

Politics and agrarianism in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

This text recreates the discursive elements of the Brazilian Communist Party's (PCB) peasant sindicalism consolidated in the pre-1964 era. The author argues that this agrarianism may shed light on the current discussion about the expectations of intellectuals and mediators in relation to the performance of the landless in the Brazilian agrarian reform. The work of Caio Prado Jr. and Alberto Passos Guimarães is revisited, with the question of the weakness of the peasantry being one of the key points. The text also seeks to associate these classical ideas with Luiz Werneck Vianna's interpretation of the landless mobilization of the mid-1990s as the emblematic social conquest of Brazilian political democracy, notably after the enactment of the 1988 Constitution.

Key words: peasantry- agrarian reform - Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) – (MST).

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Introduction

Making the discursive components' inventory of the peasant sindacalism put in practice by the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB) is a useful exercise for active mediators in the ongoing rural actions in the country. This paper intends to discuss the thought of Caio Prado Jr., Alberto Passos Guimarães and Luiz Werneck Vianna, being the first ones acclaimed classics and the latter one of the most expressive of the so-called "field of the passive revolution", the suggestive matrix of our left-wing history. It focuses on the issue of the weakness of the peasantry¹, seen here as a key to the reading which not only emphasizes the constructive meaning of the Pecebist agrarianism but also tries to pose more and more promising questions to the discussion on the expectations several intellectual areas and agrarian reform supporters have in relation to the groups of Brazilian peasants.

In good time, Eric Sabourin suggests themes for this controversy when he reacts to some researchers' discontent, such as José de Souza Martins, before the landless' performance in Brazilian agrarian reform. Quoting Sabourin: "According to Martins, the facility by which organizations that fight for the agrarian reform mobilize masses for a landless' provisory identity- including among the urban population- shows the victory of property over labor, as a reference value. It expresses the orientation of the political behaviors and their social aspirations as a political project and historical option" (SABOURIN, 2008: 169).² Sabourin so equates this deception before a poor group which "has no options". "By expecting either a different or even exemplar landless' behavior or by searching to transfer citizen claims to the ones who have less access to citizenship and to others' recognition, the author (José de Souza Martins) shows a not much different attitude from the tendency he denounces. It is worth mentioning the MST leaders' attitude, who project the view of the landless as the vanguard of a socialist revolution, as well as Incra staff, who dream of model producers inserted in cooperative productive projects" (idem).

The first section of the paper presents the constructo with which Caio Prado distinguishes himself both from his communist party as well as in relation to the peasantrylism revolutionaries proposed by some contexts of Latin-American (DEBRAY, 1967) and Brazilian left wing in the mid-60s. Next, this initial issue refers to Alberto Passos Guimarães as a publicist who not only provides basis for the PCB reorientation, announced in the 1958 March Declaration, but also gives reference to the new Pecebist tactic of "creating unions to mobilize the peasant masses". In a second moment, we refer to two of Luiz Werneck Vianna's works which qualify his expectation in relation to more recent landless mobilizations. We conclude mentioning two references to the old theme of the "form of struggle" encouraged by the mediating main character of the agrarian conflict (self-defense armed actions; legal and pacific, expansive mobilizations in the territory) which is seen by the classic communists as a decisive issue on the efficacy of the pressure of groups "from the bottom" on the process of the rural world reform.

“Structural” dissociation, rural sindicalism and peasantry

Caio Prado's recurrent presence in the agrarian debate can be explained by the national renewal program with which the historian questioned leftists of his time and, in particular, his own party. When he referred to the country's restructuring as a “national and agrarian revolution”, he was not only inverting the Communist International (IC) national-liberator model. Caio Prado particularized Brazil as a nation holder of movements and life that the revolutionary actor would need to understand through a proper theory. The ‘agrarian’ of the Caiopradian formula referred to an economy and a population- that is the point- marked by the divergence between production and consuming since the construction of the production colony turned to the international market (PRADO JR., 1942; 1945). By rooting the dynamism of national life into this kind of structure, Caio Prado sees the “Brazilian revolution” program as a reverse work from that dissociation based on the valorization of the national labor production, the agrarian of the “agrarian and national” formula having strategic dimension regardless of the structural constraints imposed to the “programmatic” Brazilian revolution imagined by Caio Prado.³ The production colony here organized under forms of slavery marked deeply the foreign workforce coming to be instrumentally used in the commercial entrepreneurship. Even after the Abolition, it survived weakly incorporated to the economic system built in our “country without people”, recalling the image Louis Couty still saw of the great “structural” mark of the genesis in the 19th century. The dissociation between production and consuming would be reproduced in the industrialist period after the 1930 Revolution. Even in the developmentalism national years (1945-64), there was still a great divergence between an economy under the modernizing impact and “the majority of the population”, particularly the rural, endemically poor.⁴ Caio Prado attached all the importance to this divergence seen as root of the weakness of the sociability forms and Brazilian politics to the extent of taking it as the key of his own conjuncture analysis (PRADO JR., 1945; 1956; 1962; 1977 in PRADO JR., 2007). This issue of “structural” divergence was ultimately referred to Caio Prado's direct political divergences among Brazilian leftists, which was quite visible in his controversies with the PCB in the 40s, 50s and 60s.

That divergence between production and consuming gives the general meaning of the renovation the historian said the country needed in order to become a modern nation (PRADO JR., 1947). The formulation of this great “programmatic” transformation proposed by Caio Prado suffered criticism directed simultaneously to the “chaotic” and “superficial” industrialism and the weakness of our political life moved by “sterile conflicts”, “individualist political fights”, “mean interests” and “personalisms”. While, on the economic level, the Brazilian revolution had as its main goal to build a “Rooseveltian” capitalism based on labor valorization and the state monitoring the interests of the population as a whole (idem), the restructuring of the “Brazilian politics” consisted in a kind of social and ideological-party dynamization of the public sphere and of our strongly notarial State.⁵ The historian proposes movements of density of public life and public power: while in the first dimension, the strategic themes are the

public opinion and the parties representative of the interests and ideological, the second one comprises elections with the formation of political-administrative governments. The author's own idea of revolution seems linked to the "dialectic" of such Brazilian circumstantial asymmetries. The historian sees the accomplishment of the national revolution through a process of "polarization of strengths" which realigned in fact, on the one hand, popular interests and associations and the progressive parties of the political and cultural-ideological world and, on the other hand, the regression field thus allowing the country to follow a new path. The "programmatic"- productivist meaning of these two great restructurings of national life recalls the American capitalism which Elias Chaves Neto- the main political communicator at the time of the historian's work- tries to associate the Caiopradian meaning of the Brazilian revolution (SANTOS, 2001; 2009). It recalls the first European (and American) industrialism whose "productivism" provided progress and which Caio Prado recurrently compared to our course of modernization of low productive dynamism and without social incorporation.

