Bicentennial of Independence

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Bicentennial of Independence 3 times 22: Ideas of a modern and sovereign Brazil circa 1822, 1922 and 2022

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In 1992, the sociologist Octavio Ianni published a book whose title contrasted with the mood of that moment: *A ideia de Brasil moderno* [The idea of a modern Brazil] sounded like a mistake due to the fact that we are one of the most unequal countries in the world; a condition lived in the midst of a political crisis that resulted in the fair dismissal of the first president of the Republic elected by direct vote in more than 30 years, when we had barely left a dictatorship that, even demoralized in its outcome, was nevertheless successful in maintaining its authoritarian legacy in several areas. However, the author's purpose was not the defense of an idea that, understandably, had everything to seem out of place, but a reflection on various attempts to elaborate this idea, in a historical perspective.

The idea of a sovereign and modern Brazil, so striking in essay-writing, academic research, and the collective imagination, designates a vast horizon of common aspirations that, without ever succeeding in its attempts at accomplishment, always come back to impose itself with renewed colors and shades, with the same promise of a prosperous future *for all*. A promise that often comes as a destiny to be fulfilled. It is true that there is also a tradition here that is conventionally called flag waving, for which Brazil is already what it should be, at least on the social plane, lacking only economic progress (Celso, 1901). But even this current – of which the last great act took place in 1992, before we see it enter the scene again today, with another costume, plot and actors – did not stop (and still does not stop) using the semantics of "modernization", so that, in the end, everything seems to revolve around knowing *what* modernization we need.

Octavio Ianni himself, a scathing critic of social and economic inequality and political conservatism, was guided, at the end of his book, by an idea similar to the one in question, which is why it would be more appropriate to speak of a family of ideas: "Brazil is not yet properly a nation", is the conclusion he arrives at, of which the figure of the "nation in process" is the corollary (Ianni,

1992, p.177, 180). In these words, there resonates a version that has become a school in Brazil and which, not by chance, corresponds to a trivial feeling: that the modern is already present among us, but with the misfortune of having to live side by side with the archaic; this one, obviously, is still there and, as if by stubbornness, resists disappearing.

Such a perspective will receive, on the part of some, a critical twist. For now, it is enough to say that that image, polarized by the future, by the effort to complete what has already been unleashed, by the "not yet", and whose semantics is an index for us, imposes itself in such a way and with such force that it shapes, from left to right, a curve from which it is difficult to find outside points. In this sense, the historical persistence of this idea is, above all, symptomatic. Its ever current production and circulation, and the fact that it is repeatedly associated with what is considered the "new", clashes with its pronounced historicity and the repeated experiences in which the promised social change ends up not being confirmed. Therefore, the condition of the person who transmits it is similar to that of the psychotherapy patient, who, as unable to recall, enacts the forgotten, which he, the patient, "repeats, naturally never realizing it". (Freud, 2010, p.199-200). Like any metaphor, this one is also useful and relevant only up to a certain point, and what is worth retaining from it is above all the directive that the work – for the analyst, therapeutic; here, critical – consists of the "reduction to the past" (Freud, 2010, p.202). Where should be located the genesis of the idea of sovereign and modern Brazil? Under what historical process should it be placed?

An idea turned into ruins: the case of Florestan Fernandes

The clash between the aspiration to sovereignty and modernity and the frustration of these ideals appears with special clarity in Florestan Fernandes' intellectual trajectory. Having dedicated himself to the problem of "provoked social change" since the 1950s, Fernandes aspired to take the step that Karl Mannheim had not taken in order to establish applied sociology as an autonomous scientific discipline and to arrive at a "theory of rational intervention in social reality" (Fernandes, 1960, p.94, 124). Without confusing sociology with intervention techniques, the objective was to qualify it from the theoretical, methodological and conceptual points of view to, *as a science*, "conduct, effectively, each of the stages of rational intervention" – which is why Fernandes proposed the "expansion" or "enlargement" of the roles traditionally assigned to the sociologist, in line with the needs of societies in transition (ibid., p.143-6).

