

# *The making of political and cultural hegemony in the context of transition: narratives on democracy and socialism in *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, *Cuadernos de Marcha* (second period) and *Controversia* (1979–1985)<sup>1</sup>*

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## Abstract

In Latin America of the 1960s, the “historical necessity” of a revolutionary rupture was imposed in such a way that, at times, even conservative parties found themselves compelled to propose a “revolution in liberty”. The assaults of the counterrevolution would provoke inversions: if, in the 1960s, the “revolution” was the hegemonic discourse, in the 1980s, the dominant motto was “democracy”. Being an ineluctable topic of debates in Latin-American intellectual circles and party organizations during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the “issue of democracy” belongs to the semantic field of an essential category for the study of political and cultural journals published in Latin America during that period, that is to say, democracy *per se*. In this context of transition, a significant fraction of the battle of ideas, in Latin America and other regions of the West, was centered on the notion of democracy, broadly claimed by almost all the ideological trends. Taking into account this context of transition, I propose to analyze, within the *corpus* of texts published in three political and cultural Latin American journals, the frictions and nexus between two major narratives of modernity: democracy and socialism.

**Keywords:** democracy; socialism; political and cultural journals.

*Construção de hegemonia político-cultural no contexto da transição: narrativas sobre democracia e socialismo em Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira, Cuadernos de Marcha (segunda época) e Controversia (1979–1985)*

## Resumo

Na América Latina dos anos 1960, a “necessidade histórica” de uma ruptura revolucionária impôs-se de tal forma que, em alguns momentos, até mesmo partidos conservadores viram-se compelidos a propor uma “revolução em liberdade”. As investidas da contrarrevolução iriam provocar inversões: se, nos anos 1960, a “revolução” foi o discurso hegemônico, nos anos 1980, o mote dominante foi a “democracia”. Veio incontornável dos debates travados nos círculos intelectuais e nas organizações partidárias da América Latina durante o fim dos anos 1970 e no transcurso dos anos 1980, a “questão democrática” pertence ao campo semântico de uma categoria imprescindível para o estudo das revistas político-culturais latino-americanas desse período, qual seja, a democracia. Nesse contexto de transição, parte significativa da batalha das ideias, na América Latina e em outras regiões do Ocidente, estava centralizada na noção de democracia, reclamada por quase todas as vertentes ideológicas. Tendo em conta esse contexto de transição, proponho-me a analisar, no *corpus* de textos de três publicações político-culturais latino-americanas, a tensão e os nexos entre dois grandes relatos da modernidade: democracia e socialismo.

**Palavras-chave:** democracia; socialismo; periodismo político-cultural.

*Construcción de hegemonía político-cultural en el contexto de transición: relatos acerca de la democracia y del socialismo en Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira, Cuadernos de Marcha (segunda época) y Controversia (1979–1985)*

## Resumen

En Latinoamérica de la década de 1960, la “necesidad histórica” de una ruptura revolucionaria fue imposta de un modo que, en algunos momentos, hasta partidos conservadores se encontraron compelidos a proponer una “revolución en libertad”. Clave esencial de los debates en los círculos intelectuales y en las organizaciones partidarias de América Latina en el fin de la década del 70 y en el transcurso de los 80, la “cuestión democrática” pertenece al campo semántico de una categoría de vital importancia para el estudio de las revistas político-culturales de América Latina en ese período, es decir, la democracia. Se llegó de modo incontenible de las discusiones enfocadas en los círculos intelectuales y en las organizaciones partidarias de Latinoamérica a los fines de los años 1970, y durante los años 1980, la “cuestión democrática” perteneció al campo semántico de una categoría imprescindible al estudio de los periódicos político-culturales latinoamericanos de esa época, cualquiera que sea la democracia. Siguiendo ese sentido de transición, una parte significativa de la batalla de ideas, en Latinoamérica y en otras regiones del Occidente, fue centralizada en el concepto de democracia, la cual es reclamada por casi todas las vertientes ideológicas. Llevando en cuenta eso contexto de transición, me propongo a analizar, en el *corpus* de los textos de tres publicaciones político-culturales latinoamericanas, la tensión y los nexos entre dos grandes reportos de la modernidad: democracia y socialismo.

**Palabras clave:** democracia; socialismo; periodismo político-cultural.

*La construction de l'hégémonie politique et culturelle dans le contexte de la transition: Narratives sur la démocratie et le socialisme dans Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira, Cuadernos de Marcha (seconde époque) et Controversia (1979–1985)*

## Résumé

Dans l'Amérique Latine des années 1960, la “nécessité historique” d'une rupture révolutionnaire s'est imposée d'une telle manière qu'avec le temps, même les parties conservateurs se sont trouvés obligés de proposer une révolution dans la liberté. Les assauts de la contre révolution en Amérique Latine provoquèrent des inversions: si, dans les années 1960, la “révolution” était le discours hégémonique, dans les années 1980, le slogan dominant était démocratie. En étant un sujet inéluctable des débats dans les cercles intellectuels d'Amérique Latine et les organisations politiques à la fin des années 1970 et tout au long des années 1980, la question de la démocratie appartient au champ sémantique d'une catégorie essentielle pour l'étude de journaux politiques et culturels publiés en Amérique Latine durant cette période, c'est-à-dire, la démocratie en soi. Dans ce contexte de transition, une part significative de la bataille des idées en Amérique Latine et d'autres régions occidentales était centrée sur la notion de démocratie, largement revendiquée par presque tous les courants idéologiques. En prenant en compte ce contexte, je propose d'analyser, à l'intérieur d'un corpus de textes dans trois journaux politiques et culturelles d'Amérique Latine, les frictions et les rapports entre deux grands récits de la modernité: la démocratie et le socialisme.

**Mots-clés:** démocratie; socialisme; revues politiques et culturelles.

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In Latin America from the 1960s, such magnitude was reached by the “historical necessity” for a revolutionary rupture, encouraged by the explosive combination of economic marasmus, traditional social structure, and strong social mobilization that, in Chile, even a central party like the Christian Democracy was compelled to propose a “revolution in freedom.”<sup>2</sup> The devastating attempts of the counterrevolution would cause formidable inversions: “If revolution articulates the Latin-American discussion in the 1960s, in the 1980s the core theme is democracy. As in the previous period, the political mobilization is strongly encouraged by the intellectual debate (see the original)”<sup>3</sup> There lies the great turn in the critical Latin American reasoning formed in the lines of Marxism; such a turn that went from the “praise of revolution” to the “praise of democracy”<sup>4</sup>

Being an ineluctable topic for debate inside the intellectual circuits and parties of Latin America in the late 1970s, and during the 1980s, the time of transition, democracy is an essential category for the analysis of cultural Latin American journals of that period. In this context of ruptures and heated political-ideological debates, a significant part of the battle of ideas, in Latin America and other regions of the West, was focused on the notion of democracy, claimed by almost all ideological trends, both conservative and progressionist.

