

AMERICAN IMPERIALISM AND THE BRAZILIAN STUDENT MOVEMENT

TED GOERTZEL

Department of Sociology
University of Oregon

Rutgers

This article is a report on some of the issues which I observed in a study of Brazilian student politics in the period from 1966 to 1968. The focus is on attempts made by the United States Agency for International Development to restructure Brazilian higher education, and on the efforts of Brazilian students to resist American intervention in their educational system.

The Brazilian student movement, which had reached a position of some influence prior to 1964, was severely weakened by the United States supported military coup d'état (see Bahia, 1954; Poerner, 1968). Prior to 1964, many of the student leaders were Marxists, but most adhered to the theory that Brazil had to go through a stage of capitalist development before having a socialist revolution. They consequently placed considerable confidence in the national bourgeoisie as a progressive force against imperialism.

The coup d'état was a severe blow to these hopes. The military leaders moved swiftly to prevent any immediate

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *This article is adapted from Goertzel (1970). See also Goertzel, 1971.*

YOUTH & SOCIETY, Vol. 6 No. 2, December 1974
©1974 Sage Publications, Inc.

tortured. Despite these obstacles, meetings did take place including a meeting of presidents of state student organizations in 1964 and a conference of the now clandestine National Union of Students in 1965.

At the 1965 conference the orthodox Communist Party delegates favored participating in the official student elections to be held under the new law, while the Popular Action students and other radical students favored boycotting the elections. The latter position won, and the more conservative orthodox Communist Party supporters became a definite minority within the student movement. Boycotting student elections, however, tended to weaken the ties between the student leadership and the mass of students, and this policy was changed at the next National Student Union conference in 1966. Students participated in student elections, but the elected leaders remained affiliated with the illegalized National Union of Students rather than cooperating with the official government student organization which never became a reality.

At the 1966 National Student Union conference, agreement was reached on leadership which was acceptable to all the major political groups. The question of tactics, however, was not completely resolved. Some students favored a highly secret form of organization which would attempt to overthrow the military government. Others favored a more open organizational structure and a focus on student issues which would permit the participation of more students. The decision was to attempt to do both: students mobilized in a Movement Against the Dictatorship in an attempt to rally the populace against the government, but also participated in student elections and led the struggle against tuition charges and for student rights.

The Movement Against the Dictatorship was not successful in its primary goal of overthrowing the government. The students organized demonstrations against the government, despite considerable efforts on the part of the government to

response from students or other leftists. Military police invaded the universities, arrested everyone who looked like a student, and held them until things looked quiet. The coup revealed that leftist groups in Brazil were quite unprepared, despite some of their rhetoric, to resist a violent move from the right, let alone lead a violent revolutionary movement of their own. Most leftists had worked within the legitimate channels of the constitutional government, despite limitations such as the outlawing of the Communist Party and the denial of the vote (through literacy tests) to a large proportion of the population. But, as soon as they were successful in getting some of their ideas accepted by the government, the elected government was overthrown by the military. Some students in Rio attempted to resist the coup, but they had only one pistol, which discharged accidentally, killing a student.

The National Union of Students was formally abolished by the Minister of Education, Suplicy de Lacerda, in November 1964. A new student organization was set up, on paper, by the government to replace it. The regulations covering this organization prohibited the students from engaging in politics or student strikes. Meetings were to be permitted only on school holidays—law number 4,464 of November 9, 1964. (See the *Jornal do Brasil*, October 23, 1966; Mayrink, 1967; Poerner, 1968.)

Although very few students were satisfied with this new structure, there was relatively little activity on the part of student activists for several years. Some student leaders attempted to meet with the new government to protest the "Suplicy" law, but President Castelo Branco refused to meet with them.

When I arrived in Brazil in 1966, it was difficult to observe student politics closely. Meetings of demonstrations would be announced to be held in one place, but actually would take place in another. The police regularly raided student meetings and assemblies and arrested the leaders, many of whom were

of industry, which is not surprising when one considers that major industries in Brazil are largely owned by American and Western European companies. It aimed at minimizing those aspects of the Brazilian university system which tended to produce critical thought, while increasing the output of technicians such as agronomists, engineers, geologists, mathematicians, physicists, chemists, and social scientists.

The most revealing part of the plan was its timetable for execution. The agreement promised to bring to Brazil five American advisors to work with five Brazilian colleagues for two years. In this period, they were charged with responsibility for "analysis in depth of the present higher education system, determination of what would be a more ideal higher education system for Brazil," and "implementation of the plan by phased achievement of desirable changes in the system." The Portuguese language version, printed side-by-side with the English language version, called only for "planning of the measures necessary for the execution of the plan."

This working schedule is noteworthy as much for its naive optimism as for its disregard for the social and political complexities of any large scale change in the structure of a major social institution. A group of five American scholars, even with the aid of five Brazilian counterparts, would be doing well if they were able to produce an analysis in depth of Brazil's higher education system in two years. They were given four months for the task.