In the early 1960s, as leader of a team made up of former students and with financial support from the National Confederation of Industry (CNI), the Government of São Paulo and the São Paulo Research Foundation (Fapesp), Fernandes stimulated a project composed of different lines of research and which crystallized the effort to carry out an applied sociology. At the opening of the project, entitled "Economia e Sociedade no Brasil: Análise Sociológica do

Subdesenvolvimento" [Economy and Society in Brazil: Sociological Analysis of Underdevelopment], we read:

> One of the main characteristics of our era consists of the great transformations that the "underdeveloped countries" are going through. In various ways and through markedly different means, these countries have awakened to *progress* and are ready to quickly and decisively overcome all the barriers that kept them in a state of economic stagnation, cultural backwardness and political dependence. Everyone yearns to erase the historical-cultural distance that separates them from the "advanced countries", and to carry out, in an equanimous and complete manner, the ideals of organization of human life consecrated by modern western civilization. (Fernandes, 1976, p.314)[1]

The "current phase of transition" (ibid., p.337) is in line with the notion of "historical leap", used in allusion both to the yearnings present in society – which "hit […] the social heritage and the preexisting cultural horizon" – and to the intellectual tasks involved in carrying out the project (ibid., p.315, 337), and to the diagnosis that that was a time of social revolution.[2]

When analyzing Fernandes' writings dedicated to the foundation of applied sociology and its use, we find at the core of his concerns the attempt to guarantee the *historicity* of sociological analysis. This is shown in at least two aspects: in the attempt to establish a theory compatible with the specific challenges of the *empirical reality* studied, in which its application will take place;[3] and in the future, considered part of the scope of sociological investigation – which translates into a perspective of modern Brazil.[4] The "prospective analysis" (Fernandes, 1960, p.108, 124-5) is, therefore, an indispensable part of the preparation and aptitude expected from the sociologist to recognize and evaluate what Fernandes saw as an already open and ongoing historical process.[5]

In all phases of Fernandes' intellectual trajectory, alongside the possibilities open to change and obstacles to modernization, the sociologist has to identify the subjects involved – because for there to be change human action in history is necessary.[6] The articulation between these terms is not without tensions: on the one hand, Fernandes is profoundly pessimistic in relation to particular interests;[7] on the other, there would have to be a vector to carry out or complete the "social revolution", and in 1962 this vector was the industrial entrepreneur supported by the "Republican State", conforming what at this time Fernandes names "men of action" (Fernandes, 1976, p.337).[8]

It is not surprising that, while emphasizing the imperative need for human action, Fernandes turns to the risks involved: linked "to the continuous influence of irrational elements", such risks concerned above all the fact that modernization depends on the action of *specific* subjects – which perhaps explains the statement, already at that moment, that a "melancholic condition" would be reserved for the sociologist (Fernandes, 1960, p.149). These two aspects (sub-

jects and risks) have been highlighted insistently by Fernandes at all stages of his intellectual life, so marked by expectation and disappointment.

In any case, the point is that the kind of modernization that Fernandes saw as possible before the 1964 coup, epitomized by the notion of "expansion of the democratic social order" (Fernandes, 1976, p.337), was a *democratic modernization*, even in its bourgeois version.[9] As for the modernization that actually took place, a *conservative modernization*, it gradually gained space in his work, particularly after 1969.

In 1972, Fernandes partially incorporated the diagnosis made by Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco in 1970 about the "impropriety for the Brazilian case" of the distinction between traditional and modern for the Brazilian reality – at least in the context of the ancient coffee civilization –, by which, far from being an obstacle, the traditional (slavery) is the very condition of the modern (capitalist) (Franco, 1970, p.102-19). Without giving up the distinction between the terms, as Franco had proposed,[10] Fernandes argues that there is a "permanent vicious circle" in Brazil, whereby

> […] the indices of progress and prosperity are achieved under the permanent marginalization of strong contingents of the population, which are not, in fact, integrated into class society and its economic, legal and political order. Basically, then, the transition to capitalism produces a social revolution. The "capitalist mentality" and capitalist "class interests", however, are not in and by themselves revolutionary. They articulate compositions that accommodate the emerging to the archaic, the national to the semi-colonial and the colonial. (Fernandes, 2018, p.156)