According to the British sociologist Paul Hirst (1947–2003), representative democracy in the 1980s, in Great Britain and all other Western countries, became the “dominant idiom in political discourse”<sup>5</sup> a tool of irreplaceable legitimation: “Everyone is a democrat irrespective of their other political views; and anyone with the slightest concern for political success carefully avoids criticising democracy for fear of the political wilderness”<sup>6</sup> In Latin America, at

<sup>2</sup>Norbert Lechner, “De la revolución a la democracia”, In: \_\_\_\_\_, *Los patios interiores de la democracia, subjetividad y política*, Santiago de Chile, FLACSO, 1988, p. 23. Whereas the developmentalist modernization was facing obstacles all over Latin America, worsening social problems, there were fast and radical changes conducted by the Cuban Revolution, showing the impracticability of the current model of capitalist development and the consequent historical necessity for revolutionary rupture in the subcontinent. Bukharin, an influent Marxist theorist and Soviet politician, condemned to death and executed in 1938 in the Processes of Moscow, in his writings about historical materialism, explained the category “historical necessity” as follows: “When we consider that a specific phenomenon was a *historical necessity*, what we intend to say is that this phenomenon must necessarily happen, be it good or bad” (see the original). Nikolai Bukharin, *Historical materialism. A system of Sociology*. Abingdon, Routledge, 2011, p. 47. Even though the modern meaning of revolution is contrary to that which, in the scope of astronomy, mainly meant a cyclical movement, another meaning deriving from the astronomic term was preserved in the current use of the idea of revolution, that is, the meaning of irresistibility, being precisely diffused in the Western thought from the end of the 18th century, as observed by Hannah Arendt: “The notion of an irresistible movement, which, in the 19th century, was ready to conceptually translate the idea about the historical need, is part of French Revolution from the first to the last page”. Hannah Arendt, *Sobre la revolución*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, p. 64. In general, the words and expressions between quotation marks along this text, and written immediately before notes, derive from paraphrases, appearing the same way originally. The reader can find the development of these words in the source.

<sup>3</sup>Norbert Lechner, *op cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>Raul Burgos, *Os gramscianos argentinos*. Cultura e política na experiência de *Pasado y Presente*, Tese de doutorado, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas, 1999.

<sup>5</sup>Paul Hirst, “Representative democracy and its limits”, *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 59, n. 2, 1988, p. 190.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibidem*. Hostilized by conservative and liberal social scientists and by Marxists, committed to the formulation of a conceptual armor for the theory of associativist democracy, Hirst, when representative democracy was at the top, dared to formulate a critic to the “dominant idiom”: “To challenge the dominant idiom appears to be political suicide, but such a challenge needs to be mounted in the name of democracy”. *Ibidem*.

least expressively, when dictatorships began to fade, only a few would dare to accept any designation other than a convict democrat.

The apparent unanimity around the concept of democracy, however, was not free of doubt. At that time, the definition of this idea was partly an index of the conflict for political and cultural hegemony, and even inside the strata related to the left-wing thinking in Latin America the definition of the idea of democracy caused dissension, with repercussions on political-cultural journals. Be it as it may, because of the feeling of defeat resulting from the ferocious repression from “contestatory” movements,<sup>7</sup> and the consequent moderation of revolutionary projects conducted by the armed urban and rural guerrilla, which had been spreading in Latin America, in the political thinking of Latin-American Left parties the discussions triggered by the concern with development and with the reformulation of theoretical concepts capable of supporting a new nucleating political culture became more important:

La última década, particularmente terrible para la América Latina por el saldo de derrotas populares que ella envuelve en tantos países, ha permitido despertar el interés y la pasión de la discusión de la democracia en diversas fuerzas políticas de la región y ello es una de las razones que explican el crecimiento de la socialdemocracia en América Latina.<sup>8</sup>

For the Left side, the process led to ideological inflections: “The experience of authoritarianism had a deep impact on the view of the left-wing about democracy.”<sup>9</sup> It was the democratic project that attracted many intellectuals, who were confronted by the depletion of the revolutionary commitment and by the disappointment caused by the abuse called real socialism. Political-cultural journalism was obviously not far from the political and social processes that marked this moment of transition. As suggested by Denise Rollemberg: “The matter of revolution, which had been on the imagination of the left-wing and stood out in the press pages, will little by little make room to the great subject of the late 1970s: democracy.”<sup>10</sup> Representatives of theoretical and ideological groups, as well as instruments of political and cultural work, the three publications analyzed in this article were distributed in this period, when democracy became an inevitable subject.

With its editorial board composed of almost fifty intellectuals coming from several left-wing parties and different sectors of society, such as Carlos Nelson

<sup>7</sup>Oscar Terán, *Nuestros años sesentas*. La formación de la nueva izquierda argentina (1956-1966), 3. ed., Buenos Aires, Ediciones el Cielo por Asalto, 1993, p. 11. Together with the words “critics” and “denouncers”, Terán uses the expression “contestatory” to refer to a generation of Argentinian intellectuals, in which he does not include himself, which articulated, in the 1960s, theoretical renovation and the desire of continuous political action dynamized by ideological passions. Aside from the differences, this intellectual attitude, based on Gramsci’s thought and on Sartre’s notion of “commitment”, defined a wide environment of ideas, with repercussions on the intellectual group that formulated the political-cultural projects of the three publications analyzed here.

<sup>8</sup>José R. Eliashev, “Una nueva ecuación para América Latina”, *Controversia*. Para el exámen de la realidad Argentina, año II, n. 9-10, 1980, p. 41. In English: The last decade, which was particularly terrible for Latin America because of the popular defeats in so many countries, led to the interest and passion for the discussion about democracy among different political forces of the region, and this is one of the reasons that explain the growth of social democracy in Latin America.

<sup>9</sup>Gerardo Caetano; Adolfo Garcé, “Ideas, política y nación en el siglo XX”, In: Oscar Téran (coord.), *Ideas en el siglo*. Intelectuales y cultura en el siglo XX latinoamericano, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI Editores, 2004, p. 354.

<sup>10</sup>Denise Rollemberg, *Exilios, entre raíces e radares*, Rio de Janeiro, Record, 1999, p. 200.

Coutinho, Leandro Konder, Ferreira Gullar and Arthur Giannotti, and directed by Ênio Silveira (1925–1996), the publication *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira* (1978–1980) maintained and increased the line of intellectual conduct of its successful predecessor, *Revista Civilização Brasileira* (1965–1968). The political-cultural project of the 1970s collection, which had 29 issues, established an identity that was strongly defined by the populist nationalism.

*Cuadernos de Marcha*, in its second period (1979–1985), was published in Mexico and was directed by Carlos Quijano. It continued the political-cultural project that had begun in 1939, in Montevideo, in the weekly *Marcha*, and was crushed in 1974 by the Uruguayan dictatorship, a project equally irradiated in the first period of *Cuadernos de Marcha* (1967–1974). The editorial board consisted of Teresa De Barbieri, Samuel Lichtensztein, Carlos Martínez Moreno, Gustavo Melazzi, Nelson Minello, José Manuel Quijano, Ruben Svirsky, Raúl Trajtenberg, and Guillermo Waksman. The publication had 27 issues and was launched in the exile of its director and members not as an *ex nihilo* creation. Instead of establishing a field of unprecedented reflection, it is historically known as a previously existing publication. The intention was to maintain an established project, addressing the analysis of national (i.e., Uruguayans) and Latin American problems from the point of view of socialism, anti-imperialism, and Latin-Americanism.

