



**“The crowd is crazy, the crowd is a woman”:  
the oligarchical-federal demophobia of the First Republic and the issue of transferring the capital**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the expressions of demophobia of the political class of the First Republic, faced with demonstrations against the government in Rio de Janeiro, and relates them to the need to move to the seat of the federal government inland. The demophobic literature produced by liberal Europeans against democratization in their countries pervaded the orientation of the Brazilian political class during the period. Committed to building an oligarchic federation, they saw the population of Rio de Janeiro as a threat. Compared to a subversive crowd of people in a huge, artificial capital suffering from foreign influence, oligarchic federalism valued the ‘authentic’ Brazilian people, referred to the image of a provincial, orderly population.

**Keywords:** First Republic; demophobia; transfer of the federal capital; Vaccine Revolt; Brazil.

On December 28, 1879, four thousand people led by the Republican Tribune Lopes Trovão gathered in São Cristóvão field to protest the enactment of a twenty *réis* (one *vintém*) tax on trolley fares in Rio de Janeiro. The tax had been established by the finance Minister of the liberal cabinet of the Visconde de Sinimbu, Afonso Celso de Assis e Figueiredo. The crowd then continued, peacefully, to the Imperial Palace at the Quinta da Boa vista, with the intention to submit a petition against the tax to Emperor Dom Pedro II. The monarch refused to see them. On the day the tax took effect, January 1, 1880, an insurrection began that completely escaped the control of its leaders. During three days, the furious crowd obstructed and pulled up trolley tracks, unhooked burros, broke trolley cars and pulled up street paving stones to create barricades. During the riots, a colonel was hit in the head with a rock, and the troops opened fire, killing three protesters and injuring 28 (Holanda, 1985, p.234). After the city was pacified, the tax was revoked. Two months later, the Emperor dismissed his cabinet. Twenty-five years later, on November 11, 1904, about four thousand people led by Jacobins went to the Catete Palace to protest against mandatory vaccines, but were blocked by the Army. The next day, there were confrontations with the police and, once again, barricades were set up. Police stations, army barracks, and trolley companies were attacked; trolley cars and public lighting fixtures were knocked down and burned. The Military Academy revolted and the government decreed a state of siege, suspending constitutional rights. Thirty died and 110 were injured, 945 people were arrested and 461 were deported to the state of Acre (Carvalho, 1997). Although the population of the city had doubled since the time of the *Vintém* Revolt, 1880, the number of deaths was ten times greater and the number of injured, almost four times greater. Two other things that did not happen in 1880 were the declaration of a state of siege and the use of deportation. Similarly, the government did not fall and no minister was dismissed.

Why was there a difference in the reaction to the two revolts? Why was the government much more repressive in the case of the Vaccine Revolt, and made fewer concessions? Various reasons could explain these differences. During the reign of Dom Pedro II, the custom of repressing revolts disappeared: the suspension of constitutional rights in Brazil had not occurred in forty years, especially in the capital. A liberal legal culture had clearly been flourishing since the 1860s, and the development of Parliamentarism made any excess sufficient cause for changing the cabinet, especially under the leadership of a monarch like Pedro II, who wished to preserve the liberal environment. Additionally, the Vaccine Revolt was supplemented by a military revolt, something that had not happened in 1880. Since its beginning, the Republic suffered a series of conspiracies and rebellions that modified the legal culture, making it more conservative and authoritarian. Beginning in the 1900s, when the regime strengthened, this analysis was no longer held only by the monarchists (like Nabuco and Eduardo Prado), but was also shared by liberal Republicans, such as Rui Barbosa, and even by Jacobins.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the conservative Republicans connected to the establishment, such as Campos Sales, Alcindo Guanabara and Gilberto Amado, began justifying repression and fraud with demophobic arguments. What are the reasons for this change? This article addresses precisely this oligarchic federative demophobia of the First Republic, present in the parliamentary debates among its leading politicians, as well as the direct repercussions on the campaign to transfer the capital of the country inland.

## **The era of democratization in central countries: the crisis of classical liberalism and the emergence of modern demophobia (1870-1910)**

When I say political class or ruling political class, I am alluding generically to the "minority of influential people" who represent "the public interest," with this government being "submitted to voluntarily or involuntarily by the majority" (Mosca, 1966, p.51). In this article, the expression political class refers to the members of the first echelon of the ruling elite – presidents, ministers, senators, representatives and judges (Pareto, 1966, p.73) – during the First Republic. By demophobia, I mean the fear on the part of the social elite that an increase in civic participation beyond their circle, in order to democratize social life, would result in disorder, subversion and the final decadence of civilized political world. As a phobia, demophobia is characterized by an exaggerated fear of crowds; and has recently been used in political debate, but without academic rigor. Recently, however, the concept of demophobia was defined by a French philosopher as follows:

Demophobia refers to all methods for concealing or rejecting the 'word' of the people, due to allergy, apprehension, or mistrust arising from the people, who are reputed to be 'ignorant,' to the extent that they are victims of their own affections, whether an excess of passion or the opposite, namely complete indifference. Demophobia can be seen in governments whenever they are confronted with challenges or popular demands that bother them. They try to play down the 'word' of the people or discredit them. But it is also a common blind spot of theoreticians who lash out at the wanderings of democracy and mistrust elections and their results, when they grant them any legitimacy at all (Crépon, 2012, p.4; emphasis in the original).

In a broad sense, demophobia has been reported in political literature since antiquity as form of tension between rich and poor, aristocracy and commoners, owners and dispossessed (Aristóteles, 1997, p.91). What has changed since then, in the world and, therefore, in political literature, are the ways to respond to or address the problem. Thus, from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, from a corporate conception of society, a formal system of division of the political community into estates, which gave the elite and commoners separate laws, courts and functions, has been maintained. Each individual's attitude or social function corresponded to the estate or status group to which he belonged. This distinction was considered natural, in that the community was seen as a body composed of different organs with different functions. The fundamental laws of the unequal and harmonic classifications in this world were as unavailable as those relating to the cosmos, nature or physiology (Xavier, Hespanha, 1998, p.115). It was the democratization process understood in the manner of Tocqueville, i.e., secularization and destruction of old hierarchies, which led to the questioning of the corporate model and resulted in the transition to another, individualistic and voluntaristic model, which established the principle of equality before the law. Society came to be presented as a legal system composed of autonomous individuals who, under the auspices of natural freedom and equality, should dedicate themselves to peace and tranquility in their private lives (Manin, 1995, p.18).

The issue of the tension between the rich and poor had not been solved, however. The majority of the population of the countries that had adopted representative government with the principle of equality before the law continued to be illiterate, worked in the fields

controlled by large landowners, and lived in traditional ways. Despite equality before the law, nineteenth-century liberalism did not extend the universality of civil rights to the field of political rights. Hence their oligarchic, rather than democratic nature. The government was the responsibility of a social and intellectual elite composed of free and equal, rational individuals, the owners, the educated, those able to make decisions for the benefit of the general populace, after lofty, disinterested discussions. The world of politics was a gentleman's club committed to the progress and freedom of its country. They were expected to ensure that the future and potential democratization – which, for them, would be limited to the generalization of the right to vote to all literate men – occurred gradually, respecting all the principles of liberal order: individual liberty, a representative system, economic liberalism, and non-intervention of the government in society. The danger was that demagogues unconcerned with liberty could convince the population to establish democratic tyranny that would suppress individual freedom in the name of a misunderstood equality. The poor and illiterate should realize their inability to understand public affairs until, due to the progress of instruction and education, they become capable of participating in government (Mill, 1849).

