

A dictatorship against the republic: economic policy and political power in Roberto Campos

Ricardo V. Silva

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

ABSTRACT

This article examines Roberto Campos' political thought from 1950-1970. During this period, in addition to holding important governmental positions, Campos also devoted himself to struggles in the terrain of ideas, publishing a large number of articles and essays. Our hypothesis is that his political thought sees the institutionalization of an authoritarian political system as the most adequate for the cultural and political conditions of Brazilian society. The main characteristic of this type of system is the hypertrophy of State executive power – in relation to other republican powers - under military and technocratic command. The main function of the hypertrophied executive is the collaboration with and implementation of institutional reforms and "rational" economic policies, against the supposedly particularist and irrational resistance of different sectors of Brazilian society. This view clashes head on with Campos' suggestion that the regime that was instituted after 1964 represents a sort of updating, under prevailing societal conditions, of the ancient Roman republic institution of the "comissary dictatorship", in which the election of a dictator for a short period of time in order to contain possible threats to republican institutions was permitted.

Keywords: Brazilian political thought; authoritarianism; comissary dictatorship; Roberto Campos; republic.

I. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of this article is to analyze economist Roberto Campos' political thought through the texts he published during the period that covers the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, a period of intense economic, social and political changes in Brazil. Our focus on this period is due to our interest in shedding light on a lesser known moment in his political thought, a moment that precedes his intense neo-liberal advocacy of the latter decades of his intellectual activity. Furthermore, the

period at stake here coincides to a large extent with the time in which Campos became directly involved in planning and management state economic policy activities, first within the Kubitschek government, as president of the National Economic Development Bank (*Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico, BNDE*) and later as the minister of planning under the Castelo Branco administration. We will begin with the formulation of the following problem: What ideal political system can be found 1) underlying Campos' view of Brazilian socio-cultural characteristics and 2) in consonance with the proposals for economic policy that he formulated?

Our attempt to respond to this problem will be guided by the hypothesis that Roberto Campos' political thought sees the institutionalization of an authoritarian political system as the most adequate for the cultural and political conditions of Brazilian society. The main characteristic of this type of system is the hypertrophy of State executive power – in relation to other republican powers - under military and technocratic command. The main function of the hypertrophied executive is the collaboration with and implementation of institutional reforms and "rational" economic policies, against the supposedly particularist and irrational resistance of different sectors of Brazilian society. Our hypothesis clashes head on with Campos' suggestion that the regime that was instituted after the 1964 movement represents a sort of *aggiornamento*, under prevailing societal conditions, of the ancient Roman republic institution of the "comissary dictatorship", implemented through its Curiate Law, permitting a temporary dictatorship when deemed necessary in order to save the Republic.

The article is divided into three sections. The first is devoted to a characterization of Roberto Campo's work, giving salience to the peculiarities of his interpretations of notions of "rationality" and "pragmatism", both of which undergird his reflections on economic policy. This is followed by our examination of the author's view of Brazilian socio-cultural characteristics, emphasizing his analysis of the influence that the latter have within the arena of state policies. In the last section we investigate the elective affinities between his proposals for economic policy and his ideal of a political system that corresponds adequately to the socio-cultural and political conditions that reign within Brazilian society, thereby seeking to reveal the inconsistency in his attempt to characterize the post-1964 regime as a republican and constitutional dictatorship.

II. RATIONALISM, PRAGMATISM AND POWER

Largely conceived as journalistic articles, Roberto Campos' published writing from the 1950 to 1960 period deal with a wide variety of themes, such as economic theory, foreign policy, Brazilian culture, tribute to friends, overt or covert attacks on adversaries, etc.

Roberto Campos' intellectual production was never restricted only to academic disputes, and thus it is not very fruitful to portray him as a mere "systematizer" of a particular ideological approach. Campos' mobilized ideas as an instrumental procedure for the exercise of power, or more precisely, in his indefatigable search for control of economic policy: denouncing "errors" or "deviations" in the way it was being handled, formulating "realistic" or "viable" alternatives (when he was outside government), justifying his own policies (when within government) and above all, posing himself before those who governed as someone "with a career as civil servant (having passed required examinations) who understood that serving was a matter of *discipline* and not a *political choice*. At least to the extent that I deemed it possible, to make good in moments of optimism, and in moments of pessimism, retard evil." (CAMPOS, 1967a, p. LXXXVIII; emphasis added)¹.

Campos' intention to dictate the norms of state economic policy is, in our understanding, what confers unity to the myriad of small articles and essays that he published. In other words, his texts are better understood when taken as part of his practical activity, as instruments and resources of power. It is no coincidence that as a format for written presentation of his thought, he preferred the large press over scientific or technical journals, nor that he chose to profer speeches and talks within strategic power centers, as he frequently did at the *Escola Superior de Guerra* (Higher School of the Armed Forces) and for entrepreneurial associations.

Before entering civil service, Campos spent several years of his youth in a Jesuit seminar, where at age 17 he obtained a degree in Philosophy and at 20, in Theology. His theological background was also reflected in his style and the way, through his "Apostolic" ideals, he always sought to emphasize the struggle between good and evil, indicating to the virtuous what temptations they should avoid and to the "corrupted", what sacrifices they needed to make to attain virtue. He also gave warnings regarding the final and irreversible perdition (Hell) that would result from the descent into vice².

Yet the binomy good/evil undergoes a secular translation in Campos' work. Good is represented by all that is "rational" and evil, by "irrationality" and all that is "instinctive". This is the basis for his obsession with planning and organization, not only in relation to himself but primarily in relation to others, as he recognized: "That demon of rationalism has been pursuing me just like a shadow that I cannot step on. Once, while I was serving as United Nations Secretary, Gilberto Amado made the harshest and fairest of accusations: 'Campos is a good guy, but he suffers from a serious and incurable ill: he is not content to organize his own thought, but loves to organize that of others'. He was right. That is just the way it is" (CAMPOS, 1967a, p. LXXXVI).