Founded in 1979 by Jorge Tula, with 13 issues until 1981, *Controversia* was a result of a series of reflections that started inside Marxist and socialist circles, as well as those of left-Peronism factions coming from the community of Argentinian exiles in Mexico, whose relations with the armed struggle, in a recent past, had been close. In its editorial board there were, among others, Nicolás Casullo, Héctor Schmucler, Oscar Terán, José Aricó, and Juan Carlos Portantiero. Its name refers to the last word on the political-cultural project, expressed by the attempt to publish critical thoughts on the defeat of political projects that its members were committed to, as well as on Marxism, that defended democracy, Argentinian populism, socialism in countries from the Warsaw Pact, and so on.<sup>11</sup>

Since the 1960s, José María Aricó (1931–1991), in the publication *Pasado y Presente*, and later, in *Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente*, already approached the uncertain relationships between democracy and socialism. Further ahead, in the early 1980s, Aricó himself, who was leaning toward defending the critical power

<sup>11</sup>Because of the size of the article, in the analyzed journals, we selected texts that condensate the arguments in this article. Texts from five authors stood out: José Aricó and Juan Carlos Portantiero, for having been important in the Argentinian “new left wing” and emblematic characters in the group *Pasado y Presente*, whose history includes *Controversia*, considering the separation promoted by this group in relation to the positions of the traditional left wing; Carlos Quijano, because, as suggested by Onetti, “Quijano was *Marcha*”, reason why Ángel Rama created the nickname “Carlos *Marcha*”; and the Brazilians Carlos Nelson Coutinho and Adelmo Genro Filho, for having been key characters in the polemic about democracy published in *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*. It is worth to remember that, as carried out by Pablo Rocca, from what David Bennett observed about the operation of reading a journal, because, as readers, those who analyze a journal, by (re)constructing a narrative, select and omit fragments, as it is done by the mere circumstantial reader: “It seems safe to assume that few issues of magazines are read *in toto*, fewer still from front to back cover. The reception of the magazine mimics its editorial production: reading, here, is an activity of selection and omission which produces the text as a (spatial) collage or (temporal) montage of fragments in provisional or indeterminate relations. The experience of periodical reading is an experience of discontinuity”. David Bennett, “Periodical fragments and organic culture: modernism, the *avant-garde*, and the little magazine”, *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 30, n. 4, 1989, p. 480. Pablo Rocca, “Por qué, para qué una revista (Sobre su naturaleza y su función en el campo cultural latinoamericano)”, *Hispanica*, año XXXIII, n. 99, 2004, p. 4. Therefore, even if the choice of articles for analysis is properly justified, the links produced by this selection will probably be temporary and undetermined, resulting from an operation that is usually not linear.

of Marxism, as long as Marx' line of thought was permanently dialoguing and confronting with different national realities and other traditions of social and political thought, started defending the understanding of democracy as a "universal value", as demonstrated in this piece of the interview, emblematically called "*América Latina: el destino se llama democracia*", given in 1983 to Horacio Crespo:

En esta desaparición de las fronteras fijas entre democracia radical y socialismo, el mito de la democracia, de la invención democrática, puede convertirse talvez en *el mito laico que unifique a las fuerzas sociales* en pro de su recomposición. Pienso que la conquista de la democracia como un elemento sustantivo en sí mismo, como un objetivo ideal que se agote en sí mismo debe tender a transformarse en el nudo central de la *actual reconstrucción* de la cultura de izquierda en América Latina (author's note).<sup>12</sup>

After the successive problems that affected the real socialism throughout the second half of the 20th century, such as the Khrushchev report (1956) about the crimes of Stalin, the invasion of Hungary by Soviet tanks (1956), the Prague Spring (1968), the Padilla case (1971), the revelation of Gulag's reality,<sup>13</sup> and the atrocities committed in Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge (1975-1978), the Marxist-Leninist dogmatism began to be questioned, making room to a stronger heterodox socialism, one that is more reformed and often open to the dialogue with intellectuals identified with traditions from the liberal thinking, such as Max Weber, Carlo Rosselli, Piero Gobetti and Norberto Bobbio.

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Bobbio, whose thought was spread, at least in Argentina, since the 1940s in the 20th century, was notorious for giving support not to a synthesis, but to a "commitment" between political liberalism and economic socialism. In Latin America, in the 1980s, when dictatorships were working hard to keep the confrontation with gradually more organized social movements, Bobbio had relevance.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>José María Aricó, "El destino se llama democracia", *In: Horacio Crespo (ed.), José Aricó: entrevistas (1974-1991)*, Córdoba, Ediciones del Centro de Estudios Avanzados, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 1999, p. 29. In English: With the disappearance of the fixed barriers between radical democracy and socialism, the myth of democracy, of democratic invention, can be turn into the *lay myth unifying the social forces* favoring its reconstruction. I think that the conquest of democracy as a substantive element in itself, as an ideal objective that concludes itself, must tend to become the central point of the *current reconstruction* of the left-wing culture in Latin America.

<sup>13</sup>From Russian, "ТЯЖАИ", acronym of: General Administration of Correlational Work Fields and Colonies. Having worked from 1930 to 1960, in the former Soviet Union, the *Gulag* was a concentration camp where many political dissidents were imprisoned, and many died of cold, hunger, diseases, and exhaustion.

<sup>14</sup>The importance of the reception of Bobbio's thought in Hispanic America and in Brazil was properly analyzed in: Alberto Filippi; Celso Lafer, *A presença de Bobbio: América Espanhola, Brasil, Península Ibérica, São Paulo, UNESP, 2004*. For the purposes of what is discussed in this article, it is worthy to consult the following chapters in special: "Os 'gramscianos argentinos' e a interpretação da relação bobbianas entre liberalismo e socialismo", "Bobbio na Argentina: das ditaduras ao retorno da cultura política democrática", by Alberto Filippi; and "A presença de Bobbio no Brasil", by Celso Lafer.

At the peak of the Cold War, between 1976 and 1978, when the new Italian republic went through times of strong political agitation and economic crisis, which would last until the following decade — period known as *anni di piombo*,<sup>15</sup> — Aldo Moro, former Italian prime minister, lawyer, and catholic politician who was influent in Dorothean circles, tried to rehabilitate the ideas defended by Enrico Berlinguer in 1973 in *Rinascita (Rebirth)*, a weekly journal of political strategy and theory of *Partito Comunista Italiano/Italian Communist Party (PCI)*. That is, a composition between the legatees of Palmiro Togliatti, communists, and the followers of Christian democracy. To sum up, from the point of view of the main Italian political forces of the time in a block of power located between extremities, it was about a central-left *compromesso storico* (historic compromise). In order to delegitimize the PCI, which back then had great prestige, *Operazione Gladio*, an anticommunist network of intelligence from the organization (NATO), with the objective of keeping the “strategy of tension”, supported by the United States and the Italian Mob, was involved in the murder of Aldo Moro, perpetrated by members of the Red Brigades. Norberto Bobbio, a politologist and philosopher of liberal inspiration, defended this *compromesso storico*, which could not be carried out due to the contingencies generated by the Cold War, when Italy seemed to be ready to conduct a national development project. Another Italian, Lelio Basso (1903–1978), president of *Partito Socialista Italiano di Unitá Proletaria/Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP)*, and member, in 1967, of the Russell Tribunal, wrote in the mid-1970s, in a text that was afterwards translated and published in the journal *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, what was thought about the concept of democracy defended by Bobbio:

I had the impression that the answers of the Marxists to the criticism against Marxism triggered by Bobbio were weak, and that, in general, a tendency for the alignment with the same position of the critic was prevalent, accepting his propositions on democracy, but the concept of democracy defended by Bobbio is the conception of “bourgeois democracy”, or, in other words, democracy that is merely representative and parliamentary.<sup>16</sup>

Banned in the 1960s with José María Aricó, after the publication *Pasado y Presente* was launched, from the *Partido Cominista de la Argentina/Communist Party of Argentina (PCA)* due to ideological defection — also considering some Jdanovic propension<sup>17</sup> in the PCA board as the motivator for

<sup>15</sup>This characterization was inspired in the movie by Margarethe von Trotta, *Die Bleierne Zeit* (Marianne and Juliane), belonging to the period known as the New German Cinema. Awarded with the Golden Lion, in the Venice Film Festival of 1981, the movie starred in São Paulo in 1983.

<sup>16</sup>Lelio Basso, “Democracia e socialismo na Europa ocidental”, *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, n. 24, 1980, p. 107.