However, with the deepening of the democratization process, liberalism became increasingly contested in Western Europe and North America. Migration from the countryside to the city accelerated the destruction of social hierarchies, reflected in the movement for universal suffrage and by the reduction of obstacles to political participation. Thus, in the big cities of those countries (France, England, USA), on an ongoing basis, a hitherto unknown (or at least only sporadic) political entity continuously appeared: the crowd, that is, people gathered in a group and politically mobilizable. That is why urbanization and social change fundamentally undermined classical liberalism. The more advanced liberals evolved to radicalism and socialism, while the more conservative followed the classical postulates of the doctrine. Unable to stop the process of subversion of the elite world they knew – what seemed to them the only world possible in light of civilization and science – those liberals who became conservatives, began to bitterly criticize the masses. It contradicted all of the liberal foundations of their worldviews, which had the rational, male, property owner, educated, moralized individual at its center. Hence these liberals, transformed into conservatives, describe the masses as having characteristics opposite those of the liberal individual: the masses were composed of poor men and women, manual workers, easily manipulated, ignorant of the laws governing the movement of progress, and subject to the lowest passions. Liberal under the July Monarchy, and transformed into a conservative during the democratic phase of the Second French Republic, Representative Adolphe Thiers described these people objectively in a speech to the National Assembly on May 24, 1850: “These men that form not the background, but the dangerous core of large crowds, these men deserve this description, one of the lowest in history, that of mob” (quoted in Rosanvallon, 1992, p.305).

Although it had the opportunity to express itself in an embryonic manner in France during those brief liberal democratic years (1848-1851), the democratic process was shown to be irreversible only after the fall of Napoleon III and the consolidation of the third Republic, around 1880. The demophobic literature in the last decade of the nineteenth century had a principal theoretical reference, the work of the English philosopher Herbert Spencer. He was a bitter enemy of the manner in which the empirical process of democratization was carried

out, in contrast to the scientific laws extracted from a liberal idea of the world modernized by Darwinism. Progress resulted from the natural selection of the various social groups, in which the fittest excelled in a fierce struggle for survival, and in which the State should not intervene. Although the formal requirement of equality before the law remained as a condition for perfect competition among individuals, in practice Spencerianism nullified it due to geographic, ethnic or hereditary determinism (Béjin, 1987). Poverty was a normal result of the inability of the weakest, and therefore state aid would only prolong their improvidence and incapacity, increasing bureaucracy and reducing individual freedom (Spencer, 1994). Removing obstacles to human happiness or virtue, by state action or by indiscriminate charity, would produce an effeminate people, lacking a moral backbone. Spencer condemned all new institutions that emerged from the empirical (not idealized) democratization of European societies: social legislation, socialism, the right to strike and unionization. They all represented undue interference in the natural process of competition. According to Spencer, "the policy of universal intervention" led to "an unhealthy laissez-faire, which allows dishonest people to enrich themselves at the expense of honest people" (Laveleye, Spencer, 1885, p.27).

The psychological pattern developed by Spencer to explain the nature of the individual and his social behavior from an evolutionary perspective was soon incorporated into the historiographical work of French writer Hippolyte Taine. To Taine, proper knowledge of the great works of mankind required understanding of the psychology of the authors, whose interaction with the social environment could only be understood, in turn, by resorting to a social psychology based on the "innate and hereditary characteristics of the man revealed in it" (cited in Ginneken, 1992, p.24). In *The origins of contemporary France*, Taine (1986) wrote a narrative of the French Revolution based on a Darwinist psychological background, relentlessly critical of the revolutionary experience. At the same time he was painting a negative picture of the crowds manipulated by radicals, based on the revolutionary experience brought to a climax by the Jacobins, Taine argued that psychological knowledge was key to understanding the socio-political phenomenon. In the field of criminology, Taine attracted disciples, such as the sociologist Gabriel Tarde, in his booklet *Crowds and criminal sects*, and the jurist Scipio Sighele, who in his preface to *The criminal crowd* displayed his demophobic sentiments: "The study of mob crimes is interesting, especially at a time when – from worker strikes to public riots – collective mob violence abounds. It seems that, from time to time, it needs to relieve itself, through a crime, from all the accumulated pain and resentment it has suffered" (Sighele, 1954, p.4).

In this framework, the science of politics in the era of democratization could only have one object: psychology applied to the masses. And it was Gustave Le Bon who undertook to write a true political science manual aimed at conservative politicians interested in manipulating the masses for the benefit of the shaky liberal order: *Psychology of the crowds*. According to Le Bon, the principal reason behind the decline of the civic standard of public administration was the expansion of political participation before completion of the gradual process of education and instruction of the common people. Civic degradation caused by the advent of the masses was measured by increasing State interference in socioeconomics, which, with what was called State socialism, threatened to eliminate individual liberty. From the emotional point of view, the masses were impulsive, capricious, irritable; suggestible and

gullible; exaggerated and naive; intolerant and dictatorial, and immoral. They were always looking for leaders, often willful and imaginative people that led them by repetition and contagion. If the individualistic order of liberalism led to civilization, thanks to progressive morality, discipline and the ability of the qualified individual, the new collectivist order created by the socialism of the masses, characterized by destruction, ignorance, passion and anarchy, could only take society back to barbarism (Le Bon, 1963, p.4). The conservatives therefore had to adapt to changing times, and also become leaders of the masses, in order to save civilization.

### **The emergence of modern demophobia in Brazil: the resistance to the abolitionist movement and the advent of the oligarchical-federative republican project (1884-1891)**

In the terms put forward in the late nineteenth century by conservative liberals resistant to democratization, the expression of demophobic sentiments by the Brazilian political class emerged in 1884-1885, in the wake of Senator Dantas' pro-abolitionist rallies, when he was trying to obtain approval for the "Seniors Law," which granted freedom to slaves over 65 years of age. In Brazil, they were the first embodiment of the image of a crowd. When deputies and senators began to face jeers on the streets and pro-abolition demonstrations, the opposition leaders immediately accused the abolitionists and the Dantas cabinet of encouraging the crowd in order to coerce them into approving the bill. According to the opposition legislator, Antônio de Siqueira (4 maio 1885), the "applause and disorder on the streets, even when they are filled with crowds," were "aggressive and thunderous demonstrations"; "unconscious instruments of a terror tactic." The inability of the government to suppress those who booed the parliamentary opposition – the true representatives of the nation – betrayed that they were no longer able to ensure "protection of order" and that, therefore "authority had disappeared in Brazil". The representative from the state of Minas Gerais, Diogo de Vasconcelos (4 maio 1885), also a oppositionist, supported his colleague: "We did not come from the provinces to suffer boos from the government". The demophobic anguish eventually toppled the Dantas cabinet in that same session, on the pretext of failing to maintain public order (and, worse, of hiring thugs to coerce the opposition parliamentarians). Dissatisfied, months later the abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco (1999, p.24-25) described the demophobic anguish of the conservative political class as follows:

This anarchy cannot continue. Public peace had been disturbed. The president of the federal chamber of representatives was the subject of a protest on the streets... In the following days, the senate and chamber of representatives looked as ridiculous as possible. The legislature was suffering convulsions. The French convention, invaded by the sections, would not have felt more threatened. It was said that slaves had taken over the capital; that an English squadron was in the port with lighted torches; that Mr. Dantas had taken the Emperor prisoner and would decree immediate abolition.

