

Part II: The Land of the Future?

The abolition of slavery in Brazil challenged the very foundations on which Brazilian society and economy had grown. With abolition came yet another decisive moment of self-definition for Brazil. How would the Brazilian economy, the largest slave economy in the modern world, function without forced labor? How would the remaining former slaves be incorporated into Brazilian society? How would this newly expanded society of free men and women govern itself? The question of government would arise over and over again throughout the next one hundred years.

The Making of a New Brazil

Abolition brought with it critical questions. The first and foremost for most was Brazil's government. Many people felt that with the freeing of Brazilian slaves, a new nation of Brazilians that had outgrown a monarchical system of rule had been created. Though he was incredibly popular in his earlier years, Pedro II lost significant support after the Paraguayan War. By the 1880s several factions within the Brazilian elite were discussing plans to bring an end to the empire. One important group was the military.

How did Brazil become a republic?

The military, distanced from and disillusioned with government, decided to stage a coup to overthrow the emperor. On November 15, 1889 a bloodless coup ousted the now old and ailing Emperor Pedro II from the throne. The emperor and his family took exile in France. Many former officials of the empire and people with close ties to the emperor left Brazil as well.

Like independence and abolition, this transition was not a social revolution of the masses, but one made by the actions of elites. Power shifted from the imperial administration to the military, but the general population remained largely excluded from politics.

Brazil's first military government was led by a military *junta* (a group of generals) who formed a republic. Brazil was quickly divided into eighteen governing states. The states were given autonomy and powers for self-government. States were allowed to possess standing militias and place tariffs on imports. Illiterate citizens, (who were the overwhelming majority), as well as women were not allowed to vote in their states, leaving only highly-educated men to vote and hold office. At the national level, a president would be elected as the head of the Brazilian government.

What caused an influx of immigrants?

The time from the beginning of the republic in 1889 until it was overthrown by another military coup in 1930 was one of the most important in terms of defining Brazilian society. The era was marked by large waves of immigration and the emergence of new cultural forms in Brazil. During this time, Brazil also became increasingly prominent internationally. A significant number of scientists and artists came to the country. These visitors influenced how Europe saw Brazil and brought new political and scientific ideas with them as well.

The 1880s saw a great number of European, Asian, and Latin American immigrants begin to arrive in Brazil. The abolition of slavery promised greater chances to be employed and for entrepreneurs to employ an emerging workforce. In two years the number of immigrants increased by more than 400 percent from 33,000 in 1886 to 132,000 in 1888. The greatest number of immigrants came from Italy, Spain, Germany, and Portugal and settled primarily in the more developed southern regions near the city of São Paulo. Additionally, many Japanese immigrants settled in Brazil beginning in 1907, forming the largest Japanese community outside of Japan.

What was the government's policy toward immigration?

The government actively promoted immigration, particularly from Europe. European immigrants were encouraged, in part, as a way of “whitening” Brazil. Many believed that the only way Brazil would be accepted as a power on the world stage was to look more like the other world powers—whiter. As in the colonial era, miscegenation was widely practiced, but now it was a deliberate aim of many in the country.

The desire for assimilation was not limited to skin color, but also applied to culture. Just as it was hoped that European immigrants would whiten Brazil's skin color, it was hoped that they would “whiten” its culture. Efforts were made to Europeanize Brazil and particularly large cities like Rio de Janeiro. An example of one European tradition that was brought to Brazil is carnival, called *carnaval* in Portuguese. Brazilian *carnaval* originated as a yearly celebration preceding Lent on the Catholic calendar. The nationwide festivities surrounding this annual event have become famous the world over.

While cultural integration certainly occurred, it did not so much result in a Europeanized society as it did a new society altogether. Afro-Brazilian culture met European culture and created new artistic forms, most notably *samba* which has come to define the yearly event of *carnaval*. Some felt this was a perversion of the celebration.

“I am referring to the great celebration of Carnival and the abuse being made of it...and also to the way this celebration of Civilization has become Africanized among us.... I find that the authorities should prohibit those [African drum sessions] and candombles [African religious rituals] that in such quantity are overflowing on our streets these days, producing such great cacophonous noise, as well as those masquerades dressed up in [typical black costumes] singing their

traditional samba, because all of that is incompatible with our civilized state.”