To be rational is to plan, to adjust means to ends, regardless of what the latter are, how or by whom they have been determined. The economist, whose is attentive to the scarcity of resources, is only

responsible for maximizing the combination of these scarce resources in order to confer technical rationality upon the actions of the real holders of power. Thus, Campos attempts to present the work of the economist/planner as something more than just the search for or exercise of power, arguing that “for the politician, just as for the military, and perhaps similarly for the jurist, national power is an intuitive category: the search for power, an existential postulate [...] For the economist, however, power is just one object of choice and rational action for which economic means can be summoned.” (CAMPOS, 1964a, p. 35). Thus we see that the economist appears as a mere tool of those who really hold power. A technician holds no power resources of his/her own, but does hold “knowledge” that enables self-presentation as a stock of scientific resources crystallized within one individual. A de-personalized individual, unpretentious as far as power is concerned, insofar as he/she does not have the final word on how the technique that he/she knows or produces are to be used. “Economic science is essentially a discipline that deals with means and not a doctrine regarding ends (idem). Furthermore: “economic theories that are called orthodox are, like any others, part of an apparatus of analysis and a system or relations; they can be translated into behavioral equations, from which economic policy norms can be deduced” (CAMPOS, 1964b, p. 35).

Economic planning, the practical application of economic science, is presented as a technique that is independent of the ends that it pursues, and may be applied to the widest range of goals held by those who govern at any given time, since “in a general sense, planning is in itself politically neutral” (CAMPOS, 1979, p. 50).

In order to prove just how distant economic planners are from the real sources of power, Campos argues that “in a instinctively -guided country, in which theory is not taken as the crystallization of practice but rather as a nervous disorder, in which the swindler arouses the most frenetic admiration, the rationality of attitudes and decisions is not exactly a formula for political success (CAMPOS, 1967a, p. LVXXXVI). Unless, as we could add, the powerful are moved by the Cartesian exactness of technical solutions and predispose themselves to repress the opposing force of “instinct”.

Furthermore, we should not go on to conclude that the neutrality of the technical-economic solutions advocated by Campos, neutrality derived from the alleged objectivity of economic science, constitutes an obstacle toward adopting an attitude of resignation in the face of circumstance. A little bit of rationality is considered better than none. Therefore, if the technician is unable to do what he/she should do, this does not justify not doing what one can. This flexibility, this adaptability in the face of reality, so common not only in Campos but in the whole group of economist-technocrats of his kind, only becomes possible thanks to the pragmatism that inspires his

thought and his action³. This is the element of our author's *práxis* that enables him to prescribe what is not done or to write different things on the same issue, "adapting himself" to new situations. Thus, and not without some reason, Campos expresses surprise over the attitude taken by many of his critics: "Where does my reputation as a dogmatic theoretician, incapable of modesty before the facts, insensitive to doubt, unwilling to admit mistakes come from? I consider myself a skeptic in Philosophy, eclectic in Economics, relativist regarding History, and empiricist as far as formulas for social behavior are concerned" (ibid, p. XCI-XCII). In fact, his frequent characterization as an orthodox neo-liberal does not seem to be fair to the multiple aspects and stages of his work that, from the former perspective, would seem to be permeated by inexplicable contradictions, if not by incoherence itself. To the contrary, seeing him as a pragmatist (or as a realist, as he so often referred to himself), the privileged focus for the analysis of his work shifts from discussion regarding his affiliation with neo-liberal economics to an analysis that considers his writings against the light of his practical activity as a man of power. This pragmatism provides the source of reconciliation between thought and politics in Campos, during the historical period under consideration here. His admiration for the Brechtian words that recommended "the habit of reflecting in a new way for each new situation" (idem, p. XC) is no coincidence.

III. BRAZILIAN CULTURE, UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND POLITICS

There are two cultural types that can be located within Campos' thought. The first brings together the characteristics of "economic man" of bourgeois economics: frugal, inclined towards accumulation, utilitarian and rationalist, one who attributes more importance to efficacy than to aesthetics and who takes on self-imposed sacrifice to the realm of labor as a means for accumulating wealth⁴. This is the cultural type that is most compatible with economic development, although the author admits that similar compatibility may be found in other cultures. In fact, he believes that there are only two cultures that can be considered incompatible with economic development: "the society of aesthetes and the society of the bacchants. The former would be incompatible with economic development because it would not generate consumption; in other words, its value system would exclude incentives for material progress [...] The latter would not promote accumulation, that is, the desire to economize". Yet the author reminds us that both these forms are "culturally unfeasible, in their pure form". (CAMPOS, 1964a, p 105).

Yet if it is true that if there is actually no socio-cultural universe that is completely incompatible with economic development, "there are cultures that are more or less favorable to development (ibid, p.106). Thus, the cultural type represented by the "economic man" proper to Anglo-saxon

countries corresponds, in Campos' view, to that which is most favorable to development. And what about Brazil? What sociocultural elements stimulate (or inhibit) its development?

This is where the second cultural type that characterizes Campos' thought emerges. According to him, "the Mediterranean races (sic) seem in general to have a hedonistic bias that we are not able to escape. [...] We have quite an ability to imitate forms of consumption, with no corresponding ability to copy habits of production. It seems both probable and yet not possible to prove that our investor is somewhat more hedonistic than the Calvinists and Puritans" (ibid, p. 112). This excessive propensity to consume has become the main obstacle that Brazilian culture places in the way of development, since the latter requires the accumulation of capital that, for Campos, is not conceivable without prior accumulation through savings. We should note that in this regard, Campos' economic thought can be considered pre-Keynesian, since he insists on the identity of acts of saving and investment. He also gives little importance to credit in the financing production and the multiplying effects of state spending. Nor does he get anywhere near the so-called "Kaleckian paradox" according to which capitalists earn what they spend. As Madi (1985, p. 49) has correctly observed, Campos' conception of how accumulation is financed is anachronistic, since it is based on the figure of the individual capitalist of the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries.