However, we must guard against the temptation to see similarities between what was happening in Brazil in the 1880s – the abolitionist campaign – and the democratization process that took place in France and Great Britain. Claiming the democratic flag, two

separate reform projects were in competition, one of a social nature, abolitionist, and the other merely institutional, São Paulo republicanism. Abolitionists felt democracy implied egalitarian social order, stating that the nation would not come into itself while divided by slavery and marked by its effects. Understanding the fragility of the reformist sectors in a society with an oligarchic tendency, Joaquim Nabuco (1988) felt that only the expropriation of the democratic project by the monarchy would make the process of abolition feasible, followed by the reduction of inequalities to promote the citizenship of a greater number of people, imposing them from above against a conservative and refractory Parliament. Nabuco's beliefs were based on a broader conception of the nation than that of the mainstream political class which, by mobilizing the concept of the people, distinguished between *populus* (the political elite) and *plebs* (the mob). By conceptualizing the Brazilian nation as also composed of the people/*plebs*, Nabuco identified the political problem as a social problem and, as such, it constituted a 'national issue' to be addressed by the state. Instead of arguing about the best way to govern a free people, as did the Republicans, Nabuco (1988, p.32, 36) proposed "to start at the beginning," or in other words "rebuild Brazil based on free labor and the union of races in freedom."

However, the most influential Brazilian Republicans, led by major coffee growers in São Paulo – the most important being Campos Sales – like most of the political ruling class during the Empire, put the social question in the background and reduced the meaning of democracy to a purely political-institutional dimension. In this view, democracy was seen, essentially, as federal order, which could only be effectively obtained through the republic. The concept of the people was mobilized only to designate the provincial elites unhappy with their slight political weight in the context of political centralization and denounce the authority of the Emperor over the political system. In the literature produced by São Paulo republican theorists – principally Alberto Sales – the most cited and reproduced foreign authors were Spencer and Tocqueville. The English philosopher served to justify the advent of a new individualistic, sociocentric order, against government intervention to reduce social inequalities. More important than social reform was political reform, requiring the urgent introduction of federalism. Political centralization resulted in the absorption of all the living forces of the country by the State, generating "apoplexy of the core and paralysis of the extremities" (Sales, 1965, p.193). On the other hand, the French thinker was incorporated by the Republicans in São Paulo to portray the Brazilian people in a manner similar to those in the United States, described in *Democracy in America*: living in the countryside, educated, industrious, agricultural, and practicing democracy at the local level. It was, indeed, the self-image of the large landowners, i.e. the provincial oligarchies, eager for federalism.<sup>2</sup> Thus, given the inability of public opinion during the period to conceive of the sovereign people as the subject of democracy, 'the provinces' took their place, in practice. Mobilized rhetorically as the political participation of the sovereign people, the concept of democracy was restricted, in practice, and was understood as simply equivalent to a parliamentary or non-monarchical regime of self-government by provincial elites (Lynch, 2010, p.384-385).

The strongly oligarchic character of the First Republic represents precisely the realization of the timid democratic ideal gestated during the Second Empire by most politicians. As is known, it was the republican and federal project following the Spencerian fashion that came to prevail

with the fall of the monarchy in 1889. Therefore, its oligarchic, not democratic character is clear, and therefore it had little or nothing to do with the empirical, real democracies formed in the North Atlantic, with the rapid expansion of the urban electorate and the State in the socioeconomic area. Brazilian republican grandees contemplated an electorate restricted to literate adult men, who could not have been more than 8.5% of the population, and that in practice were around 2.3% of the total population during the first twenty years of Republic (Lynch, 2011, p.155). Meanwhile, all the liberal classics on individualism, non-intervention of the government in the economy, and market autonomy, then naturalized by the social Darwinism of Spencer, were noisily acclaimed. At the 1890 Constituent Assembly, the overwhelming majority of representatives and senators shared this vision of the new regime: democracy was synonymous with full freedom, federalism, self-government, and capitalism – in a word, the liberation of individual, special interests from the protection of the State and Union. There was a gradation that led from liberalism to democracy, from democracy to the republic, and from the republic to the federation, so that ‘democracy,’ ‘republic’ and ‘federalism’ were expressions that were taken to be equivalent, or as having a progressive relationship between them. The more liberal, the more democratic one was; the more democratic, the more republican; the more republican, the more federalist. Federalism thus consisted of the apotheosis of liberalism, which meant the triumph of individual interests and free enterprise. When discussing what to do with federal property under the new regime, the representative from the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Ramiro Barcelos (16 dez. 1890) was clear: “Gentlemen, the State should not be a farmer, the State should not own a home. The State should sell these national properties, it should sell its homes, it should have only the buildings needed for offices, and nothing more. The State is not a businessman, nor a coffee grower, nor a homeowner, it is none of these things.”

On another occasion, Barcelos (13 dez. 1890) also stated that, since the main purpose of the Republic was to organize the federation, this was a purely economic task, so it should release the barriers to self-interest so that free economic agents in the states could develop them: “currently in Brazil, since the revolution of November 15, no political constitution has been on the agenda. We are here, and the only serious thing to address is decentralization, and this consists of economic and financial matters... The Republic was formed to conquer the federation.”

It was thus that the problem of freedom of the people boiled down to a problem of organizing new institutions in order to ensure the maximum autonomy of the states. Thus guaranteeing freedom, the country’s progress was also ensured through the free initiative of economic agents and, with it, the welfare of the people, i.e. the state oligarchies contemplated by federalism. This was the republicans’ oligarchical-federal concept of nation in 1891.