No indication was given as to how they planned to determine what would be a more ideal system for Brazil. There was apparently no appreciation of the possibility that there might be conflicts between different groups, or even between schools of thought, over what would be a more ideal educational system. A deeply political question was treated as a "technical" problem.

The breadth and depth of the plan were tremendous. The plan would consider Brazil's overall development needs:

prevent them. These demonstrations were embarrassing to the government because considerable public support for the demonstrating students was shown in the major cities. A large number of voters cooperated with the appeal to vote blank in the elections for Congress held in November 1966—about a third in the state of Guanabara (Rio de Janeiro city). (Only government approved candidates were allowed to run.) The dictatorship did not fall, however, and the students did not have any way to overthrow it.

Although they could not overthrow the government, the student leaders wanted to continue demonstrating their opposition to it. They also needed to maintain the support of the mass of students by maintaining political pressure in favor of student interests. These two goals both could be met by organizing a campaign against the government's plans for reorganizing Brazil's university system. The Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) had signed an agreement with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to restructure the university system. This provided a natural issue for the students since by attacking the agreement they were able to criticize the Brazilian government and United States imperialism while defending the students' interests. The major emphasis in the student movement, at the time I began to study it, became the attack on this agreement.

AMERICAN PLANS FOR BRAZILIAN UNIVERSITIES

I visited the USAID mission offices to obtain a copy of the MEC-USAID agreement. The official I spoke to pointed out that there was a number of agreements between the Ministry and USAID. The one which was causing so much controversy dealt with "Planning Advisors."¹ The agreement represented an attempt by the American government to restructure Brazilian higher education to make it better serve the needs

preparation and execution of educational programs would be left to the Brazilian authorities. The new agreement (Ministerio de Educaçao e Cultura, 1967) stated explicitly that:

The responsibility of determining the norms and policies of education will always fall to the competent Brazilian authorities, as well as the responsibility of approving or not approving all the plans which are elaborated. The plans, when approved, will be put in execution by the Brazilian authorities.

The Brazilian authorities did their best to ignore the planning advisors when they arrived. The Brazilian members of the planning team were not appointed until quite late, and were part-time instead of full-time. The ones appointed under President Castelo Branco were dismissed by the Costa e Silva government, and new ones were not appointed for several months. It was almost a year before their office telephone was installed. In fact, the second agreement between the United States government and the ministry specifically called for the Brazilians to provide telephone service.

The American advisors were unable to accomplish more than a small fraction of their original goals. They made a study of the accreditation process involved in establishing a new university in Brazil, and they helped to formulate a research design for studying the existing engineering library facilities. The rest of their time was taken up with studying Portuguese and traveling through Brazil studying Brazilian universities.

The agreement itself was negotiated by USAID officials and not by the planning advisors who seemed overwhelmed by the hostility which their presence generated. These advisors felt that much of the material in the agreement should not have been made public as part of the agreement, but should have been part of a letter to Washington explaining the necessity for the plan.

The USAID mission decided not to attempt to extend the program beyond the initial two year period. It was being concluded at the time I left Brazil in 1968.

economic, social, and cultural. It included the number, types, sizes, geographical locations, and functional specialities of the institutions which Brazil would need. It would include areas which no American university would permit government planners to meddle with: types of curricula, teaching methods, research programs, and student services. The planners expected to determine the type of organizational structure and administrative structures needed and the "kinds of staffing" needed by the universities.

It was not clear, of course, how seriously the Brazilian government took this agreement. Indeed, the Portuguese language version was much more innocuous than the English version. The English language version called for "creating effective implementing mechanisms to carry out both short and long range plans," while the Portuguese language version called for the "creation of an efficient mechanism for the development of short and long range plans."

The agreement did call for the establishment of committees of students and professors, of government officials, and of community leaders, to cooperate in drawing up the master plan and to serve as "implementing mechanisms" to carry it out. However, it seemed safe to predict that the Brazilian students and professors chosen to be on these committees, if they were in any way representative of their constituencies, would not be satisfied to be mere "implementing mechanisms." I felt confident enough to predict, in an article published at the time, that the plan would fail (Goertzel, 1967).

The failure of the plan was much quicker and more decisive than I had anticipated. The Brazilian government seemed to be quite embarrassed by the agreement, and when the Costa e Silva regime replaced that of Castelo Branco, the new minister of education announced that all agreements would be re-evaluated. A new agreement was signed which made it clear that the only purpose of the advisors was to provide advice to the ministry of education, while the

university council of faculty and students, which would control the policy of the institution with regard to (Atcon, 1966: 84):

its production, the quality of the same, the quantity, the tonic and the rhythm of acceleration.