In short, the interest of the "men of action" would not have reached the possibilities opened up by the social revolution, so that modernization would take place through the permanent updating of backwardness. The cumulative effect of the identified weaknesses would have made the nation "impotent to coordinate, impose and strengthen institutionally forms of socialization, techniques of organizing power and certain common values based on the interests of the national community as a whole", and converted the expansion of the capitalism and, with it, the class regime and democracy "in a cataclysmic and savage process", which only feeds back the relative power of already privileged people or groups. In this scenario, Fernandes notes that "any substantive change requires compulsive crises" (ibid., p.163).

In 1977, proposing an image clearly contrary to the "historical leap" envisioned in 1962, Fernandes spoke of an intersection between several "historical-social ages": "present, past and future intertwine and merge in such a way that one can pass from one historical stage to another by the simplest strategy: by the displacement in space." Each of these ages that exist simultaneously can only be understood and explained, according to Fernandes, through its own pattern of sociocultural integration "by the way in which it is linked to the current trends of modernization of that society" (ibid., p.167).

What place does sovereignty have? Associated with political emancipation, the latter appears as a strengthening of the social order inherited from the colony (ibid., p.147), a theme par excellence in *A revolução burguesa no Brasil* [The Bourgeois Revolution in Brazil]. In this book, which Fernandes begins to write in 1966 and resumes in 1973, he assesses the weight of our colonial past, proposing that a "reverse" process takes place in Brazil: "the 'era of modernization in Brazil' does not appear as a mature phenomenon of the internal evolution of the modern capitalist market; it is configured with the political crisis of the old colonial system" (Fernandes, 1987, p.7). Here also, the reflection also revolves around the peculiarities resulting from the historical times that intersect and confuse, and the place that historical agents occupy in them:

> [...] we did not have all of Europe's past, but we reproduced its recent past in a peculiar way, as this was part of the very process of implantation and development of modern western civilization in Brazil. Speaking of Bourgeois Revolution, in this sense, consists of looking for the human agents of the great historical-social transformations that are behind the disintegration of the slave-ownership regime and the formation of a class society in Brazil. (ibid, p.20)

If independence was Brazil's first social revolution, it would have been a "revolution within the order" (ibid., p.55). The permanence of slavery, having limited changes in production relations, conditioned not only the economy, but also politics and society. Despite being liberal in its formal foundations, the state resulting from the independence process was patrimonial at the political level, guaranteeing the privileges of the estate-based elite. There would, therefore, be an "internal logic" specific to the Brazilian process, which, according to Fernandes, would not have been perceived due to the insistence on drawing parallels with European standards that do not fit the Brazilian reality.

Under external and internal pressures, the bourgeoisie would have chosen to articulate a defensive counter-revolution and these pressures were transformed into a more intimate association with international finance capital, in repression against the working class and, finally, in the transformation of the State (including militarized) into exclusive instrument of bourgeois power, which results in nothing more than a new form of submission to imperialism.[11] In short, "a chapter in Brazil's economic history has ended; and, with it, the ideal of a national bourgeois-democratic revolution was shelved" (ibid., p.220). The national bourgeoisie proved to be, after all, autocratic, not least because there would be no other organized social force capable of limiting it, and "because it has no way of reconciling the neo-imperialist model of capitalist development, which has imposed itself from the outside in, with the old ideals of national--democratic Bourgeois Revolution" (ibid., p.220). Hence the idea of a "closed circuit", that is, a history that begins and ends in dependent competitive capitalism (ibid., p.250). The resulting autocratic and oligarchic state – the "oligarchy of the ruling bourgeois classes" – is a syncretic composition through which the

bourgeoisie dissociates democracy, capitalist development, and national revolution:

> [...] both the autocratic state can serve as a spearhead for the advent of an authentic state capitalism, stricto sensu, and the systematic damming of anti-bourgeois pressures and tensions can precipitate the revolutionary breakdown of order and the outbreak of socialism. In one case, as in the other, the autocratic-bourgeois model of capitalist transformation is doomed to a relatively short duration. Symptom and effect of a much broader and deeper crisis, the model will not be able to overcome it and survive its solution (ibid, p.366).