And that is not all. Another anti-development "vice" of our culture is our preference for aesthetics, rather than the cultivation of efficiency. In Campos, we discover that we have a true aversion to rational behavior and an undisguisable tendency toward emotionalism. In his words, "Elements persist in our culture and character that are antagonistic to development. The first of these elements is the low level of rationality in our behavior, associated perhaps to our belletrist and commemorative form of education. The ability to externalize emotions is more highly valued than the ability to solve problems [...] This low level of rationality is expressed in the absolute ease with which we express incompatible goals, in the lack of fit between our selection of problems and the choice of tools, in the bad habit of wanting the ends without wanting the means" (CAMPOS, 1968, p. 294)⁵.

There is a third cultural element that is antagonistic to development: anti-competitive behavior, or as Campos calls it, an "anti-Darwinist propensity". As he argues: "Darwinism postulates the survival of the fittest through biological competition. We detest competition as a tool for improving efficiency. Paternalism, clientelism, o *'jeito'*, the excessive protectionism that certain groups have built around themselves, and the defilement of the precious concept of nationalism in the interests of protecting privileges and inefficiency – all are evidence of our fundamental aversion to Darwinism within the political and social arenas" (CAMPOS, 1968, p. 294).

Hedonist tendencies, a low level of rationality in behavior and anti-darwinist sentiments: such are our “anti-developmental” vices. Yet Campos does not let us despair. There is hope, since all those who are given to “vice”, if willing to subject themselves to bitter medicines and the harsh period of crises that are part of abstinence, can hope to be cured. In this regard, although he concludes that “Brazilian cultural circumstances are inauspicious as a climate for development”, he also adds that “the fulfillment of this existential situation does not involve *Moirá*’s classic fatality. It can be overcome. But overcoming it would demand a conscious project based on the analysis of our repertoire of cultural possibilities” (CAMPOS, 1964a, p. 112).

Thus, we learn that the formulation of a “project” can modify our character, freeing us from the secularly consolidated traits of our culture. But who will formulate that project? The answer to these questions requires an examination of Campos’ political and economic rationalizations and the type of political system that is implicit (and at times explicit) in such rationalizations. This will be the topic of the next section of this article. At present, it should be sufficient to point out that the project that Campos conceived of was one that was to be elaborated and carried out by the centers of political power. The responsibility for indicating the route to character reform belongs to the technocracy that is at the head of executive power.

Before further developing this issue, let us look at how Campos interprets the influence of socio-cultural elements on the attitudes of actors present on the Brazilian political scenario during the period that covers the 1950s and 60s. It is not hard to see that such an influence appears determinant in the construction of the political types presented by Campos. The “xenophobic nationalist”, the “pro-State paternalist”, the “premature distributionist”, “anxious clerics”, “obsolete youth” and so forth are characters whose participation on the political scene is only possible thanks to the flawed sedimentation of Brazilian culture. And all of this is said even before beginning to consider the “socialists” and “communists” who would be benefitted by the “chaos” generated by the irrationality of the conjugated actions of all the other political actors.

In essence, Campos’ invectives against these actors seek to emphasize the incompatibility between their attitudes and the realization of a “rational” economic policy. In the specific arena of economic debate, criticism is directed toward the CEPAL (*Comissão Econômica para a América Latina e o Caribe*) theses and those of the ISEB (Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros) (ISEB)⁶. Campos rejected the notion that the causes of inflation were basically of a structural nature and that inflationary phenomena could have any catalyzing effect on economic growth. While the “structuralists” sought to combat the imbalances of a reform program in which agrarian and fiscal reform were included, Campos and all the other “monetarists” would not admit that any serious

attempt to combat inflation could dispense with prioritizing the classical tools of monetary and fiscal control.

In opposition to the structuralist thesis, which defines the behavior of monetary and fiscal authorities as essentially passive, or in other words, as “propagation mechanisms”, monetarists assert that the real cause of inflation imbalance is the irrational behavior of authorities who issue currency in excess in order to cover growing state spending. They warn that even many of the so-called “choking”, inelasticity of supply or structural tensions may be results rather than causes of inflation. As Campos reminds us, “it is perfectly possible, based on Latin American experience, to demonstrate that a large part of this so-called strangulation was originally induced by inflation, although once this has happened it may in turn serve to increase it” (CAMPOS, 1967b, p. 87). Here, Campos inverts the arguments of his adversaries, a recurrent procedure of his rhetorical style. On this issue, Campos had been a step ahead of other monetarists who were less able to assimilate the intellectual efforts of their adversaries and subject them to their own ends. Campos argued that “up to a certain point the two conflicting opinions are not as different as they seem; their divergences have more to do with method and emphasis than substance. Yet there is still a nucleus of dispute, primarily around the utility of monetary and fiscal measures and the relationship between structural factors and the inflationary process itself” (ibid, p. 82). We can see here that the author was aware that this was a political and therefore not exclusively technical dispute. This explains his conciliatory solution for the conflict: “The identification of strangulations is evidently of great utility in enabling monetary and fiscal policy to have an even more useful active role: this is the point of reconciliation between ‘monetarists’ and ‘structuralists’ (ibid, p. 92).

Yet not all the antagonists that Campos encountered on the Brazilian political scene deserved the same “consideration” as his “technical” adversaries. When criticism shifted from the “technical” to the political field, discourse took on a less polite and conciliatory tone and became sarcastic and contaminated with the adversary’s contempt. It was no longer a matter of denouncing and “correcting” the mistakes of “restless” economists who had the habit of “inventing theories” and had little experience in conducting policies, but that of silencing strident and dangerous voices which were full of subversive potential in a cultural environment like our own.

A typical example of this contemptful treatment can be observed in Campos’ references to the nationalists as “grotesque figures” and “pre-logical animals”. His major concern is the veto power that these political actors have over “rational” economic policies and furthermore, over their very capacity to influence, generating “irrational” policies: “what I find most disturbing is the irrationality of economic decisions – the cult of the myth – to which our ‘nationaleers’ have given themselves” (CAMPOS, 1964b, p. 43).