### **The problem with the oligarchical federative concept of nation: the masses in Rio de Janeiro (1890-1904)**

At the time of creation of this Brazilian democracy, understood as a centrifugal federal order, marked by the primacy of federal entities in the national political order, the capital of the Republic, Rio de Janeiro, was like a pebble in the shoe of the republicans. With nearly



seven hundred thousand inhabitants – nearly three times the size of the second largest city – the city of Rio de Janeiro was the only Brazilian metropolis and had nothing to gain from the advent of federalism. Provincial politicians had always attacked the old court of the Empire as the sole beneficiary of political centralization; an endless drain on capital coming from the provinces, now autonomous states. To make matters worse, with a large, royalist population, many mestizos without regular employment, Rio was taken as unsympathetic to the new regime (Carvalho, 1997). Finally, the modernity of the city bothered the provincial 'democrats,' who were shocked by the bad habits there. This was the case of Representative Badaró (26 dez. 1890), who climbed to the podium to "denounce the horrendous things that take place in this Babylon called Rio de Janeiro." In short, the federal capital was the only Brazilian city that had what could be termed 'the masses' at the time, thereby creating conditions that jeopardized the oligarchic-federal project, threatening it with centralization or demagoguery. Most of the new Republican grandees mistrusted the idea of any kind of popular manifestation, because they were avid readers of Le Bon, considering him "one of the world's greatest philosophers, a sociologist, a thinker, and the author of many remarkable works" (Amado, 1956, p.444). The author of *Psychology of the crowds* had several of his works translated into Portuguese at a time when all of the educated elite could read it in the original – a fact which in itself confirms his immense popularity in Brazil during the First Republic.

For these and other reasons, the provisional government chose to host the Constituent Congress not at the former headquarters of the Imperial Chamber of Deputies or Senate, located in the heart of the city, but rather at the old São Cristóvão Imperial Palace – far away enough to prevent public pressure on the new representatives of the Republic. The painter and representative from the state of Paraíba, Pedro Américo (27 dez. 1890) commented from the podium that gossip on the street said that Congress met "out of town to avoid popular revolt." The future president, Prudente de Morais (25 fev. 1891), was the first to acknowledge, as president of the Congress, the "prevention," the "disfavor" with which the Republican Congress had been received by the population. As the antipathy between the capital and the new political class was mutual, generalized support for the idea of moving the capital of Brazil to a less dangerous or hostile place arose in the first few sessions. To the constituents it seemed highly inconvenient that the base of the new federal government be located "in the middle of the masses in a vast city, agitated by nature, and sometimes a bit revolutionary" (Morais, 13 dez. 1890). They sought to move the government to keep it far from the "evil influence of this terrible city, so saturated with elements harmful to the moral life of the nation, that it has become accustomed to their continuous absorption, to the intellectual endosmosis that itself expands to the ancient capital of the Empire" (Morais, 27 jan. 1891). The ghost of the masses also haunted the demophobic head of the Republican Party of Bahia, Virgílio Damásio (15 dez. 1890), for whom the location of the federal government in Rio de Janeiro threatened the new Brazilian federation:

The conditions of the population clustered in this city are very contrary to the existence of a large capital and a large federation such as ours. Moreover, in a crowded city where the social sediment consisting of the masses lives, in which, unfortunately, instruction has not yet penetrated, nor the minimum of civic education; where we find many people, let's speak the truth, who, entirely outside the community of the industrious

and honest, live between idleness and manipulation and small crimes; this great mass of men is a weapon, a very powerful lever in the hands of agitators.

The main reason for a change in the location of the capital was thus the need to protect the federal system against the influence of a powerful and populous capital city. The Republican politicians did not think that the residents of Rio de Janeiro were representative of the Brazilian people – on the contrary, the Brazilian people were in each of the states of the federation, and therefore were better represented by the National Congress, through its representatives, than on the streets of the capital of the Republic. Therefore, it seemed to them more convenient to move the capital to a smaller, isolated city; “neither the pressure of the masses, nor dependence on a local government, are conducive to free and calm deliberations by government representatives,” argued representative Tomás Delfino (13 dez. 1890). Only in a city “with a quiet, simple, peaceful life,” could the Brazilian government be “firm, without any hesitation, and its Congress be free and without any constraints.” Their positive example was Washington, the capital of the United States, which was small and administratively and politically irrelevant. There were also two negative examples: Paris, a protagonist of all of the French revolutions, and Buenos Aires, a metropolis that always revolted against the oligarchic federal model that in so many ways served as a model for Brazilian republicans (Lynch, 2012).

Given the impossibility of moving the capital in the short term, the constituents gave the Union land in the Central Plateau in the hope that, in the not too distant future, the government would be able to transfer the capital there. In the meantime, they would have to face the specter of the masses in Rio de Janeiro, which hung over the federation, in some other way. This phantom was faced by São Paulo leader Campos Sales, who proved to be the great architect of the new regime, based on his suggestion and implementation of three measures. The first was adopted during the government of Floriano Peixoto, when Sales was a senator representing São Paulo: to create legislative jurisprudence on the state of siege similar to Argentina’s, turning it into a flexible mechanism by which the government could counter any threat of disorder and subversion coming from the sections of the population opposed to the regime. To those who feared trivialization of the siege as a commonplace government repression instrument, Sales (15 jun. 1892) replied: “the state of siege is a beneficial providence, which can coexist with truly free institutions.” It was “a necessity of modern society” that “restricting individual freedom at times, with ephemeral measures, ensures and guarantees the permanent interests of the Nation.” And he mentioned incidents that, in his view, were important symbols of disorder all over the world, and that must be prevented in Brazil: the British prime minister being booed; the pressure of workers for universal suffrage in Belgium (“anarchism”); the fact that the emperor of Germany had heard, from inside his palace, “echoes from a workers’ demonstration against his government.” Sales interpreted any street manifestation unfavorable to the government as subversive, offending the principle of authority. “It is an explosion of destructive forces” (Sales, 9 jul. 1894). At this point, Sales’ condemnation of the right to jeer seemed unanimous in the political class, and was even shared by progressive senators such as Rui Barbosa (1975, p.347-348), then (1900) also influenced by the demophobic writings of Taine and Le Bon:

It is in meetings with many people that these breeches of kindness, education and good taste are frequent. The man, a product of culture, disappeared. All that remained were the numbers, the masses, and the weight of clustered instincts, unconsciously rolling to their oppressive and brutal satisfaction. We are not talking of street protests, where often the spiral arises from the slag of plebeian passions, from unhealthy and creeping waste... In the mob, stirred by a wave of anger, the blindness of the furious oceans reigns.

The second mechanism adopted by Campos Sales, when serving as president, was what was called the Governors' Policy. It was decided then that, as in General Roca's Argentina, henceforth the future of Brazil would be determined by agreements between the president and state governors. The president would ensure the situationist oligarchies the intangibility of their domain ('federal autonomy'), protecting them from the threat of federal intervention; on their part, the governors employed pressure to elect congressional candidates committed to federal policy (Lessa, 1999). This commitment would immunize lawmakers from the influence that gossip could have on them, protecting the federation from intimidation from the capital. According to Sales, the true statesman "should not take the noise made by some radicals in the press and on the streets for public manifestations" (Sales, 1983, p.141). Therefore, the Governors' Policy guaranteed the 'elevated interests' of Brazil, with the country understood as a federally organized political community. The states represented the true opinion of the public, the true Brazilian people – and not the exclusivist and changeable opinion of the national metropolis: "despite the centralists, the true public that forms opinion and guides the national sentiment is that in the states. The Republic is governed from there, over the agitated crowds that disturb the streets of the capital of the Union" (Sales, 1983, p.127).