The transition from democratic modernization, in which Fernandes placed expectations and for which he was committed as *a sociologist before the 1964 coup*, to conservative modernization after 1969, hit Fernandes in a particularly cruel way.[12] But, even after the compulsory USP retirement, exile and relative professional and intellectual isolation, in the late 1970s he was still looking, with renewed hope, for what had most motivated him before the coup: the "true science" (his quotation marks) and the "reformulation of the sociology" (Fernandes, 1980, p.18). At that moment, hope shifts from "men of action" to "those below." In the midst of the rise of popular struggles that took place in the crisis of the dictatorship, Fernandes sees them as subjects of political projects in which the word "modernization", however, would not have a place. But the new situation in which Fernandes was nourished with hope would not last long.

End of the recovery and development expectation

The semantics of modernization gained new impetus at the end of the 1980s and at an increasing pace in the following decades, thanks largely to the opening of the Brazilian economy and the triumphalist ideological impulse that accompanied it – factors that explain in part the lively adherence of actors that distrusted it.[13] It is in this newest version that the criticism made by Paulo Arantes (2014) in *O novo tempo do mundo* is located, in which the author revisits the process that started after Independence.

In 2014 – after, therefore, the demonstrations of June 2013 and before the coup that overthrew Dilma Rousseff government –, without being able to predict how much Brazil' s and the world's expectations would still decrease, Arantes places Brazil between two times: the "passage to the New World", from the crisis of the Old Colonial System (the reference is to Fernando Novais), when "the dominant layer in the colony may have finally experienced what comes to be that mentioned 'time lived in the dimensions of the world'" (Arantes, 2014, p.31),[14] on the one hand, and the fall of the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall, on the other, when begins "a triumphant era of diminishing expectations [...] in the timeless time of perpetual urgency" (ibid., p.94).

The entry of formally independent Brazil into the new era of the world took place in a conservative manner: "the triple liberal modernization of monarchy, slavery and land enclosed by export monoculture" (ibid., p.33) re-arti-

culated with the new world order created between the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. One or 200 hundred years later, the contradictions persist and do not even allow for the construction of places of memory. As Arantes proposes, the new time in the world into which Brazil entered the nineteenth century is neither homogeneous nor empty, "nor does it fit well with the entirely new idea of a national time" (ibid., p.35, n.17).

Arantes relies on Fernand Braudel (time of the world), Reinhart Koselleck (field of experience and horizon of expectation) and Immanuel Wallerstein (late ideological framework of capitalism) to explain the "confluence [...] between the two passages, towards the New Time oriented towards an open future, as a horizon of expectation, and towards the New World, which was drawn at the vanishing point of a concomitant crisis of the Old Regime and the Colonial System" (ibid., p.40). The notions of "confluence" "superposition" and "fusion" (ibid., p.40-1) are related to the broader experience of the "simultaneity of what is not contemporary."[15] Based on an inventory of differences between peoples approximated by European navigations and colonization, this diachronic ordering by synchronic comparison generates and nourishes expectations of "achieving or surpassing." Ultimately, it puts on the horizon the goals of "developing" and "progressing" within a capitalist order. This idea will flourish particularly between the end of the Second World War and the oil crisis, and, as François Hartog points out, will reach both the so-called third world and the Europe in the process of reconstruction, and the communist countries that aimed for a "radiant future."