—A 1901 letter to the editor in the *Jornal de Noticias do Bahia*

Variations of carnival exist around the world. The three best-known take place in Rio de Janeiro, New Orleans (where the celebration is called Mardi Gras), and Venice, Italy. Brazilian *carnaval* celebrations feature elaborate parades, masquerades, and other festivities. Brazilian *carnaval* draws tourists from all around the world and lasts several days. Today, Brazilian *carnaval* is less defined by its religious origins than by current forms of cultural expression in Brazil. Many Brazilians belong to clubs called “*samba* schools,” which prepare year-round to compete against other schools in large *samba* dance competitions. Throughout Brazil all different kinds of people can be seen dressed up in elaborate costume—some riding floats in large parades, others attending *carnaval* balls or other festivities. To many, *carnaval* is one of the most authentically Brazilian features of the culture.

How did industrialization occur?

At the dawn of the twentieth century, many Brazilians called Brazil “the land of the future.” Symbolic of the era as a whole, the government introduced a new national flag, which remains to this day, reading: “Order and Progress.” The Brazilian government did not pursue progress through industrialization. Instead, the government continued to follow an economic strategy of exporting products like sugar and coffee. Industrialization was spearheaded by the private sector. A new class of entrepreneurial immigrants, largely Italian and Lebanese by descent, also contributed to the growth of industry in Brazil. Industrialization had a profound impact on the country. One important outcome was the growth of cities.

Industrial activity in factories brought thousands of people to the cities. The urban centers of Brazil swelled. São Paulo in particular, as Brazil's industrial center, grew rapidly to become the world's fourth largest city today.

The process of urbanization would continue to pick up speed throughout the twentieth century. In 1960, 45 percent of Brazil's population lived in cities. By 1999, 81 percent of Brazilians lived in urban areas. In the course of one hundred years, Brazil transformed from a predominantly rural nation to an overwhelmingly urban one.

What impact did cities have on Brazilian society?

Urbanization brought with it fundamental changes to Brazil. Most notable among these changes was the emergence of the urban *favela* (slum), the upsurge in crime in Brazil's urban areas, and the growth of the working class. The first *favelas* formed on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro as a result of widespread rural-urban migration and a shortage of formal housing. Some of these settlements were established by the government in the 1940s and 1950s in response to the housing crisis, while others sprang up more informally.

As the urban population grew, so too did crime. Gang activity, drug trafficking, and homicide rose abruptly. Brazil's crime rate became one of the highest in the world.

Urbanization also led to the creation of

a new Brazilian working class. The working class consisted of low-wage urban workers—often the inhabitants of *favelas*.

“The favela is not a problem of...urban planning.... The favela is a solution to an economic problem—the problem of maintaining cheap labor to produce goods and services.”

—Benedita da Silva, Brazilian politician

Wages remained low because of the large number of unemployed people willing to work for very little money. If a worker agitated for greater wages, he or she could be replaced by someone willing to work for less. Because there were more people than there were jobs, many people were forced into what is called the “informal sector” of the economy. The informal sector is made up of workers not legally recognized as employees of an organization but who instead work on an informal basis, selling food in a market or newspapers on the street corner, for example.

Workers' unions emerged as early as 1900 and would be increasingly important by the 1920s. In spite of this, workers remained without many rights. A union is a group of workers, usually within one industry, who are able to collectively bargain with employers and agitate for rights. When workers' needs or demands are not met by their employers, they often strike until a compromise is reached. Political organization around workers' rights would become a defining feature of the twentieth century in Brazil. One early example of such a political organization was the Brazilian Communist Party, founded in 1922. Communism—and the fight against perceived communist threats—would



The Brazilian flag, created in 1889, shows the constellations of stars as they appeared on the night that Pedro II was deposed and Brazil became a republic. Each star represents a state, so there have been minor changes to the flag as more states have formed over the years.

play an important role in the presidency of Brazil's next leader, Getúlio Vargas, and in years to follow.

The Vargas Era

In 1929, a presidential election was scheduled in which the public would decide between two candidates by the names of Júlio Prestes and Getúlio Vargas. When Prestes, the São Paulo candidate, won the election, supporters of Vargas staged a coup backed by renegades of the military to overthrow the government. By 1930 Vargas had gained full presidential authority. Although he would remain in power only until 1945, Vargas' policies and reforms would survive, with adaptations and variances, until the mid-1980s.

Who was Getúlio Vargas?