For Campos, the irrationality of economic decisions can be little more than the other side of a sort of subversive rationality: “I have been pondering for a long time in order to discover why our communo-nationalists are so reticent to combat inflation. I have discovered only two reasons: The first is the sharpening of social tensions, as cultural ingredients for a revolution. The second is the broadening of State intervention, as the prelude to integral socialism. Within an inflationary environment, no service or basic activity can survive for very long in private hands. Squeezed between rigid prices and growing costs, the private entrepreneur ceases to invest, thus letting services deterior or production stagnate: the State emerges as ‘Deus ex-machina’ and socialism is implanted through the short-cut of inflation” (ibid, p. 34).

Campos’s contempt is not limited to political actors imbued with socialist and Statist ideas. Rather, it seems to extend to all those who seek to manifest themselves politically, taking advantage of our “low level of rationality” to speak of issues that they don’t have the least knowledge of, such as – for example – economic policy. This is the core of Campos’ view of the ‘political class’: “To a large extent our ‘political class’ remains prisoner of prejudices, is unrealistic in dealing with economic problems, emotional in political debates, and inorganic in formulating a national project” (ibid, p. 30).

We need not go very far to perceive: first, the complementarity between Brazilian culture and political actors’ attitudes (both of them infected by “vices” and “irrationality”). Second, the incompatibility of such attitudes and the political system that Campos drew up for Brazilian society. We must emphasize here that this system, up until the present point in our argument, has remained implicit. We shall attempt to make it explicit now.

IV. "COMMISARY DICTATORSHIP" OR AUTHORITARIAN STATE?

Campos’ post-1964 texts get more explicit about what could be considered as a project to reform the Brazilian political system. As we shall seek to demonstrate, the basic guidelines for this project are the institutionalization of an authoritarian-type political system which combines a set of institutional rules destined to demobilizing and containing opposition movements with the hypertrophy of the powers and the broadening of the freedom of movement of the technocracy of the State executive.

For purposes of our argument, let us initially take a look at how this author justifies military intervention in the Brazilian political process. Campos argues that in the Brazilian case, armed forces intervention is linked to a “function” in which “thanks to its larger degree of institutional and organizational cohesion, [the armed forces] are occasionally called upon to engage in the restoring of social discipline, in the wake of political impasse that can lead society to institutional freezing or

radical subversion. In this case, military intervention is the result of the failure of democratic tools, rather than a cause of political crisis” (CAMPOS, 1969b, p. 18-19). The supposed incompatibility of democracy and “social discipline” is noteworthy, since it becomes an element of negative definition in Campos’ project.

Yet care must be taken in interpreting the passage above. Everything depends upon what the author considers “social discipline”. He does not provide us with an exact definition of this notion, though it does seem possible to reconstruct its meaning in the light of the elements that we have been able to gather thus far. Considering Campos’ disquisitions on culture and the Brazilian political panorama, we can affirm that social discipline is broken when the “corrupted” elements of our character resonate with intensity within political arenas. The political actors that Campos considers, during the crisis of the 1970s, are no more than the political expression of irrationality, hedonism and aversion to competition. From there flows the author’s intolerance for these actors: “I abhor the facile promises of the demagogue [...] I abhor the paternalism of the *cartorial* State [...] I abhor the false nationalist” (CAMPOS, 1967a, p. XC).

During the Brazilian crisis of the early 1960s, when oppressed social groups and classes began to speak their demands and to occupy the center of political debate, the arbiter role of the technocracy was much reduced, in proportion to the new “publicity” given to class conflict.

We should emphasize, however, that such “publicity” given to class conflict was still at an embryonic stage. Workers in the city and the countryside were barely beginning to organize themselves for the autonomous expression of demands. Political debate was essentially under the control of traditional political elites. This led to a clear disjunction between emergent social movements and the interpretation of movement demands by those who traditionally occupied the political arena.

With this in mind, we are able to infer that a “lack of social discipline” corresponds, for Campos, to the process of political emergence of the workers of city and countryside. In other words, it corresponds to the politization of class conflict. It is clear that Campos does not define the concept in these terms, resorting first to the interpretations of the process that his own adversaries made in order to formulate their rationalizations. After all, several elite factions of the nationalist Left sincerely believed that the mobilization of popular segments would represent a prelude to a socialist revolution in Brazil.

In his examination of Roberto Campos’ political ideas, in counterpoint to those of Celso Furtado, Reginaldo Moraes has called our attention to two alternatives for the organization of the political system that Campos envisioned for Brazil. “The first of them implies a kind of “commisary dictatorship”, a regime established through force but justified by the emergence of a ‘holy war

against backwardness'. The second (which does not necessarily exclude the first) demands institutional reforms that would keep the real administration of resources safe from political struggle, particularly from the pernicious influence of voters, seen as a suffering clientele that is ready to be corrupted through the irresponsible promises of demagogues and opportunists" (MORAES, 1995, p. 95).

The second alternative is related to the ideas the Campos developed during the first half of the 1950s, while he was involved in the immediate tasks of elaborating official development projects, as BNDE president and superintendent. This political alternative was valid during the Kubitschek government, creating the conditions for the implementation of its "Plano de Metas" (Target Plan). The BNDE and "executive groups" were the main institutions of the "parallel administration" of the Kubitschek government, holding *de facto* power in the elaboration and implementation of economic policy.

On the other hand, this political alternative was soon to be abandoned by Campos, particularly after he left the BNDE in 1959 and consequently, made his exit from the government's economic policy decision-making nucleus. Furthermore, it should be noted that, for the technocracy that Campos headed, the alternative policy that had been consubstantiated within the "parallel administration" did not represent the ideal political alternative. It was a "compromise solution". (LAFER, 1970). Given the impossibility to carry out an integral administrative reform that would remove clientelist sectors from institutional power, Kubitschek decided to inflate the power of the organs of parallel administration, in order to obtain greater dynamism and efficiency in carrying out his Target Plan. This solution embodies the implicit resignation of technocrats in relation to inevitable co-existence with sectors that are considered as repositories of irrationality and inefficiency.