The problem with this new era of the modern world, however, is that, in Koselleck's terms, the distance and difference between the field of experience and the horizon of expectations has not stopped growing, the former no longer being limited by the latter. Hence, a permanent crisis emerged, suspended only temporarily, during the so-called "thirty glorious years" (which, however, coexisted with the risk of a nuclear war) and, then, after the Fall (with all the evocations that such a word can have), the plunge into an era of decreasing expectations, absence of utopia, presentism without expectation of future, in a regime of urgencies. The temporalization of history, which had marked the beginning of the new time of the world, in 1789,[16] is now detemporalized; the horizon becomes withered, "without beginning, nor end, nor sequence" (Manuel Castells); a new regime of expectations is imposed, "redefined according to an equally unequal redistribution of risks and urgencies" (Arantes, 2014, p.63). Above all, in its most concrete ecological material expression, capital consumes the future (according to Laymert Garcia dos Santos) and shortens the distance between the field of experience and the horizon of expectation. Koselleck himself points out these limits, in an article written in 1985, after the report on the limits to growth published by the Club of Rome (Arantes, 2014, p.94-5). All this motivates Arantes' statement: "we want to know when and how we historically installed ourselves in a horizon of expectation divorced from the previous space of experience" (ibid., p.75).

Past, present and future in Brazil's 200 years

The Brazilian society's meeting with its 200th anniversary of Independence and 100th anniversary of the Modern Art Week takes place in a context of deep political impasses about the country's future. Inheriting the traumatic consequences imposed by the two years of pandemic, we are faced with a crisis of multiple dimensions: a health crisis, which intensified and thew open the country's social and political crisis; a political crisis, which both reduces the margins of negotiation about future projects and evidences tensions between economic and social policies, including not only educational and public health issues, but also racial and gender equality; and an economic crisis, which puts increasing pressure both on those who live off their workforce and on natural resources.

Once seen and promoted as an example of stability and social progress, the promises of the "modernization" of the globalized world benefiting a restricted portion of the world population makes the economic and social order established in the final decades of the twentieth century give successive warning signs, with growing acute social, political and ecological frictions.

Disseminated in the 1990s, the optimism and euphoria of some, materialized by both the new technological and communication paradigms, and by the illusory political and economic stability produced at the end of the cold war, took over the interpretations of the period. The image then disseminated was that of "the end of history" (Fukuyama, 1989, 1992) – of the supposed consolidation of capitalism and liberal democracy as a model of society –, or that of the notion that governments had reached conditions to offer an "optimal economic policy" with permanent economic stability, a phase called the "new economy" or "great moderation" (Stiglitz, 2003; Bernanke, 2004).

The United States, the epicenter of the diffusion of these ideas, was experiencing a period of economic growth, with productivity gains, low unemployment and controlled inflation. Technological and organizational innovations expanded not only trade among countries, including the displacement of productive structures, but also the supply of goods and services. In short, optimism drew on the perception that the future was based on the benefits of a supposed "globalization" as part of an update of the modernization paradigm, in which tomorrow could be the reproduction of the "successful" models of western societies.[17]

This illusory future, however, was sustained on significantly fragile foundations. The "new economy" was the result of liberal reforms introduced after the 1970s crisis: reforms that expanded the circulation of capital among nations, deregulating financial activities and making markets more turbulent and unstable produced the successive crises that occurred between the 1990s and 2000s (Chesnais, 1996; Brenner, 2003); reforms making labor laws more flexible, in a context in which labor-saving technical innovations increased unemployment rates and weakened union resistance, produced increasingly precarious work;

reforms based on an economic ideal of a minimal state produced the transition from state-regulated capitalism to neoliberal capitalism (Harvey, 1992).

Under this perspective, neoliberalism is understood as a new phase of capitalism. A new "development model" in contrast to the one that marked the years of the post-war regulated capitalism era, when the accumulation regime was more rigid, with greater regulation of work and greater State commitments to programs of social security.[18] Neoliberalism, in this sense, emerged as a form of flexible accumulation: (i) a new pattern of work - the deregulation of the labor market – with part-time, temporary, outsourcing and subcontracting regimes becoming more common; (ii) a production flexibilization increasing competition between workers from different countries, reducing the strength of national unions and lowering local wages; and, following a liberal ideology, (iii) the reduction of state protection confronting the provision of public services and conquering social rights, thereby liquidating the structure of a welfare state (Harvey, 1992, chap.9).

