

Foreword

For a very long time, academic research consigned the study of the political right wing to a lesser position. This can be partially explained by the contempt the progressist circles held for the right wing, which many believe should be consigned to the dustbin of history as a result of the expected triumph of the forces favouring social changes. This line of thought was made even stronger with the defeat of the right wing within the context of World War II, which led the most eager people to envisage the irreversible fall of the conservative forces. They couldn't have been more mistaken. In the last few decades the right proved to be capable of renewing itself and form new leaderships while at the same time they have managed to amass social and electoral support. Processes started some time ago, with the decline of the dominant left-wing models – especially the crises in the Soviet and social-democrat models – contributed to this situation, like what occurred more recently with the European economic crisis. Past is the day when the future of the right was grim, obliterated by the sensation of a surge in progressist values. The fact is that the right made its comeback onto the arena of the international – and national – political scene, which makes it into an even more relevant. For the historians the obsolescence of some processes or phenomena does not detract from its importance as an object of study. However, there is no doubt that up-to-dateness titillates our interest, as well as the occasional political implications of our work.

In order to define this political field more precisely we should term it as “the rights” – although the plural may be understood as being part of the concept – once the group is heterogeneous and branded by different political traditions. The establishment of the frontiers that define the field of the right can be a very controversial subject. It ranges all the way from consensual situations and classical conservatism and fascism, whose place in the right is no object for serious questioning, to the most complex case of liberalism, which opens the door to fierce argument due to current implications. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the very fight against the left helps draw the outlines of the right, once the fierce fight against the enemies is crucial to its consolidation as a specific segment in the political field.

Over the years, the right forces have built traditions that grew such deep roots that some of them can be identified as truthful political cultures. Much more than being projects of power and be based on a set of ideas, right-wing spectrum aggregates identities and include values that go beyond stricto sensu politics. Maintenance of the order, within the prospects of some right-wing cultures, means much more than the defense of property and material interests. They also fight for moral values and, more often than not, religious values that they feel are being threatened by the actions of the left. It is vital to take into consideration the complexity inherent to the groups of the right, to study their values and myths, their objectives, otherwise it will be impossible to accomplish the suitable analysis and understanding of this phenomenon so full of historical relevance today.

Such considerations explain the motivation to propose this dossier to the editors of *Varia Historia*. To make the idea concrete, a group of foreign researchers dedicated to the study of the history of the Right were brought in. The idea was to offer researchers of the history of Brazil - by the way, a group that is steadily growing - a sample of what our colleagues overseas have been doing. And the five articles in it show different approaches (theoretical, thematic, regional) to the study of the right. The intention is not exactly to learn or teach lessons, after all, studies developed in Brazil have also inspired scholars abroad. The main purpose here is to establish interaction, exchange that can be profitable for all of us, especially as most of the authors invited study the Brazilian context or get into dialogue with it.

The first text in the dossier was written by the Portuguese Professor and Researcher António Costa Pinto, who has published important works on the European authoritarian and fascist movements. In his article, Costa Pinto concentrates his analysis on corporatism and in its institutions appropriated by different right-wing groups. The author analyses the origins of corporatism, but most of all, its spread within the context of the years in between wars (1920-40), when it reached countries in Europe and in other continents. In his text, Costa Pinto shows that the ideas and corporate institutions, originally the fruit of the catholic thought, surpassed these religious bases and were shaped by different authoritarian and fascist political regimens, sometimes surviving for a very long time.

In the article that follows this one, North-American researcher Margaret Power introduces a study about a very relevant theme in the recent history of the manifestations of the right; the political activism of female groups. The participation of organizations of women in the 1964 coup is a theme that is widely known and is already studied in Brazil. What is new about this article is that it shows the transnational connections established by such groups of women, as it focuses on the networks built between Brazil, Chile and the USA. As an offshoot of a more recent historiography that has questioned the traditional concepts of the Cold War and the role of the local actors in these

disputes, the article analyses how the North-American right was influenced by the conservative women acting in Latin American countries.

The third passage of the dossier was written by Ernesto Bohoslavsky, an Argentinean historian, who has made an important contribution to the study of "the Rights" in the South cone. In his article, Bohoslavsky analyses anticommunism within the political and parliamentary debate in Brazil and Chile in the first years of the Cold War. At that time there occurred similar persecutions to the communists in both countries, which culminated in the exclusion of corresponding Communist Parties of the institutional political game, in 1947 and 1948. Delving into the study of the political speeches by right-wing leaders within this context, the author found a more complex picture concerning anticommunism as expressed by them. The initiative to ban the communist parties from the political arena was not equally accepted by all of the right-wing strands, as there was no agreement as to what strategy of combat to communism should be adopted. While some sectors favoured severe repression to the communist parties, other right-wing sectors advocated the idea that a total ban on these parties would be inefficient, besides representing an unacceptable act of aggression to the traditional democratic guarantees.

The next article in the dossier brings an interesting study by the French historian Stéphane Boisard, whose research has focused on Latin American right-wing. In this text, Boisard proposes some general reflections on categories and concepts originally developed for the European situation applied to Latin America. Based on the analysis of the main theoretical debates held by European authors in their effort to define the different right-wing strands, the author points to the need to conduct further research on this theme in Latin America. Emphasizing the importance of investigating the exchange of a network of ideas between America and Europe, and the way the European concepts were received in this part of the world, Boisard suggests, among other things, that special attention should be given to the periodization of the history of the right-wings, and that a proper characterization of these political strands in Latin America should be sought.

The text by the American historian Benjamin A. Cowan closes this dossier, with an enlightening study that points to the present importance of the theme of the right. He approaches the recent history of the political involvement of the conservative Evangelical Christians, who have gained substantial visibility lately. The originality of Cowan's work lies in the fact that he shows the process by which the Evangelical right wing appeared and its ascension at its outset in the 1970s. Scared of a change in behaviours and moral values, which they saw as being the fruit of the actions of the left, the conservative Evangelical Christians forsook their traditional practice of avoiding the political arena. They then started to embrace, enthusiastically, conservative political pursuits, thus clashing with protestant groups that followed a more

“progressist’ line. Following this path, they made an alliance with the military dictatorship, to defend the traditional family and Christian morals, against sexual freedom and communism.

Finally, the reader will have in their hands an ensemble of high quality works that show the state-of-the-art literature in the field of the studies of the history of the right-wing. The dossier is a bet on the improvement in the transnational dialogue involving researchers dedicated to the theme, as well as an invitation for young historians to come and join the group.

Good read, good dialogue.

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