The first eight years of Vargas's presidency were marked by a series of political maneuvers to extend and legitimate his rule. In November 1930 he declared a state of emergency (due to the worldwide economic depression) and claimed full state authority. In 1935, Luiz Prestes, leader of the Communist Party, attempted a counter-coup backed by the Soviet Union. It was unsuccessful. Fearing communist infiltration and the loss of his office, Vargas increased his powers. The repression of potential dissidents, particularly communist threats, remained a top priority for the Vargas regime.

“The government continues vigilant in the repression of extremism and is going to segregate in fortified military prisons and agricultural colonies, all those agitating elements, recognized by their seditious activities or condemned by political crimes. We will not permit that the struggle and patriotic dedication of the good Brazilians might come to endure turmoil and alarms originated by the personalistic ambitions, or ideological craziness

of false prophets and vulgar demagogues....”

—Getúlio Vargas, 1938

A presidential election had been scheduled for 1938, but in 1937 Vargas called off the election and wrote a new Brazilian constitution. Brazil was now a dictatorship. Vargas' stated goals as Brazil's leader were threefold: to establish a stable government, to help Brazil grow economically, and to improve the lives of urban workers. He introduced a strategy called “corporatism,” already practiced in Germany, Italy, Spain, and Portugal at the time, to attempt to meet these aims.

Corporatism is a system whereby the government coordinates all economic activity within the country by controlling the distribution of working licenses to employers, the management of workers' unions, and the regulation of the economy. Corporatism strengthened the power of the government both legally and politically. Legally, it increased the sheer power of government. Politically, by controlling the way that workers were able to organize (and prohibiting strikes), the government reduced the political power of workers who could potentially organize themselves in opposition to the government.

What is patronage-based politics?

While Vargas presented himself as committed to workers rights, his corporatist policies suppressed many rights of the workers. Vargas maintained a stronghold on authority. He granted requests and extended favors to people selectively in return for their political support. He used this method with state-appointed union leaders, offering certain favors (usually money or promotions) in return for the assurance that union workers would not rise up or challenge Vargas' authority. He used a similar tactic to ensure that the military did not overthrow him: he increased military budgets and military salaries. (Ultimately, this attempt would fail and the military would force him to leave power.)

This method of conducting politics is called “patronage.” Patronage is a relationship between a given “patron” (in this case, Vargas) who distributes favors to a set of “clients” (in this case, select political figures) who serve the patron’s particular interests. Patronage-based politics would prove a trend in the decades to come.

What else is Vargas remembered for?

In addition to developing a group of loyal “clients,” Vargas, like Pedro II, was aware of the great importance popular culture plays in holding a country together. Vargas sponsored *carnaval* activities and even funded *samba* schools. Vargas held political rallies at soccer stadiums, capitalizing on the growing national sport.

Another feature of Vargas’ legacy was World War II. In office during the war, Vargas was initially torn between supporting Germany or the Allies. Not only did Brazil have economic ties with Germany, but also, philosophically, the two countries shared some similarities in their forms of government. Brazil eventually entered World War II on the Allies’ side. Brazilian troops fought in several critical battles in Italy. It was the only time in Brazilian history that troops were deployed in a European war.

Why did Vargas lose his office?

With increasing pressure mounting for Vargas to relinquish power by the 1940s, the leader decided to allow for a popular election in 1945. The military was concerned that Vargas would end up calling off the election once again. As a result, the military intervened, forcing Vargas to leave office, and oversaw the 1945 election itself. Eurico Dutra, a military general, won the election. Dutra would rule for fewer than five years, during which time he reversed Vargas’ economic policy. Dutra reintroduced liberal economic policies and reemphasized coffee production over manufacturing. Meanwhile Vargas had won a democratic election to the Senate.

In 1950, Vargas was democratically elected president of Brazil once more. He returned to power at a difficult time. Brazil’s economy was lagging and the country was not bringing in enough money. Brazil was forced to turn to external sources for loans, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which forced the country to implement an economic stabilization project in order to receive the loan.

What are stabilization projects?