To some extent, neoliberal reforms repeated the tensions analyzed by Polanyi about nineteenth-century capitalism. According to him, liberalism, as an ideological expression of progress, ended up imposing the defense of the self--regulating market in the organization of social life. The liberal utopia, therefore, produced the mirage that, through the market, it would be possible to define the functioning of society based on economic rationality.

The dissemination of the principles of liberalism as organizers of society ended up transforming land, labor and capital in "factors of production." Treated like any other commodity, it subjected the most diverse spheres of social life to the laws of the market. Polanyi added that, this process of universalization of economic rationality, instead of being an expression of human nature, was actually the imposition of an ideology with harmful effects on society. Therefore, for the author, on the one hand, human beings and nature were "fictitious commodities" whose existence required State intervention to guarantee their subordination to the market. When moving away from its role of regulating the economy and by bequeathing control of the money supply to the market, the State, on the other hand, quit fostering both policies such as social protection and agricultural and industrial production. By subjecting workers' survival to the laws of supply and demand, the liberal economy imposed precarious and unstable living conditions – in Polanyi's (2000) expression, a "satanic mill."

By comparing Polanyi's analysis of the expression of liberal conquests with the current world conjuncture of the early twenty-first century, neoliberalism, more than a phase of capitalism established in the last four decades, becomes a government program, a normative system– or "governmentality" as proposed by Foucault (2009). By constituting the rules of sociability through the principles of market laws, of individuals as commodities, the norm is the self-regulation of all spheres of life. Competitive markets, however, depend on the State

to produce both their institutional environment, as well as the subjection of individuals to the condition of companies (Dardot; Laval, 2016). Therefore, neoliberalism is a social coercive force rather than the full freedom of individuals; a privatization of all spheres of society, guaranteeing the necessary mechanisms to produce the accumulation of capital instead of the distribution of benefits to society (Streeck, 2018, p.20-50).

The traces of similarities between the results of these two historical periods are evident. Polanyi denounced the expansion of social conflicts as a consequence of the dynamics of the satanic mill of nineteenth century society, so present in our reality. Conjunctures marked by the expansion of social inequality are common to both the beginning and the end of the twentieth century (Piketty, 2014). Written during the Second World War, Polanyi's work described the rise of totalitarian regimes as a consequence of economic and social crises, which liberal policies were unable to circumvent; a visible and present threat to democracy, like the one experienced today, with the "de-democratization of capitalism" (Streeck, 2018, p.20-50).

Hence, the doors of the Bicentennial of Brazil' Independence seem to be the time of transition. But is it a time with characteristics similar to those experienced by the 1822 and 1922 generations? Certainly, political impasses about the future have produced tensions on disputed projects, today and before. But, as proposed by Paulo Arantes, unlike in 1822 and 1922, the current absence of concrete models for the future clouded the construction of utopias. In 1822, republican and anti-slavery experiences in Latin America could suggest paths for nation building; in 1922, the experiences of democracies and backward industrialization were assimilated by the modernist generation to think about a modern Brazil. What are the 2022 models? Do they exist?

The promises of neoliberalism are being successively broken by the continuous economic crises that have marked the last decades, growing social inequality and increasingly concrete environmental limits. The promotion of a minimal State, which erodes the support and service network of society, especially the one most lacking in economic resources, places religious organizations and organized crime as options for sociability for communities. The break-up of the State, either through the narrowing of its functions, or through the scrapping of its structure, expands the power of capital, which benefits from open loopholes to increase the degree of expropriation, either by putting pressure on precarious workers, or by indiscriminate nature exploitation.