Atcon realized that this division of powers would lead to conflict. He therefore proposed that these differences be settled by an ad hoc committee made up of an equal number of members from both groups. Thus the board of trustees would have approximately half the power in making basic decisions concerning the university.

Atcon's recommendations clearly represent an attempt to move toward a managerialist conception of education. The members of the new board of trustees should be financial rather than educational specialists. They might include (1966: 88):

a large businessman, an outstanding banker, and other people outstanding in the juridical world or with social but not political prominence.

Similarly, in the actual administrative structure of the universities, Atcon recommended (1966: 82) the establishment of a managerial system:

planning directed towards the administrative reform of the Brazilian University, in my understanding, should be directed toward the proposition of implanting an administrative system of the type of a private enterprise, and not that of the public service.

Thus, Atcon recommended (1966: 86-87) that the decisions arrived at by the two councils, together with the rector, should be carried out by a professional administrator, who:

need not be, in fact should not be, a member of the faculty, but should be a technician in administration, preferably contracted

Other agreements, however, remained in force. Some of these were relatively noncontroversial, for example, the agreement providing for the translation into Portuguese of American technical books. One item, however, continued to concern Brazilian students. This was an agreement on the modernization of university administration (*Ministerio de Educaçao e Cultura*, 1968). This agreement was more cautiously drawn up than the agreement on educational planning. The goals of the project were not stated in the agreement. The problems to be dealt with, however, included many items of direct concern to Brazilian students (*Ministerio*, 1968: 129), including "admission practices, academic programming, financial management, and campus planning."

A council of rectors of Brazilian universities was established with a permanent staff to coordinate the participation of Brazilian universities in the project. The chief advisor to the council was Rudolph P. Atcon, an American who had previously published an analysis (Atcon, 1966) of the needs for structural change in Brazilian universities at the request of the ministry of education and culture.

Atcon's report was widely regarded as a statement of government plans for the reformulation of higher education, since his work had been sponsored and published by the government and the government had hired him to implement it. In fact, many students who had heard of the "Atcon report" thought that "Atcon" was the acronym of some American agency.

Atcon based his recommendations for the reform of university administration on the premise that the universities should be autonomous. This autonomy required, in Atcon's view (1966: 81), some sort of "internal control" to guarantee productivity and limit individual or group arbitrariness."

Atcon therefore recommended that a board of trustees be established which would deal with the financial affairs of the institution, including deciding on investments, budgets, and salaries. This board of trustees would function alongside the

making formal changes on paper but informally continuing in the old way. The USAID officials with whom I spoke felt that the Brazilians were not seriously committed to many of the reforms to which they had agreed in 1964. However, government policy decisions showed that it was serious about at least two things: cutting the funds given to the universities, and raising tuition payments.

Information leaked to the press revealed that the government planned to expand the universities very slowly so that by 1970 only 1.2 percent of college age Brazilians would be able to attend the university (as compared to about 1 percent at the time). The small increase in places in the university was to be financed by tuition charges and by private contributions. One newspaper report (*O Estado de São Paulo*, March 17, 1968) stated that:

The progressive institution of a system of higher education paid for by the students themselves will free funds from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture, now spent on the universities, for primary and middle education.

The increase in places in each course will be determined . . . according to a rigorous calculation of Brazil's needs for certain professions considered strategic for the development of the country.

The type of university proposed by Atcon was unacceptable to the student leadership on almost every ground. The National Council of Students met in February 1968, to discuss the educational policy of the dictatorship, and in May 1968, a pamphlet prepared by the leadership of the National Union of Students on educational policy became available. This pamphlet ("Política Educacional," mimeographed, May 1968) is the best statement of organized student opinion with regard to plans for restructuring Brazilian universities. The pamphlet states that the major focus of the struggle of the student movement against imperialism and dictatorship is the struggle against the government's educational policy.

from industry; a manager, because he is precisely that, a *manager*. He should bring to his position habits already established in industry.

Atcon's report, together with reports of the plans of the ministry of education and the ministry of planning which leaked out to the press or to university administrators, made the plans of the government clear, at least in broad terms. The government planned to orient the universities closely to the industrial system. Government funding would be diminished, making the universities dependent on financing from private sources and on tuition payments. Financial control of the universities would be given to a group of individuals from the upper class, and the administration of the universities would correspond as closely as possible to the administration of a business enterprise, minimizing the role of the elected university councils. Raising tuition charges would, of course, tend to increase the average socioeconomic status of the student body.

In general, one could say that the plan intended to imitate the organization of American private universities, rather than that of French universities which were the models for Brazil when its institutions of higher learning were organized in the 1930s and before. This was being suggested precisely at a time when students in the United States were trying to change to a more democratic university structure.