In his 1933 work, *Evolução Política do Brasil*, Caio Prado refers to the civil society weakness comparing the colonization by settlement in America's temperate zones to the Brazilian production colony. Independence is presented as a revolution without wars or armed conflicts. The young author described the defeats "from the bottom" during what would be our "French revolution of 1848", described by Marx in his political texts. It is intriguing the observations of urban "political disturbances" and the reactionary outcome of the independencalist revolution (PRADO JR., 1933). This issue of popular groups' performance is also found in *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* (1942) and in later texts. Even in this book, the little relevance given to the subsistence sector seems like a "structural" trace of the foreign-oriented economic policy leading slowly and irregularly to the formation of the small property and keeping the aggregated-"peasants" weak.⁶

In opposition, Caio Prado claimed that struggle for land within a strictly peasant meaning did not have the potential to generalize conflicts and spread associativism throughout this huge country. For Caio Prado, the peasant issue was not a central one of the revolution, the great tension to be maximized. The historian pinpointed the key point of the agrarian reform in Brazil in the contradiction with the monopolists of work and job conditions and the great mass of the impoverished. From there came the union mobilization of the contingents of "rural employers" settled in the great agricultural sectors. From this sindicalism and the pressure for the generalized enactment of workforce law of the Rural Work Statute, with similar meaning to the Abolition, came the impulse to generalize "from the bottom" to renew the rural economy. Moreover, the agrarian issue was one subordinated to that "economic dialectic" (sic) with sindicalism nature, that is, would be that "great social movement" (sic) of union character which, happening in the rural market, would ease the access to land to poor groups spread by the "pores of the great domains" (PRADO JR., 1966).⁷

The Caiopradian formula of the “agrarian and national” revolution meant a kind of journey to an American west different from the March to the Farwest of the Brazilian New State. In Caio Prado, this west was the “near West” to be activated by a unionism whose network caused the regions’ dynamics, expanding to the rural inland and the small municipalities a stimulating organizational continuum of new forms of sociability (idem). This “structural”-programmatic meaning of the Brazilian revolution so translated the Caiopradian idea of non-peasant agrarian revolution moved forward from beginning to end by the union laborism.⁸ This idea of Brazilian and agrarian revolution was different from the revolutionary-military calculation which other left-wing groups expected from rural actions (DEBRAY, op. Cit.), as it was beyond the PCB tactic unionism to continue a agrarian revolution imagined as an agency to make way for a process of redistributive agrarian reform in Brazil.

We will now summarize the mentioned peasant unionism in Passos Guimarães's version, an important author on the ratification in the 5th PCB Congress (1960) of the communists' new way of thinking, announced in 1958. In this event's Debate Tribunal, with the theme of revolutionary stages- going beyond doctrine and bringing with it the actor to its current time – Passos Guimarães, like other PCB publicists, aimed at deconstructing the radicalism at the time of the communists' persecution in the first worst years of Cold War. It is worth pointing out Passos Guimarães's engagement in planning a strategy (the “art” of politics, said the author quoting Lenin) which led the communists to operate more effectively in the existing context in the country at the time.

As to the agrarian theme, Passos Guimarães not only questioned the orientation of the peasant self-defense of the August Manifest of 1950 but would also offer validation to the non-peasant praxis started by communist followers in the beginning of the 1950s with the return of the legal union's actions, leading the PCB to abandon the associative parallelism. If part of this practice, in search of its agrarian formulation support, Passos Guimarães recurred to the concepts of the Leninian non-peasant agrarian revolution and the Prussian view of agrarian evolution. The former arose out of Lenin's assumption of the already capitalist countries or the ones whose “agrarian regime” was already amalgamated with the “capitalist economy in general” which would be impossible to destroy this regime without destroying the capitalism itself, when the agrarian revolution could be guided by other classes to make its way towards the agrarian capitalism. Passos quoted another Lenin's extract as a suggestion to particularize the Brazilian view: “It is possible to think a bourgeois revolution in a country of significant peasant population and which, despite not being a peasant revolution, that is, being such that it does not revolutionize the agrarian relations which affect in particular the peasants and does not stand them out of the social forces, even active ones, executors of the revolution” (cf. LENIN, 1907, apud PASSOS GUIMARÃES, 1960a). From the second concept, Passos Guimarães counts on the Leninian references of the agrarian revolution “from the top” which modernized though conserving the past order with high costs for the impoverished. The fastest journey to the western capitalism would be more

useful, according to Lenin, if the process followed the American farmer. Passos Guimarães brought from this Leninian excursus the perspective here also posed to Brazilian revolutionary that it was possible to multiply “the revolutionary-content bourgeois transformations” - the author took as example the expropriation of Galileia Engenho in Pernambuco-, “accomplished pacifically through 'reforms' (which) are equally not rare”. Among them, we can point out the settlers’ several successful fights for the validation of the property deeds” (PASSOS GUIMARÃES, 1960b: 89).