<sup>17</sup>Jdanovism was named after its main artifice and instigator, Andrei Alexandrovitch Jdanov (1896–1948), and consisted of the interference of Soviet authorities on culture. Up until his death, Jdanov was dedicated to restricting all freedoms of cultural producers. Jdanovismo was systematically developed after World War II. Among its victims there were the writers Mikhail Zoshchenko (1894–1958) and Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966), and the musicians Dmitri Shostakovitch (1906–1975) and Serguei Prokofiev (1891–1953). Jdanov was considered as the cultural executioner of Stalin. The starting point of the Jdanovism were the obscene attacks, in 1946, against the literary publications *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, penalized by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), for having served as a platform for the texts by Zoshchenko and Akhmatova. In music, the censor of this limiting cultural policy was the composer Tikhon Khrennikov (1913–2007), and from that came the term “Khrennikovism”. This definition of Jdanovism can be found in: Henri Dorion; Arkadi Tcherkassov, *Le russeurinaire*: petite encyclopédie de toutes les Russies, Québec, Éditions MultiMondes, 2001, p. 119.

the elimination<sup>18</sup> —, Juan Carlos Portantiero (1934–2007), leaving the exile in Mexico and relativizing the critical judgment that part of the Latin-American Left thinking had for a long time about democracy, declared the following:

La tragedia que vivían nuestros pueblos nos obligaba a pensar de otra manera: las subestimadas “libertades burguesas” eran una valla que separaba la muerte de la vida. Confirmando esa dura verdad que la experiencia nos proporcionaba, aparecían unas sugestivas voces teóricas. Por ejemplo, la de Enrico Berlinguer quien en 1977 y en Moscú, en ocasión del 60º aniversario de la Revolución de Octubre, decía: “La democracia no es hoy apenas terreno al cual el adversario es obligado a retroceder; es el valor históricamente universal sobre el cual fundar una original sociedad socialista.” La democracia como valor universal. Detrás de la frase, pronunciada en pleno centro del hielo brezhneviano, se abrían múltiples caminos de indagación. Por lo pronto, la abstracta separación, tantas veces utilizada entre “democracia formal” y “democracia real” (la primera, obviamente, la capitalista; la segunda, socialista) perdía su rigidez [...]. El mínimo de democracia está constituido por la democracia política, sin la cual no existe como tal, por más espíritu de equidad que procure albergar.<sup>19</sup>

The reference made by Portantiero to the general-secretary of PCI, Enrico Berlinguer, was not casual. Like the diffusion of the liberal political thinking, the influence of the Italian critical thought connected with left-wing circles was strong in Argentina, and vice versa, once in Italy the Argentinian theoretical-critical production was consumed, as was true for the publication *Controversia*. When translated, read, and discussed, it became prestigious in the Italian political culture, as mentioned by Alberto Filippi.<sup>20</sup>

It may not be licit to state that this influence in Argentina was large and unrestricted, because the corresponding local parties were leaning toward defending different conceptions, sometimes irreconcilable. The severity of the abstract separation between “formal democracy” and “real democracy” that

<sup>18</sup>According to the Argentinian historian Horacio Tarcus, this type of “expurgatory” practice, at least in Argentina, was not exclusive for the orthodox communism, once the parties that were critical to orthodoxy like the Trotskyists, maoists and guevarists, were based on a central and vertical structure, highly hierarchized. As mentioned by Tarcus, they were based on “a suffocating internal culture which lives on internal disputes, but also has been historically intolerant with the dissidents”. Horacio Tarcus, “Notas para una crítica de la razón instrumental. A propósito del debate en torno a la carta de Oscar del Barco”, *Políticas de la Memoria*, n. 6-7, 2006/2007, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup>Juan Carlos Portantiero *apud* Gerardo Caetano; Adolfo Garcé, “Ideas, política y nación en el siglo XX”, *In: Oscar Téran (coord.), Ideas en el siglo. Intelectuales y cultura en el siglo XX latinoamericano*, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI Editores, 2004, p. 354-355. In English: The tragedy lived by our peoples made us think differently: the underestimated “bourgeois freedoms” were separating death from life. Confirming this hard reality provided by experience, some suggestive theoretical voices appeared. For instance, the one of Enrico Berlinguer, who, in 1997, in Moscow, for the 60th anniversary of the October revolution, said: “democracy today is not only a field where the adversary must return to; it is the historically universal value to be the base to found an original socialist society”. Democracy as a universal value. With this sentence, said in the middle of the Brezhnevian indifference, led to questions. For instance, the abstract separation, often used between “formal democracy” and “real democracy” (the former, obviously, the capitalist one; the latter, socialist) lost rigidity [...]. The minimum of democracy is constituted by political democracy, without which it does not exist, as much as it tries to defend the spirit of equity.

<sup>20</sup>Alberto Filippi, *La cultura política latinoamericana en la segunda mitad del siglo XX*. Las contribuciones de José Aricó entre marxismos teóricos y socialismos reales, Córdoba, 26 de setiembre de 2011. Conferencia proferida na abertura das Jornadas Internacionais José María Aricó e realizada no Pabellón Residencial, Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades, Ciudad Universitaria, Universidad de Córdoba, Argentina.

Portantierito wished had been overcome, remained, however, operating on perspectives from some sectors in the Argentinian intellectual left-wing: “What do we expect? Bourgeois democracy, which allows us to accomplish what we want: ideological struggle”.<sup>21</sup> For those who consciously defended Marxist-Leninist positions, such as David Tieffenberg, who was exiled in Barcelona, there was a clear distinction, at least, between two types of democracy. One of these types could not be seen as “value in itself”, as an end, but only as a mean:

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*After the successive problems that affected the real socialism throughout the second half of the 20th century, the Marxist-Leninist dogmatism began to be questioned*

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[...] claro que es un instrumento [bourgeois democracy], nunca es un fin. Lo que es un fin es la democracia social, autogestionaria. Ahí está el contenido que yo le doy a esa palabra. Pero para llegar a la democracia autogestionaria hay que andar mucho, mucho. Incluso hay que terminar con el estado, un poco lo que quieren los anarquistas, pero que el marxismo plantea con la etapa previa de la toma del poder, etapa indispensable, imprescindible.<sup>22</sup>

In Brazil, the context was similar. The “instrumental” and “tactical” perspective about democracy, for a long time, dominated the orientation of significant left-wing sectors, like the *Partido Comunista Brasileiro/Brazilian Communist Party* (PCB), but in the 1970s it started to lose its primacy. According to the analysis of Daniel Pécaut on the political evolution of Brazilian intellectuals from 1974 to the early years of the 1980s,

The most important phenomenon characterizing the political evolution of intellectuals — the Discovery of civil society and *political democracy* — is perhaps based on the crisis of references that, before, ensured its identity: nationalism, populism, the configuration of society by the state (author’s note).<sup>23</sup>

The editor Ênio Silveira and the critic Carlos Nelson Coutinho were also paying attention to the news coming from Europe, and the idea defended by Beringuer in Moscow, in the solemn, severe and, not rarely, asphyxiating scenario that used to characterize the ceremonies organized by the *Kommunistíchieskaya Pártiya*

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<sup>21</sup>Mempo Giardinelli, “David Tieffenberg: el socialismo que está solo y espera”, *Controversia*. Para el exámen de la realidad argentina, año II, n. 4, 1980, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibidem*. In English: [...] of course it is an instrument [bourgeois democracy], never an end. What is an end in the social, self-manageable democracy? This is the content of this word, to me. However, there is a long way until we get to the self-manageable democracy. It is also necessary to finish with the state, like the anarchists would want, however, what Marxism sees as the previous stage of the takeover of power, indispensable stage.

<sup>23</sup>Daniel Pécaut, *Os intelectuais e a política no Brasil*. Entre o povo e a nação, São Paulo, Ática, 1990, p. 281-282.