One reform which was planned and, in fact, written into the law was the reorganization of the universities into departments. This would replace the French system where the university is divided into "chairs," with each chair held by a full professor who hires assistants to help him. The new law (Decreto-lei 252, November 28, 1967), however, provided that the head of the department would be the full professor, so it is not clear whether the change was substantial or purely formal. There is a tradition in Brazil, as in other colonial or semi-colonial countries, of doing things "só para inglês ver," or "only for the English to see," which means

technicians. It argues that the "MEC-USAID University" would be characterized by four major characteristics:

- (1) Elitization: "formation of a ruling elite, limitation of places in the 'non-priority' courses, control of the expansion of higher education, according to the needs of the labor market." Since the number of technicians needed by business is limited, and the government wants to channel most young people into vocational high schools.
- (2) Technicism: the training of technicians who are not qualified to do original research, but only to adapt imported technology to Brazilian conditions.
- (3) Division of costs: the government wishes to stop paying 90 percent of the cost of higher education and to get the students and business firms to contribute to the cost.
- (4) Militarization: The armed forces want the schools to indoctrinate their students about national security and the importance of the armed forces.

The chief concrete steps which had already been taken by the government, according to the pamphlet, were cutting the funds given to universities, charging tuition, and the strict limitation of the number of places in the university. The government had also divided some of the faculties of philosophy, science, and letters into more technical institutes and had been promoting general university reform along the lines indicated in the Atcon report.

The pamphlet concluded that the student movement had developed:

a more accurate understanding of the limitations of the struggle. The proposal of a university reform which will attend the interests of the majority of the Brazilian people, and not the dominant minority, is an idealistic and illusory proposal. The university does not exist independently of the economic, political, and ideological structure of society, but is determined by it. To propose an unattainable objective to the student movement is

Since this document is not widely available, it will be worthwhile to quote at length from it. It starts with the premise that the present university system in Brazil is archaic:

The universities, and the educational system in general, are fruits of the socio-economic structure of Brazilian society. A society divided in classes, in which a small minority holds political and economic power, whose riches come from the exploitation of the labor of the great majority of the people, determines the existence of an educational structure which marginalizes the working classes and serves the interests of the dominant classes. Higher schools arose in Brazil in order to confer diplomas to the sons of the dominant minority—they were isolated schools of Law or Philosophy, characterized by the search for the diploma and the life-long Chair. Expansion of higher education was made in an anarchic manner, according to local needs, the universities being sought out as instruments of social mobility, especially by the petty-bourgeoisie of the large cities. There were no substantial changes in Brazilian education to accompany the evolution of the dominant economic system in Brazil with the development of the industrial sector.

The pamphlet goes on to say that before 1964 the student movement had struggled for university reform, which meant to replace the archaic universities with universities oriented toward "developmentism," that is "industrialization by means of intense penetration of imperialist capital." The student movement continues the fight against the archaic structure of the universities, for better curriculums and professors and student participation in decisions about university life. However, the movement does not any longer call for general university reform since this is:

impossible in the present structure. A university oriented towards the interests of the people is possible only with a government of the majority of the people.

The pamphlet says that the government is not satisfied with the present system which produces B.A.s instead of

movements. The Popular Action is a descendant of a Catholic youth group, although many of the activists involved in it were not Catholic. It had relationships with the leftist forces in the church, and some support among the peasants. The Dissidents were tied to the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) but the nature of the relationship was not clear. Some students claim that they had been instructed by the party to take a more radical line than the line taken by the party as a whole, while others say that they were truly independent. Both student groups were on better terms with the Castro regime than with Moscow.

Smaller groups included the orthodox Communists who were more conservative and a reformist group which favored an alliance with the national bourgeoisie. Far left groups included the Trotskyists, the pro-Peking Communist Party of Brazil and a group called Workers' Politics.

All of this political activity was illegal and more or less secret. Most Brazilian students did not know very much about these groups. When elections for student leadership positions took place, there were various slates with arbitrary names chosen for the occasion, like "Unity of Politics and Action" or "Working Front" and most students voted for specific leaders whom they supported. Often, the leftist groups agreed on a common ticket with representatives from each of the political groups, as well as, perhaps, a few student leaders who were not affiliated with any group. There were no organized right-wing groups in the major faculties of philosophy, science, and letters, so when the leftist groups agreed on a common ticket, as was the case in Rio de Janeiro when I was there, there was no contest for the student government positions. In the private universities and technical faculties there were normally some right-wing slates but even in these faculties the leftist slate was usually able to win control of the student governments.

I was able to attend a meeting in one faculty in which the students were deciding on a slate for the student government

to be opportunist in practice. We must propose concrete objectives of improvement of teaching, but not a university reform project.