However, Passos Guimarães does not remain between the Pecebist intuition and the reference to Lenin. The author tries to translate into the party orientation the new way of seeing the Brazilian context of the March Declaration, totally different from the stagnationism prevailing in the PCB until 1958, according to which the country ran the risk of becoming – in the mid-1950s- a colony of the United States. Passos Guimarães saw the country as an articulated social structuration. This demanded - the author continues in his argument of that time–to think a new kind of national revolution, whose agrarian transformations would obtain, by its farmer’s course, the strategic function of the dynamization of the internal market, what reminds us of Caio Prado and somehow those years of national-developmentalism. It is worth pointing out that, in Passos Guimarães, the issue of the capitalist development (even still low) and the inexistence of a rebel peasantry challenged the old orthodoxy still embodied in the PCB. Thus, it was not a matter of a revolution moved by anti-colonialist forces in defense of the national autarchy. On the contrary, the “level of capitalist development” already reached by the country and our peasants’ “great rudeness” led the author to refer to a special kind of agrarian revolution as suggested by Lenin. It was possible to think an agrarian revolution in an “initially non-peasant” Brazil which would develop as long as the dispersed peasantry was activated by an educational-organizational and union-like process and progressed- by way of forefront nationalist and democratic governments – a gradual agrarian reform in support of the peasant performance itself. This construction of Passos Guimarães gave the revolutionary actor two commitments: a) to make himself ready for acting in the present time, operating out of concrete issues (dispersion, specific claims) and b) to engage in the affirmation of a favorable general condition-building deliberately a “peasant movement” through the structured unions among the more mobile layers of employed and semi-employed. In the PCB, these turns point towards an agro-reformism conceived as a non-revolutionary way, with possible results – by means of “partial measures of the agrarian reform” – in the democratic regime (PASSOS GUIMARAES, 1960b).⁹

Passos Guimarães went further to extract orientation for the actor. The meaning for the agrarian action did not come from a merely doctrinal reflection without reference to real life. On the one hand, the author brought to his construction the fact that the Brazilian farmers were still in process of formation- “structural” determination which led him to see our farmers as an innovative “new class” (sic) if their contingents were mobilized by means of “struggle of class” and, on the other hand, the fact that they do not have a rebel background which allowed to expect from them frontal dissidence of the

oligarchic order. So the huge task posed to the partisan actor is two-fold: to mobilize and to disperse a group, economically fragile and of difficult organization and to improve agrarian revolution until it is converted into a farmer's reformist movement in large scale. As already mentioned, the communists had already discovered by intuition the union path which provided them with the rural performance. Now, on occasion of the Pecebist re-foundation in the late 1950s, Passos Guimarães gave intelligibility to this type of organizational-union mediation, efficient if the partisan actor recognized the weakness of the peasant basing all their acting upon it. If well-understood this Brazilian version of the "peasant problem", it would be also well-understood the issue of the "form of struggle" for land, perception which dependent on, according to Passos Guimarães, the multiplication of the "Galileia's engenhos" in the national territory if the facts followed the "normal" course of action (idem).

Both the Caiopradian's "agrarian and national" formula and the agro-reformist Pecebism here associated to Passos Guimarães do not encourage the peasant action directed to knock down the order. When opposites from and affiliates to the same paradigm- the bourgeois revolution of Lenin's new type - the meanings of the classics' agrarian revolution did not dissociate the content claimed in the agrarian revolution (in Caio Prado, linked to the restructuring of the economy; in Passos, aiming at constituting farmers' agriculturists) of the mobilizing way to be guided by the mediator. In this content-form nexus, both authors converged in the pre-figuration of the open arena to the direction of agrarian conflict: from the first classic, there was the union-labor law association (occupation and job conditions); and, from the second, the legalized peasant unionism- "partial measure of the agrarian reform" (land).

Different from Lenin's revolutionary model, in the Brazilian case, content and form constituted faces of the same movement of rural renovation under the economic system (capitalist) and enforced by the existing (liberal-democratic) political regime. This reformism laid on a mobilizing process "structurally" expansive while rooted in the "economic dialectic" (Caio Prado) of the Brazilian rural world. It was not the mediators' arbitrary work but rather a process supported by the associative potentialities of the "rural employees". This issue of the mediator's voluntariness was also a decisive one for Passos Guimarães. It fell to the partisan actor (opening unions) to create favorable conditions for the expansion of the non-stabilized agro-reformist movement. Although differentiated, the classics' constructions point to complementary dimensions in support of the communists' actions of that pre-1964s era, in spite of their only partial reception in the PCB, particularly in the case of the Caiopradian ideas.

While, with his theory of Brazil, Caio Prado confers strategic function to labor associativism, in its version of the "peasant problem", Passos Guimarães puts all emphasis on the assembly of the support point where the rural contingents would be activated from, which later on would affirm themselves as a peasantry endowed with farmer's impetuosity. It was a long way – as, by the way, if we can say, we would see later. For both the PCB's tactic union movement and the Caiopradian strategic unionism

to be successful, they needed to improve on the superficial level by means of a legal and institutionalizing associativism. And also, as insisted Passos Guimarães, of an actor's drive willing to act in the short term with great lucidity.

Constitution and sociability in Werneck Vianna

Revisiting the classics arises particular interest in Luiz Werneck Vianna's expectation about the peasant activation led by the Church and the MST. In public address at the time of the events of Eldorado dos Carajás, the sociologist from Rio de Janeiro said that in times of "selective incorporation" and "in-bulk immobilization", the irruption of the landless in the public scene was great news.¹⁰ However, it is in the book *A revolução passiva brasileira – iberismo e americanismo no Brasil* (1997;2004) where we find the context associated to Werneck Vianna's expectation. His valorization of the peasants does not originate from a dissertation about the rural world, but rather from recovering the issue of sociability, an old issue since his book on the weak bourgeois revolution in the 1930s, the already classic *Liberalismo e sindicato no Brasil* (1976). Now, in his 1995, 1996 and 1997 texts, published in 1997, the author refers not so much to the issues of the Brazilian passive revolution and the weak movement of the social actors, but to the new forms of animation of the popular world which would be emerging from the several cases of demands for interest and rights stimulated by the force of the 1988 Constitution.