The third mechanism for removal of the threat to the federal government posed by the masses was suggested by Campos Sales to his successor in the presidency: take advantage of the restructuring of the port of Rio de Janeiro to reshape the urban center of the city. It should be purged of both epidemics and of the dangerous classes that inhabited it in order to recover it as a space representing a modern, civilized society. The redevelopment of Rio de Janeiro was seen to evoke a consistent threat to the Republic from "a dauntless mob, composed of adventurers, mestizos, blacks, and poor immigrants," of which was composed the lower classes of the capital (Sevcenko, 2010, p.80). It would be up to the state to "transform, by force, the unruly, 'barefoot' masses into citizens shaped according to the stereotypes that served the European bourgeoisie in exercising its domination." The urban reform also became a reform of manners, which aimed to combat the popular secular and sacred festivals, such as "Carnival, serenades, bohemian gatherings and candomblé," also attempting to eliminate begging, and the poor, represented as those barefoot and in shirtsleeves, from the city (Benchimol, 2006 p.264). It was precisely during this undertaking, led by Rodrigues Alves and aided by Lauro Müller, Pereira Passos and Oswaldo Cruz, that the Vaccine Revolt broke out. In the context of the demolition of thousands of old houses and tenements that, in order to open new channels for the flow of goods from the port, expelled the poor from the city center from one day to the next, the popular uprising began against the law of mandatory vaccination and was then strengthened by a military rebellion. This was when the demophobia of the republican political class peaked. The parliamentary speeches delivered on that occasion

are valuable because the circumstances forced the frightened and then outraged speakers, in the heat of the moment, to frankly expose their feelings about the reality of an armed mob protesting the regime they supported. In that moment of clarity, of plain speaking, the aristocratic political class of the First Republic, which legitimized itself in the name of democracy, allowed itself to openly express its demophobia.

### **“The crowd is crazy, the crowd is a woman”: parliamentary debates on the state of siege during the Vaccine Revolt (1904-1905)**

The state of siege decreed during the Vaccine Revolt lasted three months and seven days (from November 16, 1904 to February 23, 1905). Although it was the fifth state of siege during the Republic, it was the first time it was decreed with the intention of suppressing a popular revolt. The related parliamentary debates were waged in two different periods: before the decree, due to the need to approve the request from the president to Congress, and after the state of siege ended, when they had to discuss the constitutionality of acts performed by the Executive in the interim. In the first set of discussions, debate was very limited due to the urgency of those supporting the government to approve the measure given the uprising at the Military Academy. However, on this occasion, demophobia was already apparent in the speech of the senator from Rio Grande do Sul, Ramiro Barcelos (16 nov. 1904), who described these events as “disorder created by a populace seduced by ambitious politicians who want, on any pretext, to make way for their ambitions of power.” It was the classic picture painted by Taine, of the crowd seduced by a handful of demagogues to destroy order in the name of egalitarianism. Senator Rui Barbosa, from Bahia, a progressive liberal critical of the oligarchic regime, who always fought the conservative interpretation of the state of siege and, during these discussions, mandatory vaccines, was in a difficult position. While acknowledging that popular resistance to the government was always just when no option to object by peaceful means was left, Barbosa believed that this was not the case in the revolt. It had been legitimate when spontaneous, but had stopped being so due to the politicization promoted by the Jacobins. Therefore, Barbosa felt obliged to not deny the request for a state of siege decree. It seemed to him that, at that moment, it was order and not freedom that was in danger from the military rebellion that intended to inaugurate a dictatorship in Brazil. Thus, while more progressive than the establishment grandees, Barbosa shared the view that, along with jeering, any popular uprising was always negative. He described the people as orderly and hardworking, who rose against the government at the instigation of demagogues.

The people, the real people, the majority of the useful classes, were resigned, submissive, fatalistic, and unmoving. Sometimes crowds form not due to a clear sense of their rights, but due to the work of evil influences. Then disorder arises, where anarchies with all the trappings join forces with miseries of all degrees of ignorance and malice (Barbosa, 16 nov. 1904).

The second phase of the discussion on the state of siege related to the Vaccine Revolt occurred the following year, when the approval of government acts was debated. The meeting of the Chamber of Representatives on July 27, 1905 was opened by a speech by

government supporter Passos Miranda (27 jul. 1905), from the state of Sergipe, who went up to the podium to condemn the "shaky and anarchic" right to insurrection:

I think that the factions are the degrading influences of democracies. There is nothing more unnerving than to endure the intermittent jeers from these violent, agitated factions, nothing more hateful than to suffer the demented predominance of these tumultuous mobs, adeptly exploited by fake leaders who animate their prejudices and weaknesses, and by cunning perverters who flatter their vices and passions; and when, to the misery of this or that country, they obtain some success, either due to the recklessness of the ruling classes or the indifference of the people without political education, what history records is that they immediately leap beyond the fermented intentions, bankrupting their vaunted panacea or restless ambitions, climbing to power, not to eliminate the alleged abuses, against which they fought during troubled times, but to practice them more openly, according to perverse vanities or obscure fanaticism.

In his support, Miranda (27 jul. 1905) cited scholars of crowd psychology and was critical of them, like Sighele, Le Bon and Tarde: when hallucinated, believing that "everything was permitted to them," "in their monstrous fatuity," in the "fierce intoxication of their power" the masses were becoming "intolerant, despotic, and murderous." Everything they produced was "various, changeable, and ephemeral, if not impudent, malicious, and exterminating". All that was needed was a "suspicion, a chimera, a quiet rumor, fickle hearsay" to become afraid and turn into "terrorists." According to Passos Miranda (27 jul. 1905), the individual in the crowd was dominated by a "furious madness," by a "mania to destroy," related to his primitive barbarity. The crowd was crazy, because it was irrational; and it was also fickle, because it was a woman, and let itself be carried away by the turbulent tribunes. That's what happened in the French Revolution and was happening everywhere.

It could not be otherwise, because *la foule est femme*, in the unkind, metaphorical words of the sociologists. She is easily excited by beaus that animate her vanity, and speak to her of omnipotence, she surrenders willingly to their seduction and, with them, becomes docile and gullible, jealous and angry, she rarely reflects, is almost always ignorant: in a word, she acts and makes decisions based on sensitivity and nerves... And psychiatrists have another saying, *la foule est folle*, a saying meaning that the crowd is overcome by this type of delirium, clearly characterized and classified, and very familiar to alienists: the common delusion. The factions have collective hallucinations, with disturbances similar to those of some asylum inmates (Miranda, 27 jul. 1905).

The free expression of demophobia continued when, four days later, the rapporteur of the Constitution and Justice Committee, Representative Luís Domingues, defended his opinion approving the actions taken by the government. A sore point was the relocating of hundreds of poor people who had broken trams and street lights to the Amazon. The Constitution allowed the government to relocate detainees to "another part of the country" during a state of siege and, indeed, the government took advantage of the newly acquired territory of Acre to send there – in the words of President Rodrigues Alves – "known troublemakers and individuals of ill repute" (Domingues, 3 maio 1905). Domingues (3 maio 1905) also referred to the outcasts as "the men who brought terror and attacked institutions." The problem is that, although the government stated that the detainees were no longer detained, they remained in Acre.