The student leadership had decided to focus its activities on the struggle for specific student demands, even though they could not expect large scale success in the form of a revolutionary university reform. Many of the student leaders had concluded that the role of students in the national political process could not be as large as they had previously believed. The students were not successful in being the vanguard of a revolution against the government. They were ready to lead, but the masses had not followed. Many student leaders felt that continuing to call for immediate revolution was an opportunistic policy; a use of meaningless vocal radicalism to camouflage a policy which did not really challenge the government seriously. They felt that they could be more effective in maintaining their own power base among the students by concentrating on specific student demands, using the struggle for student needs to maintain student awareness of the repressive nature of the government, and student support for the radical leaders.

ISSUES WITHIN THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

These conclusions were not reached easily, but as the result of much self-criticism and dispute between the major political groups within the student movement. All of the active groups were on the left; there were no nationally organized right-wing student political groups. The groups which were most active after 1964 were largely the same as before 1964, although the positions taken by each group have changed.

The two major groups were the Popular Action (AP) and a dissident wing of the Brazilian Communist Party (the Dissidents). Both of these groups were related to national

on improving their relationships with the students. In order to do this, they organized the students into small groups, about twenty each, according to their year and the program that they were in. Each of these groups had a leader who was responsible for discussing the members' problems with them and for attending a conference, which lasted all night, in which they discussed the problems of each group and decided on what action to take, if any.

The president of the student body in this school, which is known as one of the most radical and politically active in Brazil, told me that about one quarter of the students were highly politically active. These highly active students were almost all revolutionary socialists of one kind or another. The remaining three quarters were not highly active, although many of them participated in rallies and demonstrations. They tended to have more moderate socialist or welfare state ideas.

This greater concern with student demands was coupled with a recognition that the majority of students were from the middle class. The student leaders felt that the middle classes were becoming more and more impoverished and that the students would, therefore, be more and more motivated to join with the working classes in a struggle against the dictatorship.

The new political line taken by the student movement was debated and formally stated at the Twenty-Ninth Congress of the National Union of Students, which took place in São Paulo in July 1967. This congress passed the "Carta Política da UNE" which defended the new line.

This manifesto criticized the reformism of the student movement before 1964 (National Union of Students, 1967):

Before 1964, the National Students Union placed its hopes for social transformation in the hands of the "progressive national bourgeoisie. . . ."

They believed in the possibility of a common front with the Brazilian bourgeoisie, in the supposition that the bourgeoisie had

posts. In order to do this, they formulated a common statement of position, which criticized the positions taken by the previous student government. All leaders agreed on mutual self-criticism, however, including the previous members of the "Diretório Acadêmico" (a sort of student senate).

They felt that the basic deficiencies with the student movement were (mimeographed document, May 1968):

the lack of a well defined mass line, the lack of coordination and planning of the struggles, the lack of a plan of organization of the students, and the profound gap between the student governing bodies and the mass of students.

This gap between the governing bodies and the mass, and the present disorganization of the Student Movement are the fruits of an erroneous political conception . . . which does not understand the correct relation between denouncing the government, the political struggle and the struggle for student interests. The struggles for student interests, when carried on, were conceived of as a tactic for denouncing the government, as an instrument of agitation and not, as they should have been, as having in view the satisfaction of the immediate needs of the students.

When the progressive sectors initiated the struggle against the dictatorship imposed on the country (in 1964), and came to deny in practice the reformism which existed before the coup d'état, there developed a sectarian tendency which attempted only political denunciations, denunciations which were made only superficially and with illusions that the students were going to form an alliance as a class with the workers and peasants to overthrow the government. This conception naturally led to scorn for the struggle for student needs, and consequently, a progressively larger gap between the student governing bodies and the mass of students.

This document, which had the general support of all the student leaders in that school at that time (May 1968), documents the concern that student leaders had with the ineffectiveness of their struggles to overthrow the government. They feared that their base of support among the students might be weakening and had decided to concentrate

The two major trends in this document are: an increasingly revolutionary view of the nature of Brazilian society and the need for changes, and a decision to concentrate efforts on meeting student needs rather than on attempts to lead a revolution. These two views are not completely reconcilable; if one believes that the only way to solve Brazil's problems is by a violent revolution to overthrow the existing economic system, and one believes that significant changes in the universities will not come about until the economic system is changed, then one cannot help but question the efficacy of a movement which concentrates its efforts on pressuring for immediate student demands. This inconsistency cannot be entirely reconciled, and it provided a continuing focus for ideological disputes within the student movement. Students are not in a position to overthrow the government, nor are they unanimous in wanting to do so. Most of them are of middle class origins, and they may not anticipate any personal gain from a revolutionary change. The student leaders hoped that the economic policies which the government would be "forced" to take because of its economic situation, especially in relation to the advanced countries, would worsen the economic condition of the middle classes to a sufficient extent to make them want to see a radical change in the system (National Union of Students, 1967: 26):

The majority of Brazilian students come from the middle class and reflect in practice the characteristics of this class. Because of their specific situation in the capitalist regime, the middle class does not have perspectives of its own, it oscillates between believing in the adequacy of the system and believing in its negation as proposed by the working classes. With the economic crisis the middle class in Brazil has seen itself thrown into proletarianization and conditions were formed for the radicalization of the student movement. Because of his non-participation in the direct process of economic production, the student does not have conditions to put the regime in check by himself, but he does have conditions to be an auxiliary force in the revolutionary process.

contradictory interests from imperialism. For this reason the reformists ignored the necessity for organization, since they believed that simple meetings with the political elites would unite "all patriots" against the "imperialist agents" and the "ultra-conservative landowners."