Vianna's excursus instigates us to continue reading the Brazilian agrarianism in Marxist-oriented authors and publicists, a record of considerable appeal among the mediators still active in today's agrarian mobilizations. The reference to Werneck Vianna presents useful insights to the debate about other expectations of mediators and intellectual areas in relation to the Brazilian peasants and their social movements. Can we say that agrarian mobilizations are still considered revolutionary-type actions as in former times? Do these actions continue stirring up the imagination of a "project of society" (an idea that many preserved in the following years of Lula's defeat in 1989)? Or should they be valued as possibilities of social innovation, according to José de Souza Martins? This rather old discussion about the destiny of peasantry is the answer now for the impasse reached by the own MST, now defied to institutionalize itself in the democratic rule-of-law state we fully live in. The most active militant peasant's mediator would be questioned by his own – and well advanced – condition of de facto operator in this brand-new time of several public policies, many specific programs, diversified legislation and great support and counseling volunteering; the context which concludes the conversion of the Brazilian agrarian reform into an "amplified agrarian reform" (by the way, see PRADO JR., 1964; 2007; RANGEL, 1962; SILVA, 1996 and MARTINS, 2009).

Let us see two extracts from Werneck Vianna's work from different moments which, in our viewpoint, qualify the issue of weak performance and the mobilizing potentialities

of our rural groups. The first one is from the book *Liberalismo e sindicato no Brasil* (1976), in which the author so points out about the context of 1930: “In the Brazilian agrarian situation, the lack of a dynamic peasantry resulting from its lack of ties with the commercial society would impede a process of an American-type agrarian transformations” (VIANNA, 1976: 133). The Brazilian peasantry lives the circumstances of having here a revolution “from the top” restraining the activation which – as in example of the 1905 Russian revolution emphasized by Lenin – could improve the participation of the ones “from the bottom” in the configuration of social classes in the capitalist economy at the time of those decisive events of our history. Different from the average urban layers which played a crucial role in the 1930 Revolution,¹¹ the peasants did not participate in the revolutionary movement led by Vargas. The second extract of Vianna’s work (texts from the mid-1990s) will be reviewed here to emphasize the issue of sociability. The author revises in his 1976 book the key subject which covers its work: the divergence between social democratization and the weakness of an institutionalism which neither gives free access to new societal forms nor generalizes modernism. This movement of the 1990s has its as its strong point a second journey to the Gramscian matrix which will enlarge its record, with which the then sociologist from Rio de Janeiro will try to understand the national political life in the closest contemporaneousness to us.

In fact, in 1976, Werneck Vianna calls the attention for the weak dynamism of the peasantry in the 1930 Revolution. He refers to a circumstance in which the agrarian oligarchies linked to the internal market had allied with medium urban sectors giving rise to the revolution “from the top” through which course the country would move towards industrialism. As already seen, due to the dispersion of the bourgeois groups (Florestan) and the productive weakness of the economic world (Caio Prado), we would know a weak bourgeois revolution during which industrialism would increase under the protection of a very longtime interventionist State, as taught Furtado. According to Vianna, we would have an operating State far beyond the economic sphere which not only would become an economic potency to generalize its institutional plot making the way for industry but also would play transformism functions in relation to social groups incorporated subordinately to the construction of a new competitive order, here with endogeneity, sociopolitical and cultural rhythm and traces different from the experience of the European industrialism.

Through this configuration of “passive revolution”, proposes the author, the divergence between modernization and institutionalization marked our journey to the industrializing modern world; subsistent dissociation in former times from the industrialization of restrictive market and selective social incorporation, as Vianna referred to more recently. This “structural” mark would calibrate the process which started in 1930 not only because it lacked a revolutionary alliance between the urban economic classes and the rural subaltern groups but also due to the lack of peasant pressure from below. As mentioned before, the Brazilian case kept away from the Russian experience in which a strong peasant activation put an end to the autocratic

regime and restrained the Prussian modernization in course in Russia since the last decades of the 19th century. For Lenin, the peasant insurrection there opened the door for another type of democratic-bourgeois revolution.¹²

Brazil followed a different course from that country specific for the first successful peasant socialist revolution in 1917 (MOORE, 1983). According to Passos Guimarães, the Brazilian peasants were consolidated in the second half of the 19th century in the context of immigration which would create the small property in the country (PASSOS GUIMARÃES, 1963). After the Abolition, several rural groups resorted to “sporadic insurrections” and, in some areas, the conflicts took over armed and auto-defense forces. Only in more modern times have we known real social agrarian movements, particularly at the time of the affirmation of the democratic opening in the country after Getúlio’s suicide in 1954. This new time did not come from a revolutionary process but rather was brought by a pluriclassist mobilization which intensified quickly from August 24, 1954 until 1964, increasing the political distension. Those were times of the Brazilian “pre-revolution”, as Furtado called that activation in the national life. In those last ten years, several agrarian groups emerged in the public scene through peasants’ actions (Leagues) and mainly under the syndical forms pushing a political system (CARVALHO, 2001) already stressed by those years of national-developmentalism dynamization. After Jânio’s resignation, an increasing process of political instability begins. Without the consolidation of possibilities of a “normal” course of events supported by the partisan-ideological world, then tense and very divided, the political crisis developed in the first years of the 1960s, leading the country to the 1964 military coup.

In *Liberalismo e sindicato no Brasil*, Werneck Vianna resorts to the notion of passive revolution as a criterion of interpretation attentive to the weak dynamism of the social actors, both the economic sector which benefited from modernization and the subaltern groups, particularly the disperse and disorganized peasants. What we want to point out is that, based on the lecture of Brazilian context of Vianna, it appears to the revolutionary actors a canon of action which is not extracted from the classic Marxist-Leninist paradigm (LENIN, 1902; 1905; 1975). The left-wing publicist placed at that time (and afterwards) was called committed himself to something else: to convince the partisan actors of the social change that there was a process of social transformation going on here under a conditioning of passive revolution which weakened the possibility of radical reforms. That is, they immersed in a well-determined situation by the “facts” as if they were the real actors of the modernizing process.¹³ The publicist at that time – or rather, the partisan “collective intellectual” - was called to show the social-revolutionary groups which, in the course of the “revolution without revolution”, they had before them the “realistic possibility” to start pressures on the democratic sense in favor of the majorities; possibility with great margin of success if they acted by means of a potential politics in the forefront context. This was the Pecebist canon, as suggested in the previous section.