With the 1964 coup and Campos' return to the decision-making nucleus of state policy – becoming Planning Minister for the Castello Branco government – the resources that he had previously considered as scarce were considerably augmented. From this moment on, his political proposals moved closer to the ideal of the authoritarian State. Campos' second political alternative, the "commisary dictatorship", belongs to this moment.

Here however we must proceed with extreme care. In our understanding, the notion of the "commisary dictatorship" does not provide an adequate image for comprehension of Campos' political project in all its complexity. In fact, in 1967, at the end of his very "profitable" reformist activities during the first Ministry of the military dictatorship, Campos affirmed that: "With a notable instinct of preservation that guaranteed its three centuries of history, the Roman Republic's 'Lex Curiata' permitted the implementation of transitory regimes of exception for overcoming crises. This referred to the *dictadura rei gerundae causa* – dictatorship for carrying things out – and

the *dictadura seditionis sedandae* – dictatorship to subdue sedition. Our Institutional Acts, whose goals were essentially similar – to break through institutional impasse and expunge subversion – is nothing more than a folk version of the Lex Curiata” (CAMPOS, 1968, p. 87).

From our point of view, Campos mobilizes this image of military dictatorship in the interests of justifying the 1964 military coup and activities of the military governments, principally the Castello Branco administration in which he had a recognized role. It is a *rationalization*, understood as a “strategy by means of which the producer of a symbolic form builds a chain of reasoning that seeks to defend or justify a set of relations or social institutions and thereby persuade an audience that they are worthy of support” (THOMPSON, 1995, p. 82-83).

Nonetheless, this rationalization does not withstand the test of political theory, historical fact, nor even the very logic that underlies the whole of Campos’ argumentation. It lends itself merely to the cunning attempt to attribute some dignity to that which is intrinsically worthy of none. The ancient Romans accepted the legitimacy of dictatorship and considered it to good for the Republic, but did really know how to distinguish it from tyranny.

Machiavelli sketched out the essence of the Roman dictatorship with noteworthy clarity: “a Dictator was made for a (limited) time and not in perpetuity, and only to remove the cause for which he was created; and his authority extended only in being able to decide by himself the ways of meeting that urgent peril, (and) to do things without consultation, and to punish anyone without appeal; but he could do nothing to diminish (the power) of the State, such as would have been the taking away of authority from the Senate or the people” (Machiavelli, 1996, p. 73).

There are three essential elements that are constitutive of the Roman dictatorship, as they emerge from Machiavelli’s work: the dictator is chosen, rather than having any right of self-imposition. Those responsible for naming him were the consuls, this being a mechanism established through the constitution of the Roman Republic and not the fruit of a conspiracy against it. Secondly, the term in office is seen as transitory. The Romans took this temporary nature of the position very seriously, which explains why the Constitution had very specific stipulations regarding the specific period for which a dictator could remain in office: “The dictator was nominated only for the duration of the extraordinary task that he had been given and, in any event, for a period that would not go beyond six months nor longer than the period in which the cōsul who had nominated him remained in his position” (BOBBIO, 1987, p. 159)⁷. Third: the dictator would enjoy extraordinary powers and was allowed to govern over established law, but could not alter the Constitution, creating or supressing laws, particularly if this meant “obstructing the authority of the People or the Senate” as Machiavelli affirms.

Taking the above elements as our parameter, we will be able to evaluate the degree of fairness in Campos' rationalization of the 1964 military coup, in terms of the "commisary dictatorship". In the first place, there was no mechanism in the 1946 Brazilian Constitution that would allow the military to depose a president of the Republic. Nor were members of the military nominated or elected by the people or their representatives for the purpose of assuming the role of dictator. The corporation, to put it this way, self-invested with the dictatorial role and thus violated one of the fundamental principles of ancient dictatorship.

In the second place, it is important to observe that neither the Brazilian military nor the technocrats were ever clear, in any of the hundreds of laws that they created, exactly how long the dictatorship could go on. The Romans had established a limit of six months, though Castello Branco raised himself into power speaking of two or three years – and yet in the end, the authoritarian regime lasted two decades.

In the third place – and herein lies the main point where historical fact contradicts Campos' rationalizations – the military and the technocrats did not restrict themselves to governing over and beyond the 1946 Constitution but threw themselves into the task of substituting it completely for another, in the true "law-creating fury" of the Castello Branco government. Furthermore: the spirit of institutional reform reigning during this period showed all the traits of obstructing the authority of the people's assemblies, exactly the capital sin for a Roman dictator. If we therefore would like to maintain some analogy to ancient lexicon in order to provide a faithful image of the post-1964 historical facts, we should substitute the notion of commisary dictatorship with that of tyranny. It is matter of introductory knowledge of political science the fact that for the Romans, "he who took power for himself or, even having had it bestowed by the dominant group, used it to completely alter the juridical body of the State, was known as a tyrant rather than a dictator" (SPINDEL, 1985, p. 10).

The transitory character of authoritarianism could, in Campos, only be admitted if he were also to admit the proposition of a democratic *telos* regulating his ideas. Authoritarianism would then be only a means to the end of true democracy (or that of saving the latter from those who sought to annihilate it). Yet such a premise would counter all the political facts of the century that has just come to an end, as it would also run against the grain of contemporary political theory. The history of the 20th century has shown that, when autocratic governments rise to the head of the State, promising the people the attainment of greatness and future freedom in exchange for a transitory moment of the concentration of powers, the task to which they then feverishly devote themselves is in truth that of remaining in power, precisely at the expense of the permanent humiliation of the people through the denial of their freedoms. On the other hand, contemporary democratic theory

has risen up more and more against the falacious argument that it is possible to reach democratic ends through authoritarian methods. As Robert Dahl has argued, the idea of an opposition between substantive results and democratic process is completely spurious. The democratic process demands substantial rights and goods such as “the right of the people to self government and the distribution of power, and is the only route to the fulfillment of the latter” (DAHL, 1989, p. 175).