The coup d'état was a lesson and we learned much from it. We learned that the Brazilian ruling classes are definitely compromised with imperialism. We learned that they are enemies of the real transformation of Brazilian society. We learned that only by allying ourselves in fact with the working classes will we be marching forward.

Thus, the student leaders agreed that they could no longer count on the national bourgeoisie to join in a struggle for basic social reforms. However, that did not resolve the problem of what new programs they should initiate since they had been ineffective in leading a socialist revolution. They had learned to function as a clandestine movement despite government persecution, but their Movement Against the Dictatorship was ineffective. They concluded that (National Union of Students, 1967: 20):

The banner of the Movement Against the Dictatorship represented the resurgence of the old conceptions in new clothing. Its program went from reformism to verbal radicalism. It was entirely ineffective in the pretension of rallying all of the people in the struggle against the dictatorship.

At the same time, they did not effectively carry out the struggle for student demands and this made them lose many opportunities (1967: 21):

the contempt for the direction of the struggle for the needs of the students made us lose many opportunities for politicizing the masses. . . . The increasing wave of the struggle of the *excedentes* (students not admitted to the university despite passing the exams) brought to the struggle all the latent potential of the student movement which could be transformed into a new political torrent against the dictatorship.

students from working with the proletariat, and because it places confidence in the national bourgeoisie.

They did not, however, accuse their opposition within the movement of taking this position. They accused the Popular Action group, and the other groups as well, of "leftism," the most important characteristics of which are (mimeographed document, October 1967):

petty-bourgeois immediatism, a tendency to isolate the proletariat, and vanguardist conceptions. They begin from a correct conception of the proletariat as the vanguard of the revolution, but they do not understand the necessity to guarantee the support of other layers of society to carry out revolutionary tasks . . . according to them the petty-bourgeoisie is reactionary and is not going to place itself, as a social strata, in the revolutionary camp. Only the vanguard of the petty-bourgeoisie, the most enlightened group, will do that by integrating themselves in the working class movement. This conception leads to the isolation of the most enlightened elements of the other strata. We conceive of the petty-bourgeoisie as one of the classes which is objectively placed at the side of the proletariat, capable of being won subjectively for the revolution. This is explained, principally, by the process of pauperization to which it is submitted with the advance of the integration of neocolonialism. It is clear that only patient political work can make it move subjectively into the proletariat's camp. Without this, it might clearly support some kind of fascist movement that promises social transformations which interest it. For this reason, we think that mass work among the students is essential, since the students . . . are the vanguard of the petty-bourgeoisie.

This document, which states the position of the Dissidents quite explicitly since it was written as a campaign document, says that the students are suffering more acutely than other sectors of the middle class because the middle class puts its hopes for social mobility in the universities. Even if students get into the university they find that a university degree is not always effective in social mobility. They come into contact with "already politicized elements" and with the archaic university system, and are better able to see the contradictions in the system.

Student politics in São Paulo differed from Rio in that the united front of the leftist groups had broken down. The two major groups—Popular Action and the Dissidents—were approximately equal in strength and were bitterly contesting the control of the student movement. This differed from the situation in other major centers where a united front was maintained, or where one group—Popular Action in Belo Horizonte and the Dissidents in Rio, for example—seemed to control the student government positions.

Elections were to take place at the end of October 1967, for control of the student governments in each school and for control of the State Union of Students. Campaigning for these elections consumed a great deal of the time of the student activists because of the intense struggle for control of the movement.

Both sides to the dispute had accepted the position stated in the "Carta Política de UNE," but in most schools they were unable to agree on a common slate for student elections. Generally, two slates emerged, at least in the various schools in the University of São Paulo, each led by one of the two major groups with support from other groups and from student leaders not affiliated with a political group. In some schools additional slates were put forth, in some cases by the Trotskyists or by the Workers Politics group. In some other schools, there was a dispute between a single leftist slate and a conservative slate.

Although the groups all agreed on the anti-reformist position taken in the "Carta Política," they differed in their emphasis on the two essential themes expressed in that manifesto.