Sympathetic to the rebels, the opposition representative Barbosa Lima requested a list of the exiled individuals, claiming that the government refused to identify them to prevent the filing of habeas corpus, so that the outcasts could work for large rubber tapping companies as 'plantation serfs.' On his own, in evident rejection of the principle of publicity, Domingues (31 jul. 1905) replied that the Constitution did not require the government to name those it had exiled and so it was not legally required to provide any list to anyone: "what mattered to the government was to remove the disorderly from the location of the protests, and it had achieved that goal by exiling citizens and deporting foreigners." In Domingues' (31 jul. 1905) opinion, opposition deputies had no connection "to the class of vagrants and troublemakers, and street lamp breakers"; nameless people in which no one was interested: "Nobody has noticed the absence of these people, there is no reason to provide names and request habeas corpus." When Barbosa Lima asked again for the names of the exiled individuals, Domingues (31 jul. 1905) replied angrily, "One went by the name Maria Cachuxa, another by Pinto Espantado [pejorative made-up names], and I do not know how many others of the same ilk! For me, those exiled had only one name – they called themselves troublemakers. And I do not know if, because the rioters gave these names, or gave none, the government can be deprived of the constitutional right to banish them."

The issue is of particular interest because it reveals that, under possible democratic rhetoric, the republican establishment concerned itself with the selective effectiveness of civil rights when it came to applying them to the lower classes or to the elites – a distinction that, obviously, had never been established in the constitutional order. It was the leader of the government himself who acknowledged the difference in treatment accorded to military insurgents, on the one hand, and the angry mob on the other. "Of the insurrectionists, those who had the responsibility of name or social status, those who could not, nor should be confused with Maria Cachuxa, Pinto o Sete e Quebra Toutiço [pejorative made-up names] were treated normally," stated Domingues (31 jul. 1905). Or in other words, the rebel military men were interned in military prisons, responding to the investigation and awaiting trial, while the lower classes were exiled to Acre, without their families knowing what had happened. When Barbosa Lima questioned the evident illegality of that distinction, within the framework of a constitution that proclaimed equality before the law, Domingues claimed to not understand the question. For the ruling leader, the difference between the military and the lower classes was crystal clear: "On one side was the mob that broke trams and street lamps, and on the other, army officers and equally skilled people. Thinking that the same responsibility and the same outcome should apply to both would be something unexpected." And he finished, in a strange burst of reconciliation with the military insurgents: "I will never consent to confusing them with professional vagabonds. The unfortunate, with no reputation, were removed from here by the government; the responsible individuals underwent normal legal procedures" (Domingues, 31 jul. 1905). So it was a matter of reputation, of belonging to different strata of the population, which required differential treatment from the state.

The discussion involved two additional members, Moreira da Silva and Brício Filho, who disagreed with the demophobic distinctions of Domingues and Passos Miranda. Moreira da Silva (*Anais...*, 31 jul. 1905) understood that the government had to submit to Congress a list of the people detained and exiled, regardless of their quality: "respect for human individuality

is always due, wherever it might be found." It did not accept "the distinction between the powerful and the weak, nor the difference between citizens of this or that nationality." Moreira da Silva argued that the government should arrange for the return of the exiles:

Mr. Moreira da Silva – Whoever ordered them exiled should bring them back, and present them to the courts.

Mr. Luís Domingues – It is the government who should bring them back?

Mr. Barbosa Lima – Naturally.

Mr. Luís Domingues – I do not see this doctrine in the Constitution.

Mr. Barbosa Lima – What I didn't find was this, sending them to Acre, as employees of rubber plantations. I did not see in the Constitution this turning of the people into serfs.

Mr. Luís Domingues – Name one law.

Mr. Moreira da Silva – Your Excellency knows that during the Empire there was one which allowed the government to send the individual away from the place where the offense was committed, but after completion of the offense it was obliged to send him back to face the courts. So bringing someone who has been banished back to stand trial is nothing new.

Mr. Luís Domingues – We created the Republic not to imitate, but to improve.

Mr. Brício Filho – And we made it worse.

Mr. Luís Domingues – Can Your Excellency quote me the opinion of some American constitutionalist to support that?

Mr. Moreira da Silva – Just this Brazilian law, which is much more rigorous, because it is a criminal law, because it addresses sentencing, while this is a temporary government measure (Anais..., 31 jul. 1905).

Although the conservative interpretation of republican institutions was challenged by the opposition, the opposition became insignificant. Influenced by government policy, the Chamber of Representatives was indifferent to the fate of those exiled, and as described by Barbosa Lima (31 jul. 1905), they were "absolutely willing and predisposed to approve these and all acts performed by the President of the Republic." The Jacobin deputy was right: on August 4th, the Chamber approved the actions taken by the government during the state of siege.

Demophobia also marked the debate in the Federal Senate, an institution representing, par excellence, the federative principle and the state oligarchies. In his opinion upon approving the acts of the government, Mato Grosso Senator Antônio Azeredo (30 abr. 1905) recorded that banishment to Acre "has not led to reparation, but rather applause, due to the conviction that only known troublemakers and common thugs were sent to that territory." According to Ramiro Barcelos, from Rio Grande do Sul (1<sup>o</sup> set. 1905), the exiles did not deserve mercy: they were "thugs," "anarchists," "disturbers of public order", and "troublemakers" who "upset all the work, the whole life of a big city, breaking street lamps, threatening the entire world" and "in the end producing all kinds of disorder to tire the police." The repressive measures taken by the government should have been stronger, "such a state of disorder, of anarchy, is shameful for the country, shameful for the government, shameful for the institutions and for the civilization of Brazil." Rather than a state of siege, a war should have been declared to prevent the filing of habeas corpus and make the rioters feel the "weight of the law." To

Senator Coelho e Campos (4 set. 1905), from Sergipe, criticizing the government for the lack of a list of names of the exiles was mere “sentimentality.” It seemed to him that the banishment was the best outcome of the declaration of a state of siege for two reasons. First, because the city contained “fewer unruly people,” and second because the outcast had a chance, in Acre, “to change their habits and rehabilitate themselves.” The commentary was visibly ironic:

I want to believe that many of these new residents of Acre will adapt their instincts and habits away from the blighted environment in which they lived, without stimuli for addiction and the not insignificant prospect that through work on those vast rubber plantations, they will obtain resources to establish and support a family and their consequent or probable rehabilitation. Who knows if these descendants of the rehabilitated will not be our successors in these chairs, representing the future state of Acre? (Campos, 4 set. 1905).

