

Chapter 6: The Long Dictatorship

The Coup of 1964, was referred to as a “revolution,” according to A. Rouquie. It was a dream of Vargas’ tenentes of a conservative modernization carried out by a “depoliticized state.” This military lead dictatorship differed than many backed by the US in Latin America because the political leaders put out the front of of “constitutional rule,” throughout the reign in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Elections were still held, though heavily manipulated and congress stated open, also highly manipulated.

The dictatorship used various methods to sink its claws deeper into Brazil, one such act was the Institutional Act, allowing them to modify the constitution and law. Economic power at the time laid in the hands of two civilians, Otavio Bulhoes and Roberto Campos. The two worked together to stabilize the economy by freezing wages, devaluing the currency, cutting the fiscal debt and renegotiating much of their foreign debts. Another aspect was to eliminate automatic job stability and security and created an unemployment insurance gimmick funded by a payroll tax. This was met in 1968 by widespread strikes among working class Brazilians. This coincided with students all across the world were protesting the struggles of their own.

In 1973 the turmoil was beginning to settle and the period of rapid growth was being experienced. The dictatorship kept the people from revolting by continuing many of Vargas’ social policies and benefits. By 1971, Brazilians were given pensions, the right to retirement, and medical care for the rural agricultural workers. During this time the military justice system was also in effect for past offenders and offered them a right to due process, but served the country much justice.

The new leader to be chosen would be Ernesto Geisel, who was leaning away from the dictatorship and more towards a free Brazil. He aimed to make the transition gradual and controlled not to repeat the same mistakes that leaders had done before, or leave an unstable government that could be easily taken over. In 1977, Geisel wrestled power away from the military commanders, and squashed the plan of an coup lead by Gen. Silvio Frota, as well as revoking the censorship of radio and tv emplaced by the military. Geisel's successor, Gen. Figuerido installed an amnesty law allowing exiled brazilians backino the country as well as granting immunity to the leaders that were guilty of "political and connected crimes."

Geisel was able to do the acts he did by convincing the top military leaders that a controlled withdrawal from their powerful position would actually benefit them in the end. It did not pan out the way the leaders had thought but served the greater good of the brazilian population. In 1982 elections, though still manipulated, brazil was able to elect their congress and the state leaders from newly formed and registered political parties. The regime took one of its final blows when Figuerido suffered a heart attack and loosed the grip creating a transition to a vote for direct presidential election in 1985, but was voted down by 21 votes. ALthough trying to rig the 1985 the regime lost to Neye, and for the first time in a long time Brazil was lead by a civilian president, but left with an economic mess.

As politically turbulent the 1930 to 1980 was for Brazil, their economy grew strongly, and it was the fastest growing in 1980. This growth was in part by the rapidly growing population and influx of workers. Industrialization and economic growth became

the government's main agenda, as the government become the organizer and the protector of the economy. It was said “ a nation does not develop spontaneously,” and and this may have been the case if the government had not bought out all the private industry, and not had the liberal economic policies for 1964 to 1967.

Brazil began to see some of the fruits of its labor by the emigration from the country to the cities and its ability to produce its own power. Oil refineries were built, hydroelectric dams were introduced to cut down on their foreign dependency. As all of the development and advances occurred the threat that would haunt the country forever still loomed over...inflation.