*Soviétskogo Soyúza/Communist Party of the Soviet Union (KPSS)*. The idea that democracy should be seen as a “historically universal value” had repercussions in Brazil by the publication of *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*:

By insisting on the formal aspects of the struggle for restoring the democratic freedoms, the editor shows sign that effectively does not serve only as a tactical tool, as registered in the documents from the Communist Party. Ênio Silveira, therefore, anticipates in Brazil the conception of democracy as a “universal value”, according to the expression used by Carlos Nelson Coutinho in an article that was originally published in the journal *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, in 1979, because of the crisis, which became more intense, of the theoretical Marxist-Leninist model.<sup>24</sup>

In Brazil, as pointed out by Daniel Pécaut, “political democracy” was “uncovered”. About the critical reaction<sup>25</sup> caused by the article written by Carlos Nelson Coutinho, like the objections from José Paulo Netto, manifested in the text “*Notas sobre a democracia e a transição socialista*”, published in the seventh edition of the publication made by professors and postgraduate students at the School of Sociology and Politics of São Paulo, *Temas de Ciências Humanas*, there was, at that time of fractions, in the political thinking of influent groups of the Brazilian intellectual left-wing, an important inflection: “For significant sectors of the Left, the defense of democracy should no longer have tactical value, but instead, acquire strategic value, a *value in itself*” (see original).<sup>26</sup>

In the years of downfall of the military regime, the publication directed by Ênio Silveira, *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, even if suffering the effects of ideological displacement of the fractions of critical thinking involved with the resistance against dictatorship, was also responsible for the diffusion of a new conception of democracy in Brazil, of a paradigm that would be prevalent in the orientation of prestigious left-wing Brazilian groups.<sup>27</sup> In an agitated social context, marked by the search for the autonomy of the State, both by the bourgeoisie and by the workers’ movement, the Brazilian Left thinking, influenced by formulations that stood out in Europe, entered a new stage of

<sup>24</sup>Luiz Renato Vieira, *Consagrados e malditos: os intelectuais e a Editora Civilização Brasileira*, Brasília, Thesaurus, 1998, p. 193.

<sup>25</sup>Besides the objections of José Paulo Netto, the text published in *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, “A democracia como valor universal”, according to Carlos Nelson Coutinho, who 20 years later remembered, in the prologue written in a book gathering his texts about the troubled relationship between democracy and socialism, was very much criticized, both from Marxist-Leninist views and from liberal thinkers. In the second note of this prologue, the following texts are mentioned: from the Marxist-Leninist side, the leaflet of Octávio Rodrigues, *Contra o revisionismo*, [s.l.], [s.n.], 1979, 55 p., and the text by Adelmo Genro Filho, Tarso Genro’s brother, called “A democracia como valor operário e popular”, also published in *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, issue 179, from November, 1979, p. 195-202; on the liberal side, the two texts by the diplomat and critic José Guilherme Merquior: “Marxismo e democracia”, republished in José Guilherme Merquior, “*As idéias e as formas*”, Rio de Janeiro, Nova Fronteira, 1981, p. 232-240.

<sup>26</sup>Caio Navarro de Toledo, “A modernidade democrática da esquerda: adeus à revolução?”, *Crítica Marxista*, n. 1, São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1994, p. 28.

<sup>27</sup>It is important to mention, as an ideological group of renovation of the Brazilian Marxist culture in the 1970s, the publication *Temas de Ciências Humanas* (1977-1979), whose editor was Raul Mateos Castell. Marcos Del Roio, “Leandro Konder e um capítulo da história dos intelectuais”, *In*: Maria Orlanda Pinassi (org.), *Leandro Konder: a revanche da dialética*, São Paulo, Boitempo, 2002, p. 131.

critical reviews: “Opposite to dictatorship, the *left wing had to incorporate*, more than ever, the matter of democracy, and also to make efforts to improve the knowledge regarding the Brazilian reality, creating and incorporating new theoretical formulations” (author’s note).<sup>28</sup>

Called “*A democracia como valor universal*”, the article by Carlos Nelson Coutinho was divided in two parts: “*Algumas questões de princípio sobre o vínculo entre socialismo e democracia política*” and “*O caso brasileiro: a renovação democrática como alternativa à via prussiana*”. After two decades, Coutinho contextualized the use of the expression of the general-secretary of the PCI in the title and observed that the intention that got him excited was to use Berlinguer’s idea “— in that moment of simultaneous struggle against dictatorship and against the ‘Marxist-Leninist’ — as a symbol of struggle”.<sup>29</sup> Heretic in the Brazilian Marxist thought, Coutinho, in a retrospective, defined the text as follows: “It was against the current, so much that it created polemic, causing dissensus and consensus”.<sup>30</sup> From the 1970s to the 1980s, shaken by the distress accumulated throughout the years, of systematic and institutionalized violence disseminated in Latin America by the terrorism of the State, and perhaps feeling the inglorious consequence that the collapse of the Soviet order would produce in the international Socialist field, Latin-American left groups tried to renovate. However, the evaluation was that, to make up for the effects of the collapse of “real socialism”, modernization was essential. On the other hand, many stopped realizing democracy only as a set of ideas, an indissociable superstructure of the bourgeois stage of monopolistic capitalism. For Coutinho, the text written in this context played:

[...] a role in the process of re-evaluation of democracy by the Brazilian left-wing; such re-evaluation enabled some of its segments to face, with reasonable calm, or at least without trauma, the terminal crisis of the so-called “real socialism”.<sup>31</sup>

The necessary identification of political democracy and its components with bourgeois values was no longer accepted; the same association that, in the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, created polemic, such as the one that separated the “orthodox” and the “revisionists” of the II International. On the contrary, the strict identification of democracy with its state form (bourgeois or proletarian) was rejected, and the instrumentalist conception of the State was

<sup>28</sup>Marcos Del Roio, “Leandro Konder e um capítulo da história dos intelectuais”, *In*: Maria Orlanda Pinassi (org.), *Leandro Konder: a revanche da dialética*, São Paulo, Boitempo, 2002, p. 130.

<sup>29</sup>Carlos Nelson Coutinho, *Democracia: um conceito em disputa*. Disponível em: <<http://www.socialismo.org.br/portal/filosofia/155-artigo/699-democracia-um-conceito-em-disputa->>. Accessed on: November 21, 2012. The text by Carlos Nelson Coutinho published in *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira* was considered by Marco Aurélio Nogueira and Marcos Del Roio (*op cit.*, p. 132) as a turning point for Brazilian Marxism. According to Nogueira (*apud* Toledo, “A modernidade democrática da esquerda: adeus à revolução?”, *Crítica Marxista*, n. 1, São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1994, p. 29, nota # 5), Coutinho’s text “triggered essential theoretical reassumptions, and, especially, helped to consolidate, among many revolutionaries, a democratic political culture and a modern view of socialism”.

<sup>30</sup>Carlos Nelson Coutinho, *Contra a corrente: ensaios sobre democracia e socialismo*, São Paulo, Cortez, 2000, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 10.

contested, both as a neutral mechanism (above classes) and as the support of a coercive apparatus without any autonomy.