The group led by the Dissidents claimed to be against "reformism," which it defined as a tactic based on the principle of isolating the dictatorship by having each group struggle for its own specific ends. This tactic, if successful, would result in a democratic nationalist government. The Dissidents rejected this view because it would keep the

Although student politics can best be understood through an analysis of the major political groups, it is clear that other factors entered into the political struggles within faculties. Many students, including some who were quite active and even took leadership positions, did not participate in any political group and believed that disputes between student groups were counter-productive for the movement as a whole. In elections, voting patterns were determined as much by the personalities of the various candidates, by their charismatic appeal and their effectiveness as leaders, as by a preference for a political group or support for an ideological position. Many students explained that they voted for leftist candidates because these candidates were effective in getting things done for the students, rather than because of political conviction. The candidates for each of the two major groups were careful always to emphasize in their campaigns the benefits they planned to obtain for the students in their own school.

The student elections in São Paulo did not settle the question of which group would control the State Students' Association. The election returns were apparently very close, and the committees which controlled the tabulations of the votes were apparently controlled by the Dissidents, who claimed that they had won. The other group contended that there had been a fraud, and presented some evidence for that assertion. The National Union of Students finally intervened and decided for the Dissidents, but the AP leaders did not accept this and maintained a rival State Students' Union of their own.

CONCLUSIONS

I have quoted so liberally from student documents which are not widely available, because I think they provide a sophisticated and insightful analysis of the problems of a

The role of students, according to the Dissidents, is to be the vanguard of the middle classes, and not, at the present time, to join in a worker-peasant-student movement. This movement can exist only when a worker-peasant movement has been organized, which is not yet the case. If this movement existed, the students could ally themselves with it, but could never merge with it because the students have different interests and characteristics. The students can, however, play a role in distributing propaganda among the workers and taking part in workers' demonstrations.

The other slates did not circulate position papers as lengthily and subtly argued as the Dissidents. The document (mimeo, October 1967) circulated by the Popular Action group said that the students should organize to fight both for specific student needs and for general political goals. It argued that:

The Student Movement should serve as an auxiliary force in the revolutionary process to be conducted by the proletarian classes. It should be a support force in the struggle of the people, sustaining a political and ideological struggle against imperialism and the dictatorship. The Student Movement, through its struggles, should be carried to the streets and to the people, and execute a role of political propagandizing together with the struggles of the workers and the peasants. In this manner it will be contributing to the actualization of the worker-student-peasant alliance.

Although the documents do not show an essential difference between the two groups, there is a difference in emphasis. The Dissidents placed more emphasis on the struggle for student demands, while the Popular Action and the further left groups were more concerned with organizing the workers. Interviews with the leaders of the slates opposing the Dissidents indicated that these leaders thought that the Dissidents, while giving lip service to the worker-peasant-student alliance, were taking a disguised reformist position—perhaps disguised even to themselves.

Another issue, which is perhaps more revealing of the contradictions within the student movement, came up when the government passed a law granting employment security to all public employees with a certain number of years of service. This included high school teachers who lacked university degrees but had been hired because graduates were unavailable. Many students felt that these teachers should be discharged as soon as university graduates became available. The same student leaders who spoke adamantly against anyone who collaborated in any way with the military regime mobilized themselves as a pressure group with the goal of persuading the ministry to change its ruling. Posters urged students to attend meetings on this issue in order to protect their self-interest.

While the student leaders were quite willing to deal with government officials to pressure for students' interests, they were unwilling to cooperate with even opposition political leaders in organizing a demonstration. When a May Day demonstration was called in São Paulo in 1968 by a number of local labor leaders who had organized a movement against the government's wage squeeze policies, students were naturally eager to participate.

The governor not only permitted the demonstration to take place, but announced that he would speak to the workers himself at a mass rally. The student leaders were opposed to his participation since they thought he was attempting to use the dissatisfaction of the workers to pressure for a liberalization of the regime. This was, they felt, a reformist measure which would only work against the revolution. When he arrived at the May Day rally, accompanied by a few aides in business suits but no uniformed police, he was stoned by the students and forced to run into a church. The students then burned the podium and marched, with a fraction of the workers present, to another plaza where they held a rally.

revolutionary socialist student movement. The Brazilian student movement had reached a degree of consciousness and organization well beyond that achieved by the student movement in the United States even at the height of its mobilization in the 1960s. Despite, or perhaps because of, this development they were unable to resolve the contradictions inherent in attempting to lead a socialist revolution while representing the immediate and concrete interests of students within the existing neocolonial society.

The students were most effective when they attacked those aspects of American imperialism which directly affected the universities. The attempts of the United States government to mold Brazilian higher education in the image of the American multiversity provided an ideal issue for the student movement. They were very effective in mobilizing students to resist American intervention and in raising the consciousness of the student body about the role of American imperialism in their society. They were also able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their tactics by successfully blocking some of the plans of the American agencies.

