alagoas; Nationalist Party, in Rio Grande do Norte; Brazilian Socialist Party, resuscitated in Sao Paulo; National Socialist Party in Piaui (!); Popular Party in Rio Grande do Norte and Radical Party in the state of Rio de Janeiro (. . .) The names that appear most are Liberal and Social . . . including not less than five Social Democratic parties! With rare exceptions, labels of the left at the service of the most conservative, if not regressive, right." (Chacon, 1981, pp. 117-118). In reality, the great party movements of the epoch were, on the right, Brazilian Integralist Action, and on the left, National Liberatory Alliance, to which belonged the still illegal Brazilian Communist Party. See, among others, Trindade (1974), Rodrigues (1981) and Chilcote (1974).
9. A good historical report of this conjuncture can be found in Skidmore (1967). Among the more analytic interpretations of the 1961-1964 crisis, see especially Santos (1974) and Stephen (1978)
10. The distribution of seats among the states in the House of Representatives was based, with few modifications, on criteria established by the Electoral Code of 1932, later transformed into article 58 of the Constitution of 1946, and in general maintained in post-1964 legislation. See, on these points, Soares (1971), Souza (1976, chap. V, p. 124-136) and Kinzo (1980, chap. IV, pp. 95-107).
11. On the expansion and centralization of the bureaucratic machine, see Maria de Carmo Campello de Souza, op.cit. On decisions that widened the scope of public intervention in the economy, John Wirth, The Politics of Brazilian Development (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1970); Octavio Ianni, Estado e Planejamento Economico no Brasil, 1930-1970 (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilizacao Brasileira, 1971); Luciano Martins, Politique et Developpment Economique: Structure de Pouvoir et Systeme de Decisions au Bresil, 1930-1964. (Paris: Anthropos, 1973). On corporatism and union structure, Phillip Schmitter, Interest, Conflict and Political Change in Brazil (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1971) and Amaury de Souza, The Nature of Corporatist Representation: Leaders 1978). On changes in military organization and doctrine, Edumdo Campos Coelho, Em Busca de Identidade: O Exercito e a Politica na Sociedade Brasileira (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Forense Universitaria, 1976).

12. It should be noted that anti-party tendencies are common in the political culture of many countries. (see, for example, the report of Bergounioux and Grunberg op. cit. on France.) Therefore, a certain caution is necessary when one attributes a causal role to it. With reference to the Brazilian experience, these questions are discussed in Alfonso Arinos de Melo Franco in Historia e Teoria dos Partidos Politicos no Brasil (republishation in 1974 by Editora Alfa Omega, Sao Paulo) and especially by Campello de Souza op. cit., chap. III. On a broader historical plane, see the fascinating study of Richard Hofstadter, The Idea of a Party System (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972).
13. The history of PSD was studied by Lippi (1973) and especially by Hippolito (1984). On UDN, see Landers (1971), Nichols (1974), Benevides (1981) and Picaluga (1980).
14. The Ala Moca was a renovation movement that was formed within PSD starting in the first year of the Kubitschek government (1955-1960). It came to exercise strong influence in the Congress and included among its members two of the principal leaders of the present PMDB, Ulysses Guimaraes and Renato Archer. See Hippolito, op. cit. pp. 210-256.
15. On party organization before 1964, the most complete source is Glaucio A.D. Soares, cited in note no. 1. Studies that attempt to measure party identification in this period are few and very fragmentary, owing to the lack of development of survey research. See however, the excellent work of Antonio Octavio Cintra, "Partidos Politicos em Belo Horizonte: Um Estudo do Eleitorado," in Revista Dados, no. 5, 1968. Ideological indistinctness among the parties is emphatically shown by Luis Navarro de Brito, Introducao aos Partidos Politicos, single publication of the Universidade Federal de Bahia (Salvador, Bahia, 1967). The tendency to disaggregation and blurring of the party system as a complex owing to excessive recourse to alliances is put into relief by Simon Schwartzman (1971) and Souza (1976). It is in this context that the populist exacerbation analysed first by Weffort (1965), occurred. See also Ianni (1968), Soares (1965), 1973) and Sampaio (1982).
16. On these points see Skidmore, op. cit., Stepan (1971) and Benevides (1979).
17. Figueiredo (1979) analyzes in detail the so-called "revolutionary punishments," that is, the systematic use of coercion against civilian politicians and public officials. On the beginning of the two-party system in 1965-66 and on the debates that preceded the return to a multiparty system through the reform of 1979, see Maria D'Alva Gil Kinzo (1980b).