According to the analysis carried out by the critic from Bahia in the publication *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, such identification came from a “narrow” point of view based on the mistaken conception of the Marxist theory about the State. It was basically coming from a distorted conception of the “tasks” that should be accomplished by Brazilian popular forces in the context of transition, made stronger by the weakened regime of exception that happened in Brazil since the 1960s, by the extenuation of the international recognition of this regime and by the increasing mobilization of social forces. Such tasks assumed importance between both conceptions regarding the convenient path for socialism: one that defended a “war of positions”; and the other, in contrast, that defended the resource to a “war of movements”. Whereas the latter supported the immediate confrontation for socialism, the former supported investments inside the State to build the political, economic, and ideological presuppositions that were able to consolidate the gradual establishment of

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*The necessary identification of political  
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Brazilian socialism. “The great lesson of military coups is that socialism cannot (and should not) be a coup.”<sup>32</sup> The conception of “war of positions” defended a unidirectional understanding of politics, once it was based on the premise that the strategic conduction of the assault to power would be concentrated, depending exclusively on an organization — party or movement —, expropriating the power of decision from popular participation. Democracy, therefore, would only have instrumental and tactical qualities, and experiences of democratization of the several spaces in which small outcomes of daily reality of popular sectors would matter less. About the idea of democracy as a mere form of government to be overcome by socialism, Aricó, ironizing something that was common in the Third International since its foundation until 1935, said: “Connected to the myth of socialism as being something to overcome democracy, the communists ended up installing an autocracy. And what was left was never socialism.”<sup>33</sup> The criticism of the intellectual from Cordoba is not restricted to communists. Aricó also talks about social-democrats: “In order not to abandon the field of democracy, the social-democrats forgot about socialism.”<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Francisco Weffort, 1984, *apud* Norbert Lechner, “De la revolución a la democracia”, *In: \_\_\_\_\_, Los patios interiores de la democracia, subjetividad y política*, Santiago de Chile, FLACSO, 1988, p. 26.

<sup>33</sup>José María Aricó, “Ni cinismo ni utopía”, *Controversia*. Para el exámen de la realidad argentina, año II, n. 9-10, 1980, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibidem*.

For Coutinho, who was clearly faithful to the first conception, the Brazilian left-wing should assimilate the new theoretical references that had been developing in the European socialist movement, especially the Italian one, a set of concepts that was being formulated in theory and, then, was called “eurocommunism”.<sup>35</sup> The transition Brazil was going through should integrate a slow “war of positions” inside the marks of the political-ideological synthesis that began to be stimulated between socialism and democracy:

[...] the value of democracy is not limited to geographic areas. Because if there is something universal about the theoretical reflections and the political practice of what is now called eurocommunism, this something is precisely the new way — a dialectically new way, not news that is metaphysically conceived as *absolute* rupture — to conceive this relationship between socialism and democracy (see the original).<sup>36</sup>

About the purpose that motivated him to write that iconoclast text, Coutinho mentioned:

In the 1979 scenario, when the paths of this transition were uncertain and Brazilian left-wing went through serious identity dilemmas [...], highlighting the ineliminable democratic dimension of socialism certainly seemed to be a priority. At that time, it was important to highlight that, *without democracy, there is no socialism* [...] (see the original).<sup>37</sup>

However, in Brazil, there were currents of thought, such as factions of the PCB, which continued to see democracy simply as an instrument to corrupt the bourgeois order, as a step prior to socialism; or, yet, recognized democracy merely as an obstacle to be trespassed by the forces of a revolutionary vanguard. Even the fiasco of the Soviet invasion in the Afghanistan (on December 25, 1979) did not dissuade these currents from the Brazilian left-wing, for whom eurocommunism could be seen only as the abandonment of socialism, or, possibly, as suggested by the Albanese communist leader, Enver Hoxha (1908–1985), as anticommunism.<sup>38</sup> By providing unconditional support to the considerations of Berlinguer in Moscow, Coutinho, who had been in exile in Bologna and then in Paris, in the text published in the journal *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, fustigates some PCB postulates:

<sup>35</sup>Marcos Del Roio presents the following definition: “The expression ‘eurocommunist’ comes from the publicistics of the Italian political debate, referring to the strategy developed by the former general-secretary of the PCI, Enrico Berlinguer, known as ‘historical compromise’. In short, it was an alliance project between communist and catholic masses to mark the defense and the strengthening of democracy. The theoretical base was offered by readings from Gramsci, who put the *democratic issue* in the center of the cultural-political action of the communists. [...] The search was for a *new strategic connection* between democracy and socialism” (author’s note): Marcos Del Roio, “Leandro Konder e um capítulo da história dos intelectuais”, In: Maria Orlanda Pinassi (org.), *Leandro Konder: a revanche da dialética*, São Paulo, Boitempo, 2002, p. 133.

<sup>36</sup>Carlos Nelson Coutinho, “A democracia como valor universal”, *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, n. 9, 1979, p. 34.

<sup>37</sup>*Idem*, *Contra a corrente: ensaios sobre democracia e socialismo*, São Paulo, Cortez, 2000, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup>Enver Hoxha, *O eurocomunismo é anticomunismo*, São Paulo, Anita Garibaldi, 1983.

[...] there are currents and personalities that reveal having a narrow, instrumental, purely tactical view of democracy; according to that view, political democracy — even if useful to the struggle of popular masses for their organization and defending their economic–corporate interests — would be no more, and *by its own nature*, than a new form of domination of the bourgeoisie, or, more concretely, in the Brazilian case, of national and international monopolies (see the original).<sup>39</sup>

Entering the debate about democracy triggered by the political transition that was being formed, and partly representing the position of the publication *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, the critic was polemic about some of the theoretical perspectives of the PCB, party he belonged to, connected to the tendency known as being renovator, by Armênio Guedes and Davi Capistrano da Costa. In 1982, because of the weakened tendency of the party orientations, the critic and translator Gramsci abandoned the PCB. Carlos Nelson Coutinho, Leandro Konder, and other intellectuals of the renovating tendency were qualified as “righties”, in a deprecating way, by the PCB groups that were completely hostile to revisionism.

In that context, the strong interventions of Carlos Nelson Coutinho were generally addressed, as the critic himself pointed out, to the understanding of currents of thought connected to the Marxism–Leninism about the relationship of democracy with the Brazilian political transition and with the transformation of socialism in Brazil:

Any attempt to impose radical changes by the action of minorities (military or not) will lead the popular forces to major political disasters [...]. The “left wing coup” — which unfortunately marked most of the thinking and political action of popular currents in Brazil — is just a mistaken response, equally “Prussian”, to the processes of “high” direction that was used by the conservative and reactionary forces in our Country. The more effective the socialization of politics, the less possible it is to invoke the justification related to processes of this nature.<sup>40</sup>

It might be interesting to reconsider the informative note that usually appeared after each summary of *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*. The flawless note registered the following: “always aiming at the dialogue and the debate about problems of contemporary humanism, [Encontros] is open to several currents of the international culture [...]” It is possible to conclude, in a metonymic way, that the publication, once being “open to several currents of the international culture”, would also do so regarding national culture. As its successful predecessor, whose members intended to “offer a tribune to all left-tendencies and be inspired by the model of *Les Temps Modernes*”,<sup>41</sup> *Encontros*

<sup>39</sup>Carlos Nelson Coutinho, “A democracia como valor universal”, *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, n. 9, 1979, p. 34.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 45.

<sup>41</sup>Daniel Pécaut, *Os intelectuais e a política no Brasil*. Entre o povo e a nação, São Paulo, Ática, 1990, p. 207.

meant to be heterodox. In fact, at least regarding the debate about democracy, this position of the publication was respected. If not, maybe there would not be room for the text of Adelmo Genro Filho, “*A democracia como valor operário e popular*”,<sup>42</sup> written, as mentioned by the author himself, as a “response to Carlos Nelson Coutinho”.