Therefore, if we were to accept the idea of a “commissary dictatorship” for the characterization of Campos’ political project, we would remain circumscribed to his rationalization of the 1964 military regime. What can be deduced from his proposals is not a temporary authoritarian regime destined to the salvation of the Republic but the definitive institutionalization of an authoritarian political system. Let us take another look at the matter.

In the first place, it is important to observe that Campos’ ideas on the institutionalization of authoritarianism were not fully developed until the beginning of the stage of “decompression” of the system midway through the 1970s, although some indication of these ideas can be found, implicitly, in the proposals for economic policy that he formulated immediately after the military coup.

As minister of planning during the Castello Branco government, Campos was the person who was primarily responsible for formulating and implementing the Government Plan of Economic Action (*Plano de Ação Econômica do Governo*, or PAEG). The PAEG was a synthesis of the political and economic proposals that Campos had developed up until this moment. With the gradual reduction of inflation as his chronological priority, he also sought to initiate a process of institutional reform envisaging the consolidation of what he referred to as “associative market economy”⁸.

Policies destined to combating inflation essentially followed the orthodox recipe book. Once diagnosing inflation as the result of an excess of demand, he proposed measures such as cutting public spending, limiting credit and in particular, holding wages down; together they were to result in a perceivable reduction in global demand. There was just one difference here in relation to International Monetary Fund (IMF) proposals: he sought to dilute the impact of these measures over the course of the following three years, opting for a gradual approach rather than the traditional shock treatment⁹.

This set of restrictive measures would according to Campos be incompatible with the validity of electoral processes, since “in the present conjuncture in Brazilian life, in which there is still a surgical problem regarding the extirpation of the cancer of inflation, it would be dangerous to elect populist leaders who are afraid to confront the long hard winter of holding wages down, which antagonizes the masses, limiting credit, which antagonizes entrepreneurs, and restricting public spending and subsidies, which antagonizes politicians” (CAMPOS, 1969b, p. 34). We can see that

the anti-inflationary policies formulated by Campos, supposedly indispensable and non-substitutable¹⁰ are but a vehicle for the justification of the interruption of democratic processes.

Furthermore, if anti-inflationary policy was a chronological priority of the PAEG, its greatest substantive importance lay in the process of institutional reform that it sought to unleash, as Campos recognized: “PAEG importance lay less in the implementation of specific measures for the reduction of inflation and growth acceleration than in the concentrated effort that was being made in the direction of institutional reform and modernization. In reality, the PAEG incorporated the larger part of basic policies, and it enumerated the majority of the institutional reforms and tools of action that came to constitute the ‘Brazilian model’” (CAMPOS, 1979, p. 63). These institutional reforms were not restricted to the economic level, but touched the social and political levels as well¹¹.

Although it had obtained a high level of success at the economic level and reasonable success at the social level, the “Revolution”, as Campos called it, had still not achieved success at the political level. “The dilemmas that afflicted Castello Branco, that he had hoped to have extinguished when he insisted on the distinction between the Revolution as a set of ideas that should maintain continuity and the Revolution as a process that should seek institutionalization through the Constitution, have returned. The two fundamental political problems of the Revolution continue to be the legitimation of its underlying ideas, through their institutional entrance, and popular participation, through the restoring of political party life. None of these problems is facile, yet both are urgent (CAMPOS, 1969a, p. 283).

The search for a route toward the institutionalization of an authoritarian political system is correlated with the mistrust that Campos made explicit in relation to the efficiency of the democratic regime for making “rational” economic policy viable. It is no coincidence that Campos devotes a considerable portion of his post-1964 articles to combating proposals for restoring the democratic regime, such as that of the *Frente Ampla* (Broad Front) that had Goulart, Lacerda and Kubitschek at its head. “Postulated as it has been by the *Frente Ampla*, ‘redemocratization’ would bring us back to the times of catastrophic oscillation between institutional rigidity and subversive radicalization. Without a doubt, conventional politicians have considerable ability to communicate with the people. But they transmit the wrong signals” (CAMPOS, 1969b, p. 23).

As we have already mentioned, the economic policy that Campos defends represents a sort of rationalization of autocratic power which goes as far as his assertion that “the new Brazilian Constitution [...] was conceived of as an austere de-inflationary and developmentalist tool” (CAMPOS, 1968, p. 89). He was referring to the 1967 Constitution whose institutionalization was much lamented by Campos. It is in retrospective analysis of the frustrated attempt at

institutionalization of the 1967 Constitution that Campos makes explicit what he considers as the ideal political system for Brazil.

The major element of this system is the institution of a “strong Executive”. Executive power should be armed with greater legislative prerogatives, which became possible with the creation of the “decreto-lei” (decree law) Let us take a look at the way Campos justified this: “The mechanisms of the new Brazilian Constitution, that give the Executive the power to issue ‘decree-laws’ on national security and public finance [...] are not gross by-products of the barracks, but acceptable instruments of a society in development, whose political life suffers from ideological aggression and whose economic life demands quick mutations and complex technical decision” (idem, p. 87).

Further completing the working of this “strong Executive”, Campos refers to the Security Law and the Press Law. As the author has made explicit, “under the first, the concept of national security was widened in order to cover – in addition to the traditional figure of external aggression – the notable modalities of internal challenge to institutions, through subversion and revolutionary war. In the second [...] compatibility between the right to freedom of expression and the recognition of the communications media responsibility is sought. The latter should not be transformed into vehicles for subversive propaganda, inciting economic panic and contempt for institutions” (CAMPOS, 1979, p. 241).

Counterpart of the strong Executive is the emptying of the powers of the Legislative branch, which was to have many of its functions re-located to Executive power, and thus come to function as a mere forum for debates on governmental initiative, largely deprived of real decision-making power. Furthermore, even insofar as its tasks of considering Executive decrees was concerned, the Congress would know have a pre-determined amount of time to carry out voting. Once this period was over, the project was automatically approved, since “time had run out”. In reference to the Legislative branch, Campos emphasized the importance of the two-party institution, whose greatest merit was to avoid “party anarchy” and stimulate “more programmatic and less personalistic, or regionalist arguments.” The author also eulogized the drastic change that had been introduced in electoral mechanisms, whose novelty lay in indirect presidential election through a congressional electoral college. Campos justified this change by the need to avoid “the extremely divisive character of presidential elections, the administrative paralysis resulting from long electoral campaigns, the residues of animosity that the disputes generate, and demagogic competition between candidates that take the shape of impossible promises” (idem, p. 245).

