

DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIZATION

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The democracy in Brazil it is not the democracy of our dreams, but it is a democracy that already forces the politicians to think about the demands of the poor

The first round of the presidential elections was another good confirmation that democracy is consolidated in Brazil. It is not the democracy of our dreams, it is not just the government of the people, but it is a democracy that already forces the politicians to think about the demands of the poor and to try to meet them. Not always with the same commitment, not always with the same competence. But the fact is that during the 25 years of our young democracy the people was heard, inequality decreased, and the poor improved their standard of living.

This does not mean that the poor always profit from democracy. In rich countries, during Capitalism's 30 Neoliberal Years (1979-2008), it was the very rich who became even richer. The poor and the middle class saw their revenues stagnate in spite of the ongoing technological progress and economic growth. Although neoliberalism always spoke in the name of democracy, it was actually against it, as we saw in the extreme case of the Iraq war and now in the Afghanistan War. It was, of course, an authoritarianism against another authoritarianism, but the authoritarianism of the two invaded countries was happening within their own home, whereas the other one was confused with imperialism.

Economic elites have always been opposed to democracy. They only accepted it because they could no longer resist the pressure of the poor and of the middle class. But always with reservations. Always afraid of the “dictatorship of the majority”, always afraid of expropriation by the poor. They only accepted democracy when they realized that there was no such danger. That, on the contrary, in a society that had already

achieved its capitalist revolution and presented a large middle class, democracy was after all safer than the vote based on tax quota [*"censitário"*] of the liberal authoritarianism.

Brazil achieved its capitalist revolution in the mid-1970s. From then on, the economic surplus appropriation no longer depended on the State's direct control and took place in the market. This is why the democratic transition was inevitable; this is why Brazilian democracy is consolidated. But there is still a lot to do to improve the quality of democracy, to pursue democratization. In this area, the main challenge is to grow faster, because the economic development opens up opportunity for improving the standards of living, decreasing inequality and protecting the environment; the main difficulty is the tendency to the cyclic overvaluation of the exchange rate; and the main task is always education, because education is the condition for the economic development itself, for the continuity of democratization and for the affirmation of citizenship.

Brazil went in that direction since the Itamar Franco administration. After the Real Plan it might have grown much more, should it have combined fiscal responsibility with exchange rate responsibility; should it have adopted the new-developmentist strategy based on those two responsibilities, as the dynamic Asian countries do. Both candidates to the runoff elections promise to do it. To build a national development strategy together with the nation is not an easy task, but I believe that Brazilian people and its democracy are ready for it.