On behalf of a “humanist ontology” and “revolutionary ethics”, and based on Marxism, Adelmo Genro Filho intends to disprove of the focus of Carlos Nelson Coutinho’s text, starting by the title, “A democracia como valor universal” (in English, *Democracy as a universal value*), “perfect synthesis” of the “mistake” of this focus, suggesting, by using a visible parody, a new title and a new thesis: “A democracia como valor operário e popular”<sup>43</sup> (in English, *Democracy as a working and popular value*). For Coutinho, focusing on the “democratic matter”, it was about “conquering and, then, consolidating a regime of fundamental freedoms”,<sup>44</sup> which would gradually allow by the alliance of the interested segments of society, the deepening of an “organized mass democracy”.<sup>45</sup> As a contrast, to Adelmo Genro Filho, such propositions seemed to be overly “simplicist” and maybe even naive:

Which are the forces interested in the conquest and in the *permanence* of the “rules of the game” of liberal-bourgeoisie democracy? Absolutely none. Brazilian bourgeoisie already had its revolution. The hegemonic block bets on the opening as a tactical retreat, actually, an “opening” in its own way. [...] Workers and other popular classes are equally not interested in the *permanence* of the “rules of the game” of formal democracy. These are only aspects of the claims that were made stronger objectively by the existing economical structure (see the original).<sup>46</sup>

Refractory to any type of political coalition with sectors of the bourgeoisie, the same one that had taken PCB, in the years prior to the 1964 coup, to bet on a pact with the “progressive bourgeoisie”, Adelmo Genro Filho recognizes that nonhegemonic bourgeois sectors search, at most, for one parcel of influence on the block of power, always considering the “historical unfeasibility of an autonomous capitalist development in the scenario of international economic relations”.<sup>47</sup> As a result of that premise, the evaluation of Adelmo Genro Filho implies that the character of the Brazilian bourgeoisie, with its revolution, would basically be Bonapartist. Associating the approach of Coutinho to another focus publicized in the same journal, that is, the perspective defended by

<sup>42</sup>Adelmo Genro Filho, “A democracia como valor operário e popular”, *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, n. 17, 1979, p. 195-202.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 196.

<sup>44</sup>Carlos Nelson Coutinho, “A democracia como valor universal”, *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, n. 9, 1979, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 46.

<sup>46</sup>Adelmo Genro Filho, *op cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibidem*.

the communist Italian leader, Lucio Lombardo Radice, in the text “Socialism to be invented”,<sup>48</sup> Genro Filho suggests that these two theoretical guidelines are, in practice, reformists. Lombardo Radice was, back then, supporting eurocommunism, and in that tendency he recognized a paradigm of overcoming both the Soviet model and the social-democrat model. Both concepts have errors, according to the evaluation of Genro Filho, while renouncing the category “revolution”, replaced by the trust in the search for hegemony as a continuous process:

Reformism among Marxists is not a conscious behavior; it is a space between analysis and reality. Coutinho includes this space in his article when he does not capture the complexity of the powers in the Brazilian society. But the origin of the error is a product of a type of Marxism that is well known in Europe, especially in its horror against the category “revolution” when it comes to politics.<sup>49</sup>

Irreducible, Genro Filho cannot abandon the schemes that had been unquestionable guidelines for significant segments of the Latin-American and Brazilian socialist movement for a considerable part of the 20th century: “With rupture being indicated as essential, and revolution as an essential category of Marxism, only then it is possible to think of the possibility that the new State can keep certain *forms* of bourgeois democracy” (see the original).<sup>50</sup> With an interpretation that is close to purism, he concludes:

[...] to talk about “socialism” *with* “political democracy” is a theoretical-methodological behavior well known in the history of worker struggles, which does not make a bit of progress in the real matters of the exercise of power in socialism. On the contrary, it eliminates the problem of true and original worker and popular democracy to be built. Therefore, the perspective of the Marxist analysis places exactly the problem of “democracy as a worker and popular value”, and not “Universal Value”.<sup>51</sup>

To Aricó and other members of *Controversia*, such as Portantiero, the traditional dichotomy between political democracy, “formal”, and economic and social democracy, “real”, normally stated by left-wing intellectuals, was a vague and counterproductive separation in that context. According to Portantiero, it was better to “[...] appreciate the democratic matter as a valuable good for a society that is severely ill with authoritarianism”.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup>The text published in *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira* is an adaptation of the homonymous book published in the same year in Italy. Lucio Lombardo Radice, *Un socialismo da inventare*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1979.

<sup>49</sup>Adelmo Genro Filho, “A democracia como valor operário e popular”, *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, n. 17, 1979, p. 198-199.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 202.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup>Juan Carlos Portantiero, “Transición a la democracia en Argentina: ¿un trabajo de Sísifo?”, *Cuadernos de Marcha*, segunda época, año IV, n. 22, 1983, p. 16.

More than insisting on shortcomings and limitations of political democracy and on alleged prodigious potential of an economic and social democracy, more than overestimating the responsibilities of dominant social segments and exogenous political-economic factors, it was important to search in the actions and thought of popular movements the contradictions that could weaken the unrestricted development of democracy:

[...] discutir sobre democracia no puede significar mostrar la responsabilidad de los militares, el imperialismo, la oligarquía y la gran burguesía, por su falencia, sino indagar en la propia realidad de las clases populares, en su propia interioridad, para encontrar allí las razones de su *debilidad: mostrar su presencia en su propia fuerza*, en las organizaciones sociales en que se organiza, en las fuerzas políticas en que se expresa, en las ideologías a partir de las cuales conoce a la sociedad y a sí mismas. [...] Se trataría, como disse Tomás Borge, de buscar el monstruo en nosotros mismos, y no ya fuera de nosotros (see the original).<sup>53</sup>

A few months before the first edition of *Controversia* was released, Portantiero wrote, in the second period of *Cuadernos de Marcha*, as a temporary collaborator, in an issue that was totally dedicated to the situation in Argentina about the macro-political transformations of capitalism and their effects on Latin America:

La reorganización en curso del capitalismo mundial afecta de manera muy especial a aquellas naciones que pertenecen al tipo que Wallerstein llama “semiperiféricas”, es decir, que ocupan una posición intermedia en la división internacional del trabajo y que, en momentos de crisis de la economía mundial, resultan particularmente sensibles a la necesidad de reubicación en el sistema. Y ese es el caso de nuestras burguesías.<sup>54</sup>

The re-accommodation referenced by Portantiero, or better, the *aggiornamento* of the superstructure resulting from the economic metamorphosis produced by the emergency of a new historical cycle in the development of capitalism, required political changes. In central countries, the technological-scientific revolution had also set historical forces of transformation free. If the arena of social struggle was built inside the marks of liberal democracy and the Democratic Rule-of-Law State, it was necessary, for the field of critical Latin-American intellectuality, to think about the political positions and the theoretical

<sup>53</sup>José María Aricó, “Ni cinismo ni utopía”, *Controversia*. Para el exámen de la realidad argentina, año II, n. 9-10, 1980, p. 17. In English: [...] to discuss about democracy cannot mean to show the responsibility of the military, imperialism, oligarchy and the bourgeoisie, for its failure; however, it should question the reality of popular classes, to find reasons for its *weakness: to show its presence in its own strength*, in social organizations where it is organized, in political forces where it is expressed, in ideologies from which it is possible to know the society and itself. [...] As mentioned by Tomás Borge, it would be about looking for the monster in ourselves, and not outside.