These, in short, are the main elements of the political system that Campos advocated, all elements prescribed by the 1967 Constitution. Undoubtedly this was a political system of authoritarian design, whose institutionalization would conflict deeply with the maintenance of a minimally

democratic political order. Thus, Campos comes to admit explicitly that “in the current historical context, a certain degree of authoritarianism is unavoidable” (Ibid, p.224).

But this is not all. Even with all these controls, Campos does not feel that he has defended his views sufficiently. There is still one remaining element of his project which deserves consideration. Campos mobilizes the image of the “commisary dictatorship” one last time, in which the “figure of the Law” appears designated as “state of emergency”. “The mechanism for declaring a state of emergency [...] is destined to attend to one of the classic requisites of the constitutional dictatorship, that is, that the identification of a critical situation which can be considered a State of Emergency is not the exclusive task of the Chief Executive and his cabinet, but involves the participation of representatives of the Judiciary [power] and the Legislative [power]. The duty to inform Congress on the measures that have been taken aims to deal indirectly with this second requisite, that is, that limitations on the ‘rule of Law’ are not indefinitely prolonged , which *would transform the constitutional dictatorship into an unconstitutional one*” (ibid, p. 284; my emphasis). Here, the image of the commisary dictatorship would be more plausible were it not for the fact that it emerges within the ambit of a political system in which there is no more indication of the survival of the independence of powers and respect for the freedoms that characterize republican order¹².

If even with all these controls over the authoritarian political system, “social discipline” comes to be threatened, the decree of a “state of emergency” would function as an absolute guarantee to maintain the authoritarian order. It is worth concluding with the observation that there is a catastrophic view of class conflict underlying the nucleus of concerns that Campos uses to justify the state of emergency, a very peculiar version of the commisary dictatorship: “We must frankly recognize that class conflicts in modern industrial society and the confrontation of ideological systems create new and subtle challenges [...] It is to these new realities that the ‘state of emergency’ is meant to respond” (idem, p. 254).

REFERENCES

BERLIN, I. 2002. Dois conceitos de liberdade. In : **HARDY**, H. & **HAUSHEER**, R. (orgs.). *Isaiah Berlin: estudos sobre a Humanidade*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

BOBBIO, N. 1987. *Estado, governo e sociedade*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

BIELSCHOWSKY, R. 1995. *Pensamento econômico brasileiro: ciclo ideológico do desenvolvimentismo*. 2ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto.

CAMPOS, R. 1964a. *Ensaios de História Econômica e Sociologia*. 2ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Apec.

- _____. 1964b. *A moeda, o governo e o tempo*. Rio de Janeiro: Apec.
- _____. 1967a. *A técnica e o riso*. 2ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Apec.
- _____. 1967b. *Duas opiniões sobre a inflação na América Latina*. In : HIRSCHMAN, A. (org.). *Monetarismo versus estruturalismo*. Rio de Janeiro: Lidador.
- _____. 1968. *Do outro lado da cerca*. 3ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Apec.
- _____. 1969a. *Temas e sistemas*. Rio de Janeiro: Apec.
- _____. 1969b. *Ensaio contra a maré*. Rio de Janeiro: Apec.
- _____. 1979. *A nova economia brasileira*. 3ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio.
- _____. 1994. *A lanterna na popa* (memórias). Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks.
- _____. 1996. *Antologia do bom senso*. Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks.
- DAHL, R.** 1989. *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University.
- GENNARI, A.** 1990. *A lógica da subordinação: aspectos do conservantismo brasileiro – as idéias de Roberto de Oliveira Campos*. São Paulo. Dissertação (Mestrado em Economia). Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo.
- LAFER, C.** 1970. *The Planing Process and Political System in Brazil: A Study of the Kubitschek's Target Plan (1956-1961)*. Cornell. PhD Thesis (Political Science). Cornell University.
- MACHIAVELLI, N.** 1996. *Discourses on Livy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- MADI, M. C.** 1985. *A vanguarda do pensamento conservador – Um estudo sobre as idéias econômicas de Roberto Campos no período 1950-1964*. Campinas. Dissertação (Mestrado em Economia). Universidade Estadual de Campinas.
- MORAES, R.** 1995. *Celso Furtado – o subdesenvolvimento e as idéias da Cepal*. São Paulo: Ática.
- MORAES, R.** 1987. *Planejamento: democracia ou ditadura?* São Paulo. Tese (Doutorado em Filosofia). Universidade de São Paulo.
- PEREZ, R.** 1999. *O pensamento político de Roberto Campos*. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas.
- PETTIT, P.** 1997. *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*. Oxford: Oxford University.
- SILVA, R.** 2000. Planejamento econômico e crise política: do esgotamento do plano de desenvolvimento ao malogro dos programas de estabilização. *Revista de Sociologia e Política*, Curitiba, n. 14, 77-101, jun.

SKINNER, Q. 1999. *Liberdade antes do liberalismo*. São Paulo: Unesp.

SPINDEL, A. 1985. *O que são ditaduras*. 5ª ed. São Paulo: Brasiliense.

THOMPSON, J. 1995. *Ideologia e cultura moderna*. Petrópolis: Vozes.

VIROLI, M. 2002. *Republicanism*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Received on April 25, 2006.

Approved for publication on August 22, 2006.

Ricardo Silva (rsilva@cfh.ufsc.br) holds a Doctoral Degree in Social Sciences from the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp) and is currently Professor of the Department of Sociology and Political Science at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).