The supposed globalization, beneficial to a limited part of the world's population, leaves a legacy of social insecurity, poverty, and environmental destruction. In this sense, after the decades of the "golden age" of capitalism, society experiences the expression of a capitalism that uses the oppositions between the modern and the archaic, instead of disseminating the promises of "modernity." With the contradictory movement to diversify consumption patterns, despite

the worsening of the quality of life of a significant portion of the population, Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco's criticism of peripheral capitalism is reiterated, now at an international level. Delay is the engine of accumulation of the modern rather than its barrier. What is being experienced, therefore, is a *Brazilianification* of the world in a reversal of roles: the exports to developed economies of imperfections in the nation's formation, structural heterogeneity and the vulnerability of peripheral capitalism.[19]

In neoliberalism, either left to right, governments in Brazil and around the world have only managed crises in a regime of exception and urgency, managing population contingents through the containment, domestication and cooling of the "dangerous classes;" postponing, in a way, a chaotic social and ecological explosion. If Machiavelli asked himself similar questions, he would have done so within a circular conception of historical time, so that repetition would give him a horizon, a possible prognosis. But everything changed when time became linear and accelerated towards the unknown. In the words of Hartmut Rosa (2009, p.101):

> [...] the individual's reaction to social acceleration in late modernity seems to result in a new form of situational identity, in which the dynamism of classical modernity, characterized by a strong sense of direction (perceived as progress), is replaced by a sense of directionless, frantic motion that is in fact a form of inertia.

Within this framework, Rosa states that it is impossible to preserve social synchronization and integration. Hence, at this point, what would there be to celebrate? If the concepts of sovereignty (1822) and modernity (1922) were already inconsistent in the country, now they seem to have lost any thickness.

Notes

1 For a summary of the research lines involved in the project and its results, refer to Fernandes (1976, p.319-20 n). In a complementary character, refer to p.338-70.

2 Giving pauperism as an example of "anomic conditions of existence", Fernandes (1960, p.148-9) asserts: "only truly radical measures would make it possible to attack it at its roots. Now, measures of this magnitude only find practical feasibility in times of social revolution. Outside that, they become impractical."

3 The assumption is that the Brazilian situation demanded theoretical, methodological and conceptual adaptations from the sociologist so that there could be application and intervention, which is well illustrated by a parenthesis in the class notes of the course given in 1966: "(social awareness, planning and control of social problems x dynamics of modern western civilization in 'periphery' countries)" (Fernandes, 2018, p.103). Especially emblematic is the statement that, if the theories elaborated elsewhere must adapt to the Brazilian empirical reality in order to have explanatory power, on the other hand, "only social scientists from 'underdeveloped countries' have the conditions to solve methodological or theoretical problems poorly formulated by classical authors" (Cardoso, 1972, at the book flap). Refer to Fernandes (1976, p.762018 n).

4 In Fernandes, this perspective is supported by the diagnosis of a process of modernization that has already begun. Take the "*Bibliografia sobre a modernização do Brasil, principalmente depois de 1930*" [Bibliography on the modernization of Brazil, mainly after 1930], published in *Sociedade de Classes e subdesenvolvimento* [Class society and underdevelopment], whose first edition was published in 1968 (Fernandes, 1975, p.207-67).

5 Hence, the last of the 10 points of the program for a subject taught in the Social Sciences course at USP in 1966 was: "*10- Uma perspectiva sociológica do presente e do fut*uro" [10- A sociological perspective of the present and future] (Fernandes, 2018, p.100). The subject in question was entitled "*Formação e desenvolvimento da sociedade brasileira*" [Formation and development of Brazilian society].

6 Emblematic on human action in history is the critique of liberal sociology, the "background of the bourgeois conscience" which, by producing knowledge that "did not correspond to practical requirements" created a utopian fiction that "contained no historical significance" but presupposed, however, "progress as destiny" (Fernandes, 1980, p.35-6).

7 See Fernandes' critique of common sense (considered insufficient) and particularism (Fernandes, 1960, p.100-1, 108-9, 112-3).

8 Later, at the end of the 1970s, Fernandes wrote that only "men of action" those "directly involved in the business and business world or in political activity", "could follow" the "historical rhythms of the transformation of the bourgeoisie into the ruling class, and, later, of its own transformation as a dominant class" (Fernandes, 1980, p.36).

9 In the late 1950s, when asking himself how to operate, in situations subject to traditional control, "with a view to the well-being, security, autonomy and integrity of human groups affected by the influences of 'progress', Fernandes Fernandes (1960, p.148-9) observes that the balance could either depend on traditional controls or on their replacement by other types of control, and that the decision should take into account "the real interests of the human communities involved in the process".