<sup>54</sup>Juan Carlos Portantiero, “De la crisis del país popular a la reorganización del país burgués”, *Cuadernos de Marcha*, segunda época, año I, n. 2, 1979, p. 12. In English: The reorganization of global capitalism affects especially those nations that belong to the type Wallerstein calls “semi-peripheral”, that is, those that have an intermediate position in the international work division and that, at times of economic crisis in the world, are particularly sensitive to the need to handle the system. And that is the case of our bourgeoisie.

paradigms that should be defended in the new scenario, as it is possible to infer from the observations of Portantiero, from a text published in the first edition of *Controversia*:

El golpe militar de marzo de 1976 replantea ahora toda la cuestión y coloca las bases para una redefinición profunda de la problemática aquí esbozada. Por un lado, la democracia formal ya no aparece como un puro reclamo liberal. Por el otro, la hondura de la crisis y el monto de los cambios que el grupo dominante quiere efectuar en la Argentina, obligan a pensar en cuáles serían las bases para la estructuración de un proyecto democrático que sea a la vez político y social, formal y fundamental. [...] a partir de un examen de la discusión que sobre la democracia tiene lugar hoy en la Argentina habría que ver cuáles son en esta hora las condiciones sociales que pueden hacer posible a la democracia; qué “estilo de desarrollo” le es afín y cuál le es irremediamente hostil.<sup>55</sup>

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*It would be more plausible to assume that the production of new social relations could be made under democratic regimes, inside institutional marks*

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Being aware that the democratic transition would be a process conducted by the hegemonic block, by representatives of social forces that had given political support to dictatorship — a “modernization” of the society and the State, organized by the State itself —, Portantiero expressed, in these observations similar to those manifested by Carlos Quijano, in this fragment of the text that launched the second period of *Cuadernos de Marcha*: “Without a doubt, the ‘reestablishment of democracy’ is a priority. However, which democracy are we talking about? Or else, which democratic institutions are we talking about?”<sup>56</sup> Both the Argentinian sociologist and the Uruguayan economist, belonging to the group of intellectuals exiled in Mexico after the establishment of military regimes in the countries of the South, seemed to have predicted the paths of Latin-American politics during the transition that was about to come. Between fear and hope, Carlos Quijano, *enfant terrible* of Latin-American political-cultural journalism, seems to manifest, in that fragment, the perception that the context would require syntheses instead of isolated options, false bifurcations.

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<sup>55</sup>Juan Carlos Portantiero, “La democracia difícil. Proyecto democrático y movimiento popular”, *Controversia*. Para el exámen de la realidad argentina, año I, n. 1, 1979, p. 7. In English: The military coup of 1976 brings up the matter and suggests a deep redefinition of the problem. On the one hand, the formal democracy no longer appears as liberal propaganda. On the other, the crisis and the changes the dominant group wants to make in Argentina make us think about what would be the bases to structure a democratic project that is both political and social, formal and essential. [...] from the analysis of the discussion about democracy that happens today in Argentina, it would be important to know which are the social conditions that can enable democracy; which “type of development” is possible and irremediably hostile.

<sup>56</sup>Carlos Quijano, “Los caminos de la liberación”, *Cuadernos de Marcha*, segunda época, año I, n. 1, 1979, p. 3.

“Democracy, integration, interruption of the capitalism, and then, as we think and believe with anxiety and hope, the goals of our difficult and successful actions. Another America will come. Which one? We still do not know. There are no models. We must be able to build them”<sup>57</sup>

The theoretical crisis that came onto the international socialist movement and onto the Latin-American left-wing thinking, during the dissolution and military defeat of the popular field, armed guerrillas made the exclusionary antagonism of socialism *versus* barbarism, of Rosa Luxemburgo, to be replaced by the search for conciliation between both currents of ideas that had been struggling against each other for almost 200 years: democracy and socialism. In the limit of possibilities of transformation, without room for abrupt ruptures, it would be more plausible to assume that the production of new social relations could be made under democratic regimes, inside institutional marks.

Then, democratic reformism became stronger, as well as the confidence in the success of major fronts, the alliances. More than a mere result of the “fittings” and “modernization” triggered by the emerging superstructure, democracy, at that time, was a concept embedded in the core of the dilemmas Marxism was going through, as defended Portantiero:

[...] la relación entre *democracia y socialismo* está en el mismo centro de la polémica actual del marxismo contemporáneo. Más aún: quisiera decir que si el marxismo no resuelve esa dificultad de la interacción entre ambos términos estará agotado como programa de la revolución contemporánea y quedará confinado como una teoría estatista de la acumulación del capital en sociedades atrasadas (author's note).<sup>58</sup>

The strengthening of the socialist movement as a historical power of transformation, as a “mythical force”, depended on the relationship that should be stimulated, according to which is read in this piece written by José Aricó, between the ideas of “socialism” and “democracy”:

Sobre los pilares de las ideas de “socialismo” y de “democracia” (y de democracia formal, acentuaría) puede constituirse esa *síntesis* de la que requiere hoy el movimiento socialista para reconquistar la unidad entre teoría y práctica, ética y política, ser y deber ser que constituyó durante muchos años la razón de su capacidad expansiva y transformadora, el secreto de su fuerza mítica (author's note).<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup>Carlos Quijano, “Los caminos de la liberación”, *Cuadernos de Marcha*, segunda época, año I, n. 1, 1979, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup>Juan Carlos Portantiero, “De la crisis del país popular a la reorganización del país burgués”, *Cuadernos de Marcha*, segunda época, año I, n. 2, 1979, p. 12. In English: [...] the relationship between *democracy and socialism* is in the same subject of the current polemic of contemporary Marxism. However, it is important to say that if Marxism does not solve this difficulty of interaction between both words, it will be finished as a program of contemporary revolution and will remain restrained to a state theory of capital accumulation in delayed societies.

<sup>59</sup>José María Aricó, “La crisis del marxismo”, *Controversia*. Para el exámen de la realidad argentina, año I, n. 1, 1979, p. 13. In English: On the pillars of the ideas of “socialism” and “democracy” (and formal democracy, I might say), it is possible to constitute this *synthesis* required today by the socialist movement to regain the unit between theory and practice, ethics and politics, be and should be, which for many years constituted the reason of its expanding and transforming capacity, the secret to its mythical force.

The synthesis between these two ideas, therefore, whose conciliation expected to bring instruments able to offer responses to the crisis that as coming onto Marxism, onto the intellectuals and the left-wing, consisted of the main challenge for the independent Latin-American thinking throughout the period in which the three publications composing the object of this article circulated.<sup>60</sup> This synthesis occurred mainly under the influence of Gramsci's ideas, as mentioned by Rollemberg: "The concept of democracy was amplified in left-wing segments. Gramsci appears as an important reference".<sup>61</sup> To sum up, the increasing concept of democracy implied the assimilation of an understanding of politics as a permanent conflict and abandonment zone, also critical, from the point of view of Ariana Reano, of the "Old conception of the politician as a unit without inclinations, that is, the old idea of a socialist society without contradictions".<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the conquest of hegemony, once irresistibly mediated by politics, now seen as a place of continuous conflict, begins to be perceived as a permanent accomplishment.

<sup>60</sup>Among the large number of left-wing publications, such as *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira*, the second period of *Cuadernos de Marcha* and *Controversia*, which were part of the constellation of Latin-American political-cultural journals that circulated in the context of democratic transition, two of them, one Argentinian and one Brazilian, *Punto de Vista* and *Novos Estudos do CEBRAP*, were analyzed by Ana Cecilia Arias Olmos, according to whom: "In fact, in the context of transition, both publications were in accordance with the ethical and ideological line of thought of the democratic left wing to claim for the establishment of civil rights and to embrace the task of recovering the citizenship that had been destroyed by severe and long authoritarian regimes". Ana Cecilia Arias Olmos, "Práctica intelectual y discurso crítico en la transición. Punto de Vista y Novos Estudos del CEBRAP", *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 70, n. 208-209, 2004, p. 940. This constellation of journals and the networks composing it, both converging and diverging, analyzed the concept of democracy.

<sup>61</sup>Denise Rollemberg, *Exílios, entre raízes e rades*, Rio de Janeiro, Record, 1999, p. 200.

<sup>62</sup>Ariana Reano, "Controversia y La Ciudad Futura: democracia y socialismo en debate", *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, vol. 74, n. 3, 2012, p. 494.