During the debate, only the senator for the Federal District, Barata Ribeiro (2 set. 1905), a historical Republican and a Jacobin like Barbosa Lima, disagreed with the demophobic situationism by claiming that every individual who protested against the government was considered “disorderly, disturbing the order, or revolutionary” due to situationism. And, after nostalgic praise of the liberalism of the Empire, he compared the repression of the Vaccine Revolt with the approach implemented by the monarchy at the time of the *Vintém* Revolt. On both occasions, said Barata Ribeiro, the population reacted to the government with barricades, breaking street lamps, removing street paving stones and upturning trolleys, attacking the police with stones, broken glass etc. “However,” the senator noted, “this popular uprising of greater intensity and gravity did not provoke, on the part of the imperial government, a single measure of repression, but rather inspired it and demonstrated its allegiance and respect for public opinion,” or in other words the cabinet change and suspension of the measure. And he exclaimed: “What would we have said back then, what would we republicans have said in those days, if the government had exiled to Acre the hundreds of people detained because of the riots? But that’s old history, it is the history of the period that we republicans call national decay, and whose weaknesses and pusillanimity led to the advent of the Republic” (Ribeiro, 2 set. 1905).

As was easy to predict, the protest of the Rio de Janeiro senator also fell on deaf ears. Of the 32 senators present, 31 voted to approve the state of siege. Only Barata voted against it.

### **The “barbarian invasion”: oligarchic crises and the progressive emergence of the electorate (1909-1930)**

It would take a two-volume book to describe in detail all of the significant episodes of demophobia involving politicians of the First Republic. For the purposes of this article, I will mention only three. They are not regime crises, which occurred when disagreements between the state oligarchies made it impossible to make a unanimous nomination for president. On these occasions, the opposition candidate not only embarked on a campaign criticizing the establishment, but also sought to mobilize domestic constituencies, visiting many states and holding rallies in state capitals. In all cases, the initiative of opposition candidates was rejected as demagogic and anarchic by the status quo of the Republic. The first presidential



campaign that featured an opposition candidate who, though he had no real chance of winning, mobilized the working classes, was that in which Rui Barbosa faced situationist Marshal Hermes da Fonseca (1909-1910). Defeated, Rui led the opposition to the government for the next four years. His fellow civilian party, then liberal party members were attacked by conservatives throughout the period as "professional troublemakers" who wanted to "undermine and destroy the constitutional order in order to, on the ruins of the motherland, on the remains of republican institutions, assail the positions and the government" (Anais..., 7 maio 1914). Popular demonstrations of liberal opposition were never considered representative of "public opinion," they were merely "a cabal of scallywag." The conservative representative Victor Silveira (24 dez. 1914) was more explicit: "what is happening in the streets does not represent the people, nor the nation, nor the country, nor the Republic." This was the opinion of the head of the Conservative Republican Party itself, Senator Pinheiro Machado. For this admirer of Le Bon, republican institutions should never be at the mercy "of the demagogic versatility of popular opinion" (Machado, 20 jan. 1915).

In 1921-1922, it was the former president Nilo Peçanha, a popular Rio grandee, who ran against the candidacy of the governor of Minas Gerais, the ultraconservative Artur Bernardes, in the campaign he called the Republican Reaction. Replicating the campaigns of Rui Barbosa in 1909 and 1919, Nilo traveled to several states to mobilize the electorate, attacking the oligarchic character of the regime and preaching the advent of true democracy, of which the Republic was a simulacrum. The campaign shook the foundations of the regime, served as a detonator for the lieutenant movement and created a true anti-popular hysteria in the political class. Arriving in mid-October in Rio de Janeiro, Artur Bernardes and his entourage were greeted with "colossal jeers" by the residents along Avenida Rio Branco (Gabaglia, 1951, p.491). The episode was perceived by politicians to be extremely serious, forcefully reminding them of the irrational crowds incensed by the subversive press and manipulated by demagogues. Expressing the sentiments of the offended candidate, an admirer of Bernardes described the incident as "a lamentable manifestation of displeasure, by the wandering mob, poisoned by licentious language of the press" (Magalhães, 1973, p.113). The daughter of President Epitácio Pessoa described the incident in a more characteristically demophobic way: the jeering had been the work of "a crazy crowd," of "thugs coming from Niterói, and the staff of opposition newspapers... and representatives of the armed forces" (Gabaglia, 1951, p.491). Again came the image of the crowd made crazy by adventurous demagogues, in the pay of the opposition. The jeers, the boos, were not yet seen to legitimately represent the displeasure of the population, nor were they considered to be part of a citizen's right to express himself on the streets. It was, quite simply, "a manifestation of true savagery" (p.491). In 1922, the political class still considered jeering by the people in the same light as the slave-holding conservatives of the Empire and as the founders of the republican regime: as a threatening "explosion of destructive forces" that threatened authority and the social hierarchy (Anais..., 9 jul. 1894).

Therefore, in 1922 the Republican political class again broadly feared the popular movements of Rio de Janeiro, a fear that had been muffled with the redevelopment of the capital twenty years before. It was then that, dealing with the hostility of the population, facing the lieutenant threat and governing virtually all of his term under a state of siege,

surrounding the Catete Palace with barbed wire, relentlessly persecuting opponents and rewriting the Constitution to make it more authoritative, emasculating the Judiciary of the right to grant habeas corpus, the head of the political class, namely Artur Bernardes, took up the mantra of transferring the capital when he became president of the republic. However, in the messages sent to Congress, requesting the transfer, there was a novelty in the argument, reinforcing the demophobic approach: the need to develop the Brazilian regions inland.

The national government should carry out its activities in a center from which it can accurately and calmly take the measure of national feeling, without having its view altered by an improper position of observation, without its reflection disturbed by the tumult of a large metropolitan city, and where the personal security of the representatives of public authority can be ensured, away from external and internal attacks. Inland, the capital would be a bond connecting the various states, and might radiate federal transport and communication routes and other elements of progress in all directions; and in the event of a national defense emergency, government actions would be more secure and efficient (Brasil, 1978, p.529).

As can be gleaned from the transcribed passage, the new element in the developmentalist argument was closely linked to the oligarchical-federative concept of the nation. The developmentalist argument served to disguise and, therefore, favor the demophobic order embedded in the defense of transferring the capital. Bernardes again resorted to the old tactic of valuing an 'authentic' Brazilian people, which referred to a provincial Tocquevillean imaginary and orderly population, identified with the states of the federation, rather than the threatening and subversive image of a crowd of people politically mobilized by demagoguery in an artificial and stagnated metropolitan capital. The development of the *Sertão* [an arid region in the northeast] would be favorable to the 'nation,' understood as an oligarchic federation, to the detriment of the 'masses' in the coastal capital, which was merely an eccentric 'partisan pocket' in the country. In other words, the argument to develop the regions inland was only an update of the merely federative concept of democracy, established along with the oligarchic republic. The last episode of demophobic expression by the political class of the First Republic worthy of note occurred precisely in 1930, at the time of its overthrow by the revolution. Among the multitude of manifestations, the most characteristic was perhaps that of Humberto de Campos, a fiction writer and congressman from the state of Maranhão who was removed from his position by the revolution, who immediately began passionately reading the work that served as the model for all European demophobic literature: *The origins of contemporary France*, by Hippolyte Taine, who revealed, "the truths of the past, and the weaknesses and miseries of the present" (Campos, 1954, p.93). After lamenting that the new mayor had appointed "suburban politicians" for technical positions in the municipality, Humberto de Campos worried about the fact that thousands of revolutionary soldiers from all over the country were being quartered in the beautiful public buildings in the Parisian style, built in Cinelândia during the Passos reform by the deposed politicians, due to lack of space. He was particularly upset to see the Monroe Palace, seat of the Senate and a symbol of the oligarchical federation, occupied by 'the masses' of soldiers extracted from the worst social conditions. It was the last demophobic response of the aristocratic regime:

Even today, on the road to the Academy, I passed by the Senate. And my heart broke. The most elegant building, which was our pride at the São Luís exposition, the home that [former Senate President] Antônio Azeredo filled with expensive carpets and tasteful furniture, was vomiting out its doors, and a whirlwind of men poured down its marble staircase, almost all in shirtsleeves, dozens of whom slept on tarps spread out on the lawn of the building's garden. In the landscaped park, pans bubbled on makeshift stoves. The Senate is, today, a simple barracks for revolutionary soldiers! ... They are the first barbarians. Will the Huns come next? (Campos, 1954, p.102).