¹ Campos was one of the main formulators of economic policy during the 1950s and 60s. He was superintendent and president of the BNDE during the Kubitschek government (1956-1960) during which time he headed the successful planning team that was behind the “*Plano de Metas*” and the unsuccessful Plan for Monetary Stabilization of 1958. After the 1964 military coup, he became Minister of Planning for the Castelo Branco administration (1964-1967), during which time he was one of the main formulators of the PAEG (*Plano de Ação Econômica do Governo* – 1964-1967), or Government Plan for Economic Action, and the ambitious Ten Year Plan (1967-1977), that was never put into practice. On experiments in economic policy and their vicissitudes in the political context that begins with the Kubitschek *Plano de Metas* and ends with the Three Year Plan of the Goulart administrations, see Silva (2000).

² An analysis of the influence of religious rhetoric on Campos’ thought can be found in Moraes (1987, p. 211-215).

³ This “pragmatic” aspect of Roberto Campos though during the period under consideration here did not escape the analyses of Perez (1999) and Gennari (1990). The latter author characterizes that trait in Campos’ thought as “dynamic eclecticism”.

⁴ This cultural type corresponds to Weber’s man instilled with the Protestant Ethic. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to keep Campos’ divergences with the Weberian conception in mind. For Campos, the Protestant Reform, although it could be considered a moment of expansion of the capitalist *ethos*, should not be seen as a cause but rather as a result of such expansion. On the other hand, he situates the true eclosion of what Weber supposed had happen during the Reform in another historical moment (the Renaissance period). “This [the Reform] was not the cause of the irruption of the capitalist ethos, but the result of a growing institutional tension located exactly in the fervent vigor of capitalism’s advance”. And this was explainable as “the sociocultural impact of the Renaissance and the portentous economic mutation brought about by Discovery and by the revolution in prices generated new pressures, that could not be contained by the institutional structure of the Church. As a result of these pressures the Reform was born” (CAMPOS, 1964a, p. 33-34).

⁵ It is worth noting that this highly negative judgement of the degree of rationality of Brazilians is something that accompanies the author through his mature work, that in many senses can be considered to contain more continuity than rupture in relation to the writings from the period we are covering here. In effect, in his voluminous book of memories, Campos continues to insist on the “irrationalism in Brazilian behavior”. (CAMPOS, 1994, p. 159, 225). Even later, in a 1996 text of his, we see that Campos continues to consider it a “rarity to find a Brazilian remotely capable of linking cause and effect” (CAMPOS, 1996, p. 317).

⁶ We were referring to the conjuncture of the early 1960s, since during the previous decade Campos debate with the CEPAL can be considered as more of a dialogue between close relatives than as a conflict between fierce antagonists. The fact remains that during the 1950s Campos was integrally devoted to development tasks, as president of the BNDE e formulator (together with Lucas Lopes) of the Kubitschek government’s Target Plan. At that time, to accentuate the absolute priority of restrictive policies to combat inflation would not have been a good attitude for someone who meant to remain at the center of economic policy control. Neither should we forget that Campos was one of the founders of the ISEB. It was only at the end of the 1950s, with the crisis of developmentalist ideology and the re-orientation of CEPAL theses toward the question of deeper reforms did Campos come to insist on the issue of stability. On this matter, see Bielshowski (1995).

⁷ In his examination of the Roman dictatorship, Rousseau also called attention to the need the Romans had perceived for established a very strict time limit to the period of dictatorship. “Whatever the reason for establishing this important position, it must have a very short duration and under no circumstances should it be prolonged [...] Once the urgent need has subsided, dictatorship is tyrannical or of no avail” (Rousseau *apud* BOBBIO, 1987, p. 161).

⁸ “The associative market economy is an institutional model that has presided satisfactorily over recent growth in the non-socialist world. Within it, different groups, such as enterprises and unions, place themselves between firms and trade unions, on the one hand, and public power, on the other. Thus it is different from the market economy, which is characteristic of liberal capitalism, and centralist planning, characteristic of the socialist state. Within the associative economy, the State has a guiding function, co-participatory and interventionist, but it does not monopolize production nor does it hand over all power to the planner elites” (CAMPOS, 1979, p. 211).

⁹ We should note that Campos’ option for a gradualist treatment to combatting inflation, in spite of the rigid monetarist recommendations of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) for shock treatment, is actually due more to his conviction that orthodox formulas are not viable than to the technical superiority of the gradualist treatment.

¹⁰ “The crude reality is that no serious program to combat inflation can dispense with the coordination of three elements – containment of government deficit, wages and credit – which are the three elements that are responsible for the excessive search for money” (CAMPOS, 1968, p. 121).

¹¹ “In general terms four different types of reform can be differentiated: those of a properly economic nature, such as the various types of fiscal reform; the implantation of new tax codes; the law of capital markets; revision of foreign trade law, mining law and legislation on electricity; those of a socio-economic nature, such as the creation of Funds for Workers’ Protection in relation to years of service, Program for Social Integration, the founding of the National Housing Bank, Educational Reform and Agrarian Reform; instrumental reforms such as the creation of the Central Bank and the Ministry of Planning; and administrative reform; political reform such as the reinforcement of the authority of executive power, indirect election for president, the institution of a two-party system and the reformulation of the functions and powers of the legislature” (CAMPOS, 1979, p. 45-46).

¹² In recent times, numerous scholars have devoted themselves to reconsidering republicanism as a tradition of thought that is geared toward the appreciation and defense of freedom in terms that diverge from the liberal tradition. While liberalism conceives of freedom exclusively as the “non-interference” of external forces (particularly the State) in the private terrain of the individual, republicanism interprets freedom as independence and the “non-domination” of particular individuals or groups of individuals over others in society. From this point of view, there is no necessary antagonism between freedom and law, as there would be according to thinkers such as Isaiah Berlin (2002). As long as law is formulated with the participation or

consent of citizens and is geared toward inhibiting the possibility of social domination it is not only compatible but actually necessary for republican freedom. Of course we refer here to a normative concept of freedom. In the international literature, studies by Pettit (1997), Skinner (1999) and Viroli (2002) have made noteworthy contributions.

Translated by Meryl Adelman

Translation from **Revista de Sociologia e Política**, Curitiba, n.27, p. 157-170, Nov. 2006.