

The price of democracy is eternal vigilance

By Adilson Araújo

Monday April 1st (the famous April Fool's Day) marks the 60th anniversary of the military coup that caused so much unhappiness in our Brazil. Inaugurated in 1964, the authoritarian regime led by the generals only left the scene 21 years later, in 1985, when the civilian Tancredo Neves, former governor of Minas Gerais for the PMDB, was elected president in an indirect election held through a College Electoral imposed by the coup plotters themselves to replace universal suffrage.

The regime succumbed after an arduous struggle between the opposition, unions and social movements, which culminated in the memorable Diretas Já campaign, a mass movement that brought millions of Brazilians to the streets.

A tragic balance

The balance of the leaden years that marked the uniformed dictatorship is painful and tragic.

The generals reluctantly left the political scene, demoralized and immersed in the mud of the corruption they promised to fight.

The ruined economy, weighed down by foreign debt, was subjected to surveillance and recessionary income from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), resulting in the first lost decade in the history of Brazilian capitalism. Between 1980 and 1990, the country's per capita income grew like a horse's tail. That is, it fell 9%.

Thousands of Brazilian men and women were persecuted, unjustly arrested and mercilessly tortured by the military regime for defending democracy, national sovereignty and the rights of the Brazilian people. Hundreds of these victims were murdered after being savagely tortured.

Powerful forces participated in the coup and, as in 2016, geopolitics also had a determining factor.

The so-called bipolarity prevailed in the world, which pitted the United States against the Soviet Union.

Through the so-called Operation Brother Sam, the United States mobilized the Navy and Air Force in support of the coup plotters, a fact that testifies to the anti-national character of the regime installed by the generals, who, obsessed with anti-communism, revealed themselves as infamous vassals of imperialism.

Class coup with military support

The dictatorship was installed with strong support from the ruling classes, the bourgeoisie and native landowners, and in particular from the bourgeois media, which strive to present themselves to the distinguished public with the mask of champion of democracy and freedoms.

As the theologian and philosopher Leonardo Boff noted, on April Fools' Day 1964 there was a "class coup with military support."

The working class was by far its main victim. Unions were muzzled, and leaders legitimately elected by the rank and file were removed and replaced by regime-appointed interveners.

Job stability is gone. The minimum wage was cut. Even the inflation index was manipulated by an IBGE at that time monitored and guided by the military.

Freedom of expression and the press were suppressed, giving way to stupid and harmful prior censorship for our fertile culture.

On the other hand, to increase the profits of imperialism, the law that raised the tax on remittances of profits and dividends, proposed and promulgated by João Goulart, but challenged by multinationals, was repealed. In 1995, the neoliberal FHC government completed the work of the dictatorship by exempting remittances from taxes to the headquarters of companies based abroad.

Scammers don't deserve amnesty

The national economy, dependent on foreign capital and finally given over to the volatile moods of imperialism, sank into the swamp of stagnation.

Bankrupt, discredited and exhausted, the military dictatorship could not resist the force of the popular demonstrations.

However, the crimes committed by the regime went unpunished and the reckoning between Brazilian democracy and its executioners has not yet concluded. This was very evident on the fateful January 8, 2023, when extremist supporters of Bolsonaro cried out in front of the barracks asking for the intervention of the Armed Forces to depose, and perhaps assassinate, President Lula.

For the good of democracy and the Brazilian people, the new coup initiative led by Jair Bolsonaro and his fanatical flock cannot go unpunished.

Fraudsters who want to destroy the democratic rule of law do not deserve an amnesty.

The punishment of Bolsonaro supporters involved in the coup attempt and, mainly, Jair Bolsonaro is essential to strengthen and consolidate our still fragile democracy.

In these dark times, it is good to remember an old lesson expressed in a now famous phrase:

“the price of freedom (and democracy) is eternal vigilance