10 The reasons why Fernandes preserves the conceptual pair are exposed in the introduction to the part dedicated to "*Cidade Tradicional*" of the collection *Comunidade e Sociedade no Brasil* [Community and Society in Brazil], originally published in 1972 (Fernandes, 2018, p.129-34). If, when specifically addressing the antique coffee civilization, Fernandes seems to agree with Franco (ibid., p.155), already in the introduction to "A Pequena Comunidade" [The Little Community], he will speak of national integration as a "social cataclysm", that would provoke the explosion of the archaic structures in which the unprotected are sheltered, compelling them to thicken, in mass, the candidates for degraded jobs and salaries" (Fernandes, 2018, p.122). Refer also to p.217.

11 For all these reasons, Fernandes Fernandes says (1987, p.215): "The central problem of the historical-sociological investigation of the Bourgeois Revolution in Brazil consists of the crisis of bourgeois power, which is located in the current era and emerges as a consequence of the transition from competitive capitalism to monopoly capitalism."

12 On this, refer to Fernandes (1980, p.13-4).

13 Writing about Lula's two terms in office, a political analyst gave his book the suggestive title *A modernização sem o moderno* [Modernization without the modern] (Vianna,

2011). He understands the "modern", in this case, as "a continuous deepening of political democracy, valuing the self-organization of the social and the autonomy of associative life before the state" (Vianna, 2011, p.20).

14 The reference to "time lived in the dimensions of the world" is to Fernand Braudel (Braudel, 1969, p.79; 1979).

15 The expression is by Koselleck. However, according to Hartog (2021, p.70), Koselleck does not develop this idea. The simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, rejected by Christian authors until the end of the eighteenth century, presupposes a chronologically equal, neutral and mundane time, within which a horizon of expectation is inserted in the ever-increasing space that opens up between the past and the future. (Hartog, 2021, p.78, 71 and 91).

16 In the old regime of historicity, light came from the past; since 1789, the future illuminates the past (Hartog, 2020, p.225).

17 This perspective of an ideal model of society can be illustrated by the preponderance of the New Institutional Economics among the economic interpretations of the 1990s. Its representatives were Nobel Prize laureates in the decade, while their perspective influenced both the academic production and the policies of institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. In general terms, the New Institutional Economy maintains that from "good institutions" it would be possible to build perfectly competitive markets, allowing individuals to act with full economic rationality. The application of the neoclassical program in a historical analysis, through the analysis of institutions, allowed the perspective to compare national trajectories. For analysis of the theoretical model, see North (1990); for a cartoon application of the model, refer to Acemoglu and Robinson (2013).

18 According to the ideas of the French Regulation School. Refer also to Aglietta (1976) and Lipietz (1991).

19 The term was coined by Douglas Coupland in *Generation X: tales for an accelerated culture* (1991), characterizing the process of disappearance of the middle classes. This reading is well indicated by Francisco de Oliveira (2003).

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ABSTRACT – The idea of a sovereign and modern Brazil, so prominent in essay-writing, academic research and the collective imagination, comprises a vast horizon of common aspirations that has cyclically promised a prosperous future, until being confronted by the complexity of today's challenges, on the eve of the second centenary of Brazil's Independence. The article questions the revisions of the ideas of sovereignty and modernization among essay writers and in historical and economic thought.

KEYWORDS: Independence, Sovereignty, Modernization, Essay-writing.

RESUMO – A ideia de Brasil soberano e moderno, tão marcante no ensaísmo, na pesquisa acadêmica e no imaginário coletivo, designa um vasto horizonte de aspirações comuns que propôs ciclicamente promessas de um futuro de prosperidade, até ser confrontado pela complexidade dos desafios atuais, às vésperas do segundo centenário da Independência. O artigo interroga as revisões das ideias de soberania e modernização no ensaísmo e no pensamento histórico-econômico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Independência, Soberania, Modernização, Ensaísmo.

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