As to Werneck Viana, a publicist from the mid-1970s and early 1980s, he stimulated the renovation of his PCB thinking. With that view of 1930, the new author went beyond the Pecebists before him which had tried to fundament the “new politics” of the 1958 democratic front. So, Vianna followed the same footsteps showed in Sodré (1962) when, quoting Lenin, the historian referred to a “Prussian way” (sic) of a capitalist evolution among us and emphasized the strategic role of democracy for the renewal of the country (SODRÉ, 1962). Not by chance, Vianna’s partisan affiliation reveals itself in the centrality he granted to the issue of the convenient and competent presence of the actor in his circumstance. This feature is very clear in the articles he published in the newspaper *Voz da Unidade* and others written in the 1980s. Werneck Vianna’s outlook analyzes of that time emphasized the role of politics as a privileged operation field of the actor engaged in the course of the democratic transition after the 1979 amnesty (VIANNA, 1983; 1988).

Let us refer to the issue of sociability in Werneck Vianna’s later essays. Different from 1976, in the second half of the 1990s, the author places us before the circumstances of watching the manifestations, though late for us, of a “Americanization” process “from the bottom”. We watched a societal dynamism of a new emergent type since the last quarter of the 20th century, which increased in the 1990s in some popular areas in the world, particularly among the peasants. Its “yeast”, said Vianna, “was no longer in liberalism”, “or in the social issue, as in the moment of incorporating the workers into the world of social rights under the protective and organizing action of the State” (VIANNA, 1995; 1997: 23). Vianna argued then that the “cause” is the “democracy as manifested in the process of citizenship massification” (idem), whose “paradigmatic expression” (sic) the author rightly perceived in the landless. Due to the specificities of its social demands – land, “a political asset” – proposed Vianna -, “each of its advance in the agenda of social democratization has influenced positively in the advance of the political democracy, including because it leads to isolation the most retrograde sectors of the elites whose political support has traditionally derived from the exclusive rural” (ibidem). The sociologist from Rio de Janeiro had a lot of expectation for the emergence of a new peasant impact with a democratic-oriented politics which gave free course – to that one and other dynamics of the “ordinary man” – in evidence in the end of the century.

Vianna’s resolute reading of the notes the Italian Marxist wrote about America would reinforce the assumption that the new activation could mean changing in the pattern of social structuring. The author did not focus any more on the canon derived from the reflection of the great classic revolutions, including the passive European revolutions. By considering the democratic and equalitarian American society, Gramsci instigates the publicist, from the moment the Welfare State was in crisis and the URSS was just extinguished, to move towards a paradigm of a kind of “programmatic” revolution, different from the European model of the 1800s.¹⁴ America represented for Gramsci a new type of social structuring without the demographic composition of the Old World’s countries and their “parasite” activities which split layers to consolidate asymmetrical

relations between society and State, a very outstanding feature in the countries of late modernization. From this specificity of America in relation to the type of society and state life originated from the classic processes (England and France) and the “revolutions without revolution” (Germany and Italy with their passive revolution), Gramsci aims at another reflection: considering a society whose modernization did not demand a “huge effort”, mainly the decisive state supports activated by an alliance of a weak economic class (without the dynamism and hegemonic endowment of the bourgeois “universal class” described in *The Communist Party Manifest*) with bureaucratic layers, as typical in the authoritarian German capitalism (MARX and ENGELS, 1847-48; 1975; ENGELS, 1895; 1975; MOORE, 1983). Again about the paradigm of the 1800s revolution, it is worth reminding that Lenin availed himself of this “statelyzed” way of the “from the high” revolution not only to particularize the Russian context but also to distinguish the decisive role of the theoretically prepared Jacobin actors, as mentioned before (see Note 12). Once again, in sequence to the controversy brought to Brazil by the Khrushchev Report (1956-60), some PCB Leninian publicists also had in mind that model of Prussian capitalism in the end, offering points of reference to a left-wing field that would be distinguished throughout the years by a strong compulsion to act in the political sphere.

In the 1990s, Werneck Vianna, with his curiosity renewed, sought to discern traces of the fifteen years after the 1979 amnesty (not a decade and a half years “lost” at all). Vianna did not stick to the public use of the concept of passive revolution in so much as the interpretive canon mobilized in *Liberalismo e sindicato no Brasil*, with which the author would even see the PCB action in the “war of positions” moved by the colligated forces around the goal of re-democratizing the country (MDB). In his interface with Gramsci’s Americanism, Werneck Vianna turns again to the equation of the 1859 Marxist Preface, remaking the viewpoint of 1976 – of the economy-society-“enlarged State” nexus (with which he explained our first industrialism) - discerning in the issue of sociability in positive register. By the way, this issue of sociability was the arrival point of another important publicist in the area of democratic resistance when the 1964 regime started to become exhausted.¹⁵ Placed years later, the realignment of Vianna’s focus – from the passive revolution (which leads to underline the low performance-emphasis on the actor nexus) to the challenge of the “civil society defrosting”-, has another circumstance as reference.

Similar to the investigation of 1976, Vianna’s new movement did not consist of a Gramscian operation disassociated with the circumstance really posed to the political and social actors. The new publicist also tested his rethematization with reference to our social thinking with whoever gives better attention to the Iberian trace of our social structuring, Oliveira Vianna. Even in those 1990s, the author did not lose sight of the conditionings derived from the past (in genesis, the New State “risorgimentism”) that still marked the dynamics of the social life. However, his eyes are fixed in the “Americanization” “ ‘from the bottom’ of the post-64 period, his point becoming the

societal impulse of, so to speak, an “auto-organization of the social” symbolized by the landless movement, which caused great interest in that second half of the 1990s.¹⁶

Remembering the Europe-America nexus to discuss the issue of the peasant mediations nowadays requires two qualifications. The first one, to observe that the “Americanization ‘from the low’” referred to by Vianna was not presented here with the same American strength. Instigated by Gramsci’s “programmatic” paradigm, the Brazilian author saw in our more recent economic-social modernization (of “selective incorporation”) and in the expansive associativism (more and more differentiated) a kind of reconciliatory “structure” of dynamism which, if not having the Americanism impetus yet, it somehow looked like it. The second qualification concerns the conditions of general order (not dependent from volunteer action) that Vianna emphasized as firm support to that performance- the political democracy and its institutionalization in the 1988 Constitution.