Student leaders also devoted much of their energies to defending concrete student interests. One issue, which became a major one in 1968, was the question of admission quotas. Each year, more and more students apply for admission to universities. In 1968 a large number of students who achieved satisfactory scores on the admission exams were turned away because of lack of room in the universities. The student leadership mounted a very effective campaign for the admission of all qualified students. This campaign served the needs of the students, while drawing attention to the fact that the government was not living up to its rhetoric of expanding education to meet the needs of social and economic development. The student leaders were again able to demonstrate their effectiveness by getting most of the applicants admitted.

to judge the effectiveness of this movement, but it would seem to have had to devote most of its efforts to the struggle to survive.

The student movement was winning considerable sympathy and support from the population at large, at least in the major cities. Citizens applauded and threw confetti when students marched through the streets, while they hurled verbal abuse at the police who chased them. However, this popular support was not effectively organized and was, in any event, largely limited to the cities. Thus, when the repression came down there was little the students could do about it.

The government's repressive tactics effectively forced the revolutionary movement to stop functioning as a student movement. It was no longer possible to hold open mass meetings which could reach large numbers of students. Students continued to be the major source of recruits into the urban guerilla movement, but relatively few students were willing to abandon the student life to spend their time in organizational or propaganda activities among the workers or peasants.

It is doubtful that any revolutionary movement with a chance of seizing state power can remain a student movement. Certainly this would be difficult in a country where only one percent of the population gets to a university. A student movement would seem to be inherently limited to representing student interests while raising the consciousness of students and encouraging them to join nonstudent revolutionary groups.

Nevertheless, the gains which a student movement can win for its constituents are severely limited in a country which is dominated by a local capitalist oligarchy and by American interests. Perhaps if the student leaders had compromised their revolutionary convictions and worked with the less reactionary elements within the ruling circles they might have won more concessions for the students and even contributed

Although there was no opposition to this student action on the part of the workers or union leaders present at the time, the leaders of each of the unions released statements to the press deploring the attack on the governor. Few of the workers were ready to participate in a demonstration against the governor; they were more interested in advancing their own immediate interests. On May Day a year later, there was no demonstration and the plaza was occupied by its usual group of stamp vendors and collectors.

By engaging in confrontation tactics of this kind, the students rejected the attempts of the less reactionary faction within the ruling class to reach an accommodation with them. The governor had himself been arrested in 1919 in a student demonstration, and commented to the press that he would tolerate orderly demonstrations (*O Estado de São Paulo*, April 2, and April 21, 1968). Certain other prominent political leaders were attempting to use the student movement to pressure the government for liberalization.

More conservative elements in the regime, however, favored a steep increase in the repression of the student movement. This strategy was adopted, with results which have become well known. Demonstrators were shot, and the student movement was forced to abandon demonstrating as a tactic even on such occasions as the visit of Nelson Rockefeller. Large numbers of student activists were arrested and brutally tortured or killed. Dozens of leftist university professors were fired by presidential decree and prohibited from holding teaching positions anywhere in Brazil for five years.

The student movement was largely unprepared for the savage increase in repression, but regrouped as best it could as a highly clandestine urban guerilla movement. Some of the more dramatic tactics used by this movement had received attention in the press, tactics such as bombings, bank holdups, and kidnaping of diplomats in order to secure the release of imprisoned revolutionaries. I am not in a position

to a political climate which would have been more receptive to the efforts of revolutionary groups to build consciousness among the workers and peasantry. Yet we have no way of assuring that this policy, which would have been interpreted as a sell-out by the most militant students, would have been any less ineffective than the confrontation tactics which were forced on the students by the military regime.

NOTE

1. USAID project number 512-11-660-263. All translations from the Portuguese texts quoted in this article are my own. Subsequent references to this document.

REFERENCES

- ATCON, R. P. (1966) Rumo à Reformulação Estrutural da Universidade Brasileira. Rio de Janeiro: Ministério de Educação e Cultura.
- BAHIA, R. (1954) O Estudante na História Nacional. Salvador: Livraria Progresso Editora.
- GOERTZEL, T. (1971) "Generational differences and student activism in Brazil." *Sociology and Social Research* 56 (October): 49-61.
- (1970) "Brazilian student attitudes toward politics and education." Ph.D. dissertation, Washington University.
- (1967) "MEC-USAID: ideologia de desenvolvimento Americano aplicada à educação superior Brasileira." *Revista Civilização Brasileira* 14 (July): 123-137.
- MAYRINK, J. M. (1967) "A inquietude universitária." *Cadernos Brasileiros* 39 (January): 44-54.
- Ministerio de Educação e Cultura (1968) "Assessoria para modernização da administração universitária," in *Acórdos, Contratos, Convênios (Separata)*. Rio de Janeiro.
- (1967) "Convênio de assessoria ao planejamento do ensino superior," in *Acórdos, Contratos, Convênios*. Rio de Janeiro.
- National Union of Students (1967) "Carta política da uniao nacional de estudantes." *Revisão* 5 (September): 18-28.
- POERNER, A. J. (1968) *O Poder Jovem*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.