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were created in 1944 to assist international finance, aid international economic development, and decrease

Futebol

Soccer, or *futebol* as it is called in Portuguese, came to Brazil in the 1890s with British sailors. Brazilian soccer began as an elite sport played at private athletic clubs. By the early twentieth century, soccer clubs had begun to form throughout all of society. In the 1930s soccer became a truly national phenomenon. Vargas promoted soccer clubs throughout the country and created a National Council of Sports. Brazil gained international acclaim when it won the World Cup in 1958; by the 1960s Brazil was a legend in soccer. An epic player named Edson Arantes do Nascimento, called simply Pelé, accounts for Brazil’s rise to international fame. Pelé brought three World Cup titles home to Brazil and became known as the best player the sport had ever seen.

A source of great national pride, soccer spills over into other aspects of Brazilian life, including politics. The military dictatorship, which began in 1964, often attempted to use Brazil’s international soccer success for political purposes. In 1982, as an intense debate raged in Brazil about the country’s political future, one of the country’s largest teams won a championship with the word *Democracia* [democracy] printed on the backs of their shirts. The message was clear.

countries' debts. The World Bank and the IMF became increasingly active on the world stage in the 1950s and 1960s with the implementation of financial assistance projects in countries around the world. These projects aimed to stabilize domestic economies, spur economic growth, and ultimately get poor nations out of debt. Stabilization projects involved the implementation of a series of financial policies that sought to decrease government spending and increase business revenues, which often included cutting wages and laying off workers.

Stabilization, sometimes referred to as a “bitter pill,” was difficult for many countries to swallow. Because the projects came with generous loans, many countries adopted them. To many countries these loans seemed like the only option in dire economic times. In the end, taking out loans from the IMF to pay back other outstanding loans frequently increased many countries' indebtedness and perpetuated the cycle of going into debt to pay back previous debt.

The stabilization project was not well received in Brazil. Further, allegations of corruption in the Vargas administration incited widespread suspicion of the president. Campaigns were initiated to overthrow him.

“I feel like I am standing in a sea of mud.”

—Getúlio Vargas

On August 24, 1954 Vargas committed suicide. The public was moved by his death. Many even held pro-Vargas demonstrations in the streets in remembrance of their leader of some twenty years. Many demonstrators were the same people who had, months earlier, rallied for his resignation.

What is Brasília?

After Vargas' death, Juscelino Kubitschek became the new president of Brazil. Kubitschek's era was known as “fifty years of growth in five.” Kubitschek was concerned with economic growth above all else. He in-

roduced hugely ambitious plans to reach that goal. Representative of his economic endeavors as a whole was his successful attempt to create an entirely new city in the undeveloped interior of Brazil.

Kubitschek suggested the establishment of a new city to open up the vast interior of the country. Brasília, as it was called, was to become the new capital and was to be the symbol of Brazilian modernity—it was appropriately built in the shape of an airplane. The city was inaugurated in 1960.

If the city represented modernity to Brazil, it would also come to represent the challenges that modernity would bring to Brazil, chief among them, indebtedness. As it turned out, the state did not have the funds to pay for the giant project of building a city from scratch. To finance the project, Kubitschek's government simply printed more money. This increase in money resulted in a rapid rise in prices, a condition known as inflation. The effect of inflation was profound. For many, the costs of living increased but their wages did not, leaving people able to afford less with their given wage.

What were the economic challenges of the 1960s?

Kubitschek's successor, Janio Quadros, inherited an intensifying national economic crisis. Convinced, as inflation increased, that Brazil could not simply keep printing money to stay afloat, Quadros turned to the IMF as Vargas had in 1953. As under Vargas, Brazilians did not widely support this action. The IMF set conditions for economic assistance that resulted in a reduction in government spending and an increase in unemployment. Similar to Vargas' time, these challenges ultimately prevented Quadros from completing his term. Quadros resigned and fled the country.

Who would succeed Quadros? What economic strategy would be adopted to confront Brazil's unsteady economy and would it be accepted by the people? How could the country reconcile its economic needs and its social obligations?

The vice president in line to take over the presidency was João Goulart. Many Brazilians (including much of the military) as well as countries around the world (including the United States) were wary of Goulart taking office because of his presumed connection to the Communist Party. The United States was in the midst of a worldwide confrontation with communism and was particularly concerned about communist countries in the Western Hemisphere. Goulart held his office for fewer than three years before the Brazilian military staged a coup with the help of the United States government—the country's fifth coup since 1889.

“If our influence is to be brought to bear to help avert a major disaster here which might make Brazil the China of the 1960s—this is where both I and all my senior advisors believe our support should be placed... Measures [must] be taken