18. Detailed analyses of electoral behavior after 1974 can be found in Lamounier and Cardoso (1975), Reis (1978), Lamounier (1980), Pereira (1984), Baquero (1984). The wider institutional implications of these electoral standards are discussed in Lamounier (1984 and 1985).
19. This section is in large part reproduced from Bolivar Lamounier and Alkimar Moura, "Politica Economica e Abertura Politica no Brasil, 1973-1983", published in the collection Textos IDESP, no. 4, 1984.
20. PFL - Party of the Liberal Front - is from a legal viewpoint in the phase of construction. Nonetheless, its alliance with PMDB through the so-called Democratic Alliance was the sine qua non of the victory of Tancredo Neves in January of 1985. PT - Workers Party - opted for a more mobilizing strategy and maintained the position it had assumed since the campaign for direct elections, refusing to participate in the Electoral College. The cost of this was a serious schism, resulting in the resignation of the leader of the Congressional delegation, deputy Ayrton Soares, who opted to vote for Tancredo Neves. PDT (Democratic Labor Party) was directed by Leonel Brizola to support Tancredo Neves' candidacy, declaring, however, that it only considered legitimate a tenure of transition, of two years, followed by the calling of direct elections in 1986.
21. The sublegenda was adopted for the first time in the elections of 1966, based on art. 92 of the Electoral Code of 1965 (Law no. 4.737 of 17.07.65), afterward instituted by the Lei das sublegendas (law no. 5.453, of 14.06.68). A good example of the running of new candidates using this means is that of the present Senator Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who ran for the first time in 1978. The first entered, Franco Montoro, was replaced by Fernando Henrique in the Senate in 1982, by virtue of his election as governor of Sao Paulo. Like party fidelity (see note 22), whether or not the sublegenda becomes permanent will be the object of intense debate in the revision of electoral and party legislation to be promoted by the Tancredo Neves government.
22. Party loyalty is the clause according to which a representative who, "by attitudes or vote opposes himself to directions legitimately established by the organs of leadership of the party, or leaves the party under whose title he was elected" loses his tenure. It was instituted by Constitutional Amendment no. 1, of 1969, authorized by the Military Junta. It was clearly a response to the crisis of the end of 1968, when numerous congressmen of ARENA joined with MDB and rejected the permission solicited by the government to try a deputy of the opposition.

23. Lijphart's analysis is useful in this context especially because it moves attention from isolated mechanisms to more embracing models of institutional organization. Themes such as parliamentarism versus presidentialism, proportional or majoritarian electoral systems, and others, have been debated intensely in Brazil, but the possible interdependence of their effects is almost never analyzed. See Lijphart (1982, 1984), and also the important critical analysis of his work undertaken by Dentzien (1982) and Cintra (1982).
24. Santos (1984) points out, in a broad conceptual scheme, this present more limited character of party systems in relation to the diversity of social movements and of party forms of participation. In Brazil, the relations between these two aspects are clearly very tense. Suffice it to recall, in this respect, that the Church maintains itself in a position that is at the least one of independence in relation to the parties, extracting advances in the area of social reform. In the same way, various professional associations have demanded the detached vote (voto avulso) for the future Constituent Assembly, for the purpose, logically, of reducing the control exercised by the parties.

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