For sure, the author of *A revolução passiva brasileira* saw that the societal dynamism of the 1990s was different from the Americanism while in America, the –economic-productive sphere permeated social life so as to decrease the distance between “directed and directors”, which turns out to be a feature, as referred above, of the experiences of the European 1800s, particularly in the revolutions’ “from the top”. In America, material interests, the social and state sphere were close to each other turning idle the demiurgic vocation of the bureaucracies and intelligentsias, mainly under the scope of a civic culture founded in “well-understood interests” and its “immediate” translation to social life.

In the end of the 20th century in Brazil, we were in the face of a new dynamism among the most underprivileged contingents though the news did not reach the “ordinary man”, as in the Gramscian example. The social activation of the 1990s was partly similar to Americanism insofar as the generalized awakening of interests and the social differentiation demanded more and more claims and several associative forms. By irregular course, our “Americanization ‘from the below’” if well-succeeded –in fact, a process of transformism “of positive register”, using Vianna’s notion- was still far from sustaining processes of American-like “auto-organization of the social”, mainly without the help of its support in democracy and essential supplementary conditions. Let us quote now the own author: “If the passive revolution of the territorial elites translated its program to create a nation for its State, the nation which is emerging from the process of conquering rights and citizenship by the great majorities did not create its State. The history of its constitution has been more on the societal level, late Americanization, ‘from the bottom’, which is fulfilled by a movement of molecular ruptures and its actions in defense of their interests and rights. Politics, however, is not theorize about sociology, and it is the only one which gives access to the issue of the State, without its domain a directed group does not convert itself into a director one” (VIANNA, 1997; 1997: 24). And Vianna went on (quoting himself Gerratana’s text of 1975), placing democracy “as the left-wing key-word about its form of insertion in the passive

revolution in the Brazilian way, so as it converts itself into the basis of an active transformism, supported by the actor's action, still waiting that this new emerging force from the social comes together with politics, including there its history in the country and its best traditions" (Ibidem).

The second qualification concerns the new appraisal the own partisan actor would extract if he understood (as in Vianna) the meaning of determinations in the social dynamism, that is, rooted in the "structural" plan of the interests and encouraged by the mentioned influx coming from the "superstructural" world (of the democratic institutions, of Ulisses Guimarães's Constitution). Therefore, if properly understood here Vianna's essays, we can see, on the one hand, that in the 1990s the multiple actions in defense of the interests, rights and other claims encouraged new social energies. And, on the other hand, which, following its expansive course, this dynamism reached transversally the most diverse groups and social contingents, thus strengthening social life, though it was not seen in the country a relevant massification of civil culture aggiornata to the times of still becoming a society in the course of considerable modernization under the full force of the democratic rule-of-law State.

Given the issue of social dinamization in Vianna's register, let us go back to the Pecebist point of the weakness-performance nexus of the rural groups. We can note that the news of the 1990s described previously would also come from the fact that that mobilization was different from the peasant presence of the 1950s until 1964, period of the passive revolution under the activation of very dynamic contexts (syndical associativism, student and cultural movements, activation of the political world and relevant areas of public opinion). Rooted in a large world of interests, the most contemporaneous social dynamism emerged under more solid conditions which, as seen before, Vianna sees in the more quickly movement of democratization of the country since 1979.¹⁷ The question posed now is to know to what extent, once confirmed a presence more and more disseminated of the "ordinary man" in the public sphere- like the one Vianna expected from the landless-, the forms of mediation of our times of full force of the democratic rule-of-law State would already be of "institutionalizing" endowment guided towards differentiated references of classic and more contemporaneous models (revolutionary party and inteligentsias; mediation agents driven by values). That is, the mediator activism did not legitimize itself any more in the eyes of the public opinion (which is similar to it and national) by the utopian energy of the disruptive play or on account of final causes (idea of radical change, future society, socialism).¹⁸ In order to develop, do the social movements still depend so much on the ideological-intellectual forefront and the religious appeal? As Vianna said in the quoted text of 1996, marking his stance in relation to the landless: "Our role is not substitutive in relation to them. Our role is to conquer positions in politics so as they can pass" (VIANNA, 1996a: 35).

Similarly to the Pecebist classics which consider the peasantry's "structural" weakness, the most recent actor also refers himself to this question as an important point of his

stance of the 1930 modernizing context. By bringing out the theme of an “Americanist” dynamism in the second half of the 1990s, Vianna proposed an idea of social change different from the ‘statedolatry’ of our tradition. His reference to the Gramscian notes on Americanism suggests a conception of an alternative “programmatically-type of “social auto-composition” to the breaking paradigm of social transformation. In this register, the Brazilian peasants are seen neither as outsiders prone to an anti-systemic confrontation nor their claim by land is vested in anticapitalist or utopian qualities.

In my opinion, Vianna’s account updates the not well-understood Pecebist tradition until today in a crucial point: the permanent search, on the actors’ part, for the best condition for the continued movement of the social groups in relation to the ones which are expected from social innovation- subordinating this search for all their action. The condition of the impulse which has encouraged our underprivileged, particularly the peasants, has been – and will be- the ground of democracy with more and more resources it has to provide (freedom and free associativism, democratic legality and public spaces; convergence and alliances, national repercussion and support by the public opinion; elections, parties, governments and public policies and, we may add, a discursive scene favorable to the ‘de-ideologization’ of the mediator activism).¹⁹ It is a much more solid ground today, different from the political system of the pre-64 era when the Peasant Leagues and, particularly, Contag unions emerged in the public scene.

Final remarks

The review of Werneck Vianna’s work presented here reminds Caio Prado and the peasant syndicalism of the Communist Party formulated by Passos Guimarães, in the sense of the expectation the author of *Quatro séculos de latifúndio* had in relation to the contribution of the peasants’ struggle of class to the reform of the Brazilian rural world (PASSOS GUIMARÃES, 1963). Innovation to be developed in the political context in the meaning Lenin gave it in *Que fazer?*, as a function to be built by live learning in the fields of interaction among all the classes in search of power (conflicts, hegemonic disputes, intragrupal collaboration). This generality of politics ground would be the privileged ground for the dynamism and awareness of the own social groups. It is worth saying, field in which the popular performance would be molded, in the case of our peasants- proposed by the PCB- by means of a certain way: during a non-peasant agrarian revolution initially rooted in a union associativism, determined as the basis of the peasant activation itself and so on. Due to this particularity of the Brazilian peasant movement, Passos Guimarães insisted on the task posed to the actors, mainly on the partisan actor. In the case of the pre-64 era, “progressist and democratic forces” to build unions far away from the rural world.