These words would be prophetic. The 'Huns' came and stayed.

### **Final considerations: Brasília**

The idea of transferring the capital disappeared during the Vargas Era, for the obvious reason that a regime based on popular, unitary support, although promoting national development and the 'march to the West,' could not transfer the capital to the middle of nowhere. After the New State ended, however, it was former President Artur Bernardes who, elected constituent representative, amended the bill drawn up by the constitutional subcommittee to include the transfer of the federal capital, which finally took shape in Section 4 of the transitional provisions of the 1946 Constitution (Duarte, 1947, p.452). The relocation of the capital finally occurred a decade and a half later under another president from the state of Minas Gerais, Juscelino Kubitschek. To justify the measure, Kubitschek employed arguments similar to those of Bernardes, with respect to the ills represented by the pressure of the people on the federal government based in Rio de Janeiro.

Three of the most important books in the late 1950s that advocated the transfer, published with the approval of the President and Israel Pinheiro, who wrote the prefaces, serve as illustrations. The first one was written by the young diplomat José Osvaldo Meira Penna (1958, p.308), who employed racist arguments: "a large city, with its influences, its passions, the exaggerations of a sometimes flippant press and the constant dangers that can arise from a mixed blood, highly emotional people, in an irritating greenhouse environment, does not seem to be the most suitable seat for an efficient administration, able to act on a national level." The oligarchical federative argument came next: "Brazil will not be a true federal state until we transfer the capital from the monstrous metropolis to a specialized entity whose purpose is to tend to the entire nation. Regional democracy is an essential feature of the federal system. Federalism is decentralization." Another book, from Peixoto da Silveira (1957, p.27), from the state of Goiás, followed the same path: "life in Rio tends to be increasingly difficult and consequently a focal point for the outbreak of social unrest... The supreme government of the country must work in a more peaceful environment." Israel Pinheiro also reiterated Bernardes' strategy to disqualify the people of the nation's largest metropolis in order to embrace an abstract concept of a federal nation. The people in Rio were not the 'real' Brazilian people, who were thoughtful and provincial: they were the egotistical 'masses':

A city like Rio, due to its size and its early industrialization, with the consequent concentration of the masses, forces the federal government, by the simple fact of being headquartered there, to be constantly concerned with matters of a purely local nature,

diverting its attention, to the detriment of national problems. The federal government is asphyxiated under the wave of private, though legitimate, interests, divorced by force from those Brazilians who, inland, also silently build the country's wealth, often without any governmental support. The serious social upheavals continued to ferment, principally in large cities, inflated by elements of indiscipline and disorder, which are then ideal conditions for subversion (quoted in Kubitschek, 1962, p.61-62).

Finally, Kubitschek himself declared in 1962 that the removal of pressure from the masses in Rio de Janeiro on the decisions of Congress had been the first beneficial result of transferring the capital. If it were still based in Rio, labor demagoguery would probably have mobilized the 'Rio de Janeiro masses' to prevent the adoption by Congress of the parliamentary solution to the resignation of Jânio Quadros, who emasculated the government of João Goulart:

Brazilian democracy would have had a hard time resisting a test like the one in the second half of 1961 if the seat of the federal government had continued in Rio de Janeiro. Brasília was the major factor in maintaining the climate of order and trust that allowed Congress to meet with the necessary freedom of movement and deliberate without agitations and mass pressure. Brasília would have been justified if only for this reason (Kubitschek, 1962, p.65).

From this angle, beyond the ex post mythology created by Kubitschek around the transfer of the capital, Brasília's construction looks like a posthumous victory of the oligarchical federal national concept of the First Republic, whose demophobia resisted valiantly during the democratic, although elitist regime of 1946.<sup>3</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A known expression of Barbosa's disillusionment with the Republic is his famous "Trivialities Speech," given to the Senate in 1914, in which he commended Dom Pedro II: "Seeing so many trivialities triumph, seeing dishonor prosper, seeing injustice grow, seeing powers expand in evil hands, man begins to question his virtue, laugh at honor, and be ashamed of being honest... This was the work of the Republic in recent years. In the other regime, the man with the stain on his name was lost forever – he could no longer have a political career. There was a vigilant sentinel, whose severity all feared, and, alight up high, guarded the surrounding area like a lighthouse that never burned out, diligently protecting general honor, justice, and morality. In the Republic, this is not so. In the Republic, all of the groups have maintained themselves distant from the parties, from the action of the government, and from the practices of institutions. Today we are content with formulas and appearances, because these dissipate slowly, and almost nothing remains. We have only names, only reminiscences, only the ghosts of things that existed, of things we wished to resurrect, but that in reality are completely gone" (Barbosa, 1974, p.86-87). In this and other citations from texts published in other languages, a free translation is provided.

<sup>2</sup> I owe this reminder of the Tocquevillean description of the American people to professor Robert Wegner, during the first public presentation of this text as a talk in June, 2011, as part of the Casa de Oswaldo Cruz's graduate program in the History of the Sciences and of Health (Fundação Oswaldo Cruz).

<sup>3</sup> In the symbolic year of the height of the 'golden years' of the Juscelino Kubitschek government, one of the principal periodicals of the capital of the Republic, the newspaper *O Globo* (11 abr. 1958), published, with no critical intention, a trivial declaration of the principal delegate of the Bureau of Customs and Amusements, Péricles Machado de Castro, illustrative of the demophobia of the 'elitist democracy': "The recent attacks and deaths arise from a very serious fact: there are thousands of unemployed people, lazy people who do not want to work honestly and – it is sad to confess – are almost all Brazilians, individuals who invade properties and build on them, who disobey municipal ordinances, who build shacks using stolen material and live in them without paying anything, and shantytowns proliferate, to the shame of the beautiful city. The slums are incubators of tramps of all types: boys who, taught by older men, steal food at street fairs

and ladies purses; adolescents who, together with adults who are already streetwise, attack and kill people in broad daylight, deal with contraband, smoke pot, and prostitute young girls; women who are always unemployed and that, when they find employment, steal from their employer what they can in order to pass their misgotten gains to their exploiters who await them in the slums, with the children who will, later, grow up to also become delinquents and remain there or spread to other locations."

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