On the other hand, in Caio Prado, the main favorable condition for the rural underprivileged – a “great social movement” (sic) - by their “structural” support (unions rooted in the large sectors of the rural economy) it had been a “programmatically” meaning itself while this associativism would spread by the national territory taking sustainable new societal forms and regional dynamization (PRADO JR., 1964; 2007). While the last meaning of the Pecebist organizational tactics showed the underprivileged groups the way to their institutionalization as a peasant economy, that strategic dimension of the Caiopradian laborism wavered with its empowerment before the experience and the modern-associative knowledge of the syndical network in order to incorporate them to the productive sphere from where they could move on (PRADO JR., 1963 in PRADO JR., 2007). Paradoxically, this way showed by Caio Prado – and never fully understood by his party – is the way the PCB communists ended up creating when they founded the unions, created the Union of Workers of Brazilian Agriculture (ULTAB), in 1954 and, almost ten years later, structured Contag in 1963.

To conclude, we pose two comments about the issue of the form of rural conflict after the lessons the classics brought us. The first one concerns the suggestion coming from the general meaning which guides its agrarism – be part of the “productivist” restructuring of the set of social formation, in Caio Prado, and the practical-political of the actors’ gradualist acting, in Passos Guimarães. By privileging the modern syndical form, the classics did not pose the question of the institutionalization of the conflicts and their mobilizations after the beginning of the claims (conditions of work and employment, in one; and “partial measures of agrarian reform” and land, in the other). They conceived the syndical form of mobilization as an associativism which would be here to stay. In Caio Prado, the horizon of the mobilizing process coincides with the renovation of the economy and the local life where the conflict was potentialized by the syndical laborism. In Passos Guimarães, the peasant syndicalism aimed at consolidating in large scale the institutionalization of the emerging small property since the great immigration cycles took place in the 19th century.

A second and last comment as to the relation between the “programmatically” nature of agrarian mobilization and the way of the mediators’ performance, particularly the partisan actor whose presence is still important. The issue of the form of conflict encouraged by the mediators – either violent or legal-peaceful; of intensely mobilizing character (leagues; post-89 movementalism or to Contag ongoing way) – is not a minor issue, as it was not in the past. For the classics, the progression depended on it, and therefore, the force, the influx coming from “the bottom” which only a legalized associativism called to the reformist agrarian and rural process permanently. Registered in the political process effectively existing, today’s rural actors are called to accept unconditionally the democratic rule-of-law State, while it is still burdensome to search for legitimacy and efficacy out of the meanings of their own acting, either in internal ideology or in social group essentialism.²⁰ The issue of “form of struggle” directed by the actors continues minimized in the rural-militant area and the gravitating intellectuals towards agrarian mobilizations nowadays, even if this issue is coming close to the

institutionalization of the ongoing agrarian movements- either pressed by their organizations which fear them or by their adversaries on the other end. Nowadays, does the latter include any figures in the actors' disorientation like in the past? It is not believed that, among the defenders of agrarian reform, any kind of expectation flourishes before the conflicts which only attracts obstacles to the already advanced process of reform of the rural world, contradictory but which moves towards democratization.

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Notes

1 In the theses presented at the V Congress of the PCB (1960), in the issue related to the “role of the peasants in the revolution”, recalling here an expression of that time, we can see the following parameter: “However, the peasant movement resents of the great delay and is very low its level of organization” (PCB, 1960).

2 Sabourin goes on quoting the own USP sociologist: “This is about the most difficult kind of latifundium to fight against, one of the popular mentalities colonized by the central character of the “agrarian income”. Sabourin explains that Martins charges the landless of recreating an “insidious” mediation and adhering “to the easy profit their land’s rental to third parties provide them, whose mechanism he calls “patchwork agrarian income because it is performed by ‘the poor’”(ibidem).

3 For Caio Prado, the restructuring of economic life would result in the valorization of the productive element like the first European (and American) industrialism, the classic course the dynamic association between production and consuming led to a great expansion of progress in society. Here, the so-called Law of Say, according to which “the reproduction creates its own market”, collided with our circumstance of being in the capitalist periphery (PRADO JR., 1954). This was a “structural” determination to be considered by the Political Economy, taking the historian, in turn, to the theme of “productivist” meaning of the restructuring of our social formation.

4 This “structural” character takes the author also to differ from the Marxist Political Economy. Let us read an extract of the 1954 text about Cepal and the “economicist” developmentism at the time: ‘As to the ones who insist on the process of capitalization- the historian referred to the debate about the “solution of the Brazilian economic problem”- it is clear that their concerns are essentially turned to the productive businesses of which capitalization would be a preliminary. Surely these questions cannot be excluded from any given solution to the Brazilian problems nowadays. My restrictions are relative to the distinction given to them, without considering that, in my opinion, it should be preliminary to, or at least together with and on the same level of, the problem of consumption and market. In the Brazilian case, and between the two poles of the economic tool, production and consumption, offer and demand, I would choose the latter as a departure point and mark of the matter” (PRADO JR., 1954; 2007: 147).

5 In the annex “Perspectivas em 1977” and *A revolução brasileira* (PRADO JR., 1966; 1978), Caio Prado identifies the general meaning of his work as the symbol of the “notarial State” which Hélio Jaguaribe presents in 1962 (cf. JAGUARIBE, 1962).

6 Due to the little importance given to subsistence agriculture in the national economy (“mediocre” and “disgusting” complementary activity), Caio Prado refers to the “colonial subcategory”, the aggregated (“the socially indefinite” element), the “disqualified”, the “useless and unsuitable” and the “permanent unoccupied” (VASCONCELLOS, 2009). As we shall see later, Caio Prado would discern in the workers of great exploitation the strategic contingents to pressure the transformation of the rural world.

7 In the text written for the V Congress of the PCB (1960), Caio Prado said that the great concentration of rural property did not care about the immediate struggle for land as a key issue of the renewal of the agrarian economy (“This alternative only presents itself in proportions capable of influencing the balance of the labor market and the offer and demand of workforce, when the workers’ access to rural property becomes a possibility which practically does not exist nowadays”. (PRADO JR., 1960; in PRADO JR., 2007: 243). And concludes, referring to taxation as another “general condition”: “The practical issue we therefore propose is to provide the current conditions with the adequate way to facilitate the access to land property to rural workers”.

8 Old, this meaning of the “programmatic” Brazilian revolution seems clear in the 1966 book, particularly in 1977, when the historian emphasizes the theme of the “bureaucratic capitalism” (PRADO JR., 1966; 1977 in PRADO JR., 2007). In 1966, some communist politicians wondered the meaning of A revolução brasileira and charged the historian of not having been interested in the PCB performance in the democratic front against the 1964 regime. The historian presents his idea of the country’s economic restructuring minimizing (before b the AI-5) the dictatorial context we then lived in (SANTOS, 2001).

9 We can read in the theses of the V Congress: “In order to stimulate the organization of the rural masses, it is necessary to give vital attention to the employed and semi-employed rural workers. Due to their social condition of proletarian or semi-proletarian, and also to their level of concentration, the employed rural workers are more susceptible to organizing themselves in unions and can create the initial basis for the mobilization of the peasant’s masses. This mobilization requires, equally, that it starts from the current conditions of the peasant movement and has as basis the most immediate and viable claims, such as the decrease of leasing taxes, the renewal of contracts, the guarantee against evictions, the payment of the minimum salary, the legitimization of the ownerships etc. It should not be recommended, in practice, words of command which will not meet mature conditions for their achievement yet” (PCB, 1960: 73).

10 It was during Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s government, when the author posed this question: “What do we want? Thatcher or Mitterrand? I think we want Mitterrand and think we can have a better Mitterrand, or do we want to follow the path of this government and knock it down with an impeachment, or a street mobilization? Who does this interest to? I ask: does it interest to whoever follow the ongoing process of

political democracy? Then the question is not here. Who does Chiapas interest to? What interests to the group of democratic forces in Brazil? Bring this cause, this life, this new fire inside the political system, inside the public arena and from there renew the agenda of all the actors” (VIANNA, 1996a: 35).

11 It continues intriguing for the research the 1930 nexus- “petite-bourgeois-democratic revolution”, recalling this last “odd” notion to which Otávio Brandão referred about the time of rebel activism of the medium groups in the pre-revolutionary years of the 1920s (cf. ZAIDÁN, 1988).

12 Let us recall that in this point the Russian bourgeois revolution, by its peripheral circumstance, would characterize by the weakness of the bourgeois and proletarian classes and by the active participation of the past actors and classes called to promote the construction of capitalism in Russia. The theme of the weak bourgeois revolution showed Lenin that the possibility of Russia going to the modern world would demand the intervention of powerful actors (and the presence of well- determined party groups and intellectuals). Lenin’s theorization is in *Que Fazer?* (1902 and *Duas Táticas da Social-democracia Russa* (LÊNIN, 1902; 1905; 1975).

13 Vianna reflects his famous Gramscian definition of “passive revolution” (GRAMSCI, 2002) in his reference to the modernizing course without the presence of efficient actors (VIANNA, 1995; 1997).

14 “Programmatic” in the meaning of “social revolution”(sic) presented in the structure-superstructure symbol announced by Marx in the Preface of 1889 (the productive forces-production relations dialectic). Vianna points out a Gramsci who in the Americanist theme would not be a “superstructuralist” theorist the risorgimentist theme (the old-new dialectic) held to be true.

15 This is the case of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. In *Dependência e desenvolvimento na América Latina* (1967), Cardoso (and E. Falletto) pointed to an interpellation to the stagnating matrix which anticipated a weakness of the 1964 regime in short term. In his essay of the first half of the 1990s, Fernando Henrique’s concerns turned both to the criticism of the economic-revolution catastrophe nexus as well as the theme of the “defrost of civil society”, an ongoing news then which would be reference to the opposition appraise its resistance in those hard times. See, also in the register of the valorization of politics, the partisan text, “Resolução política do Comitê Estadual do PCB da Guanabara” (March 1970), written by Armênio Guedes (1981).

16 Let us quote this extract of the sociologist from Rio de Janeiro about the possibility then opened to revert the kind of expressive “English-like” incorporation, according to him, of Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s government: “... we should design an American-like incorporation, trespass border, open the world to the subaltern sectors, the new emergent interests, the landless, the homeless, the ones without nothing, to whoever arrives now, in a movement of ‘Americanization from the bottom’, guided by a

democratic politics which rules this movement and allows them to pass” (VIANNA, 1996a: 35).

17 In regard with that time’s democratic transition, we can read in the mentioned text of 1996: “It was the possible way and, as we can see today, interesting and important for the progress of social democratization, refer to the Landless Movement, which prosper on the way resulted from the progress of the political democracy in Brazil (VIANNA, 1996a: 33).

18 In the text “The institutionalization of social sciences and social reform: from the social thinking to the American research agenda” (VIANNA, 1994; 1997), the author presents the theme of, let us say, “dilution” of the intelligentsia’s performance like the externality of the theory-practice theory according to the Kautsky-Lênin nexus (cf. LÊNIN, 1902, op. cit.).

19 In his 1996 address, we can read about Vianna’s reception towards the meaning of the events of Eldorado dos Carajás: “Bring this cause, this life, this new fire inside the political system, inside the public arena and from there renew the agenda of all the actors. To do so, we must have an opposition. And not an opposition which not only shakes the social as hysteria but which does not manifest itself and does not happen directly on the level of politics, which does not forge alliances, which now, fortunately, starts changing.” (VIANNA, 1996a: 35).

20 See José de Souza Martins’s review of the Church “populism” (sic) in the Brazilian rural world (MARTINS, 2000).

Translated by Celina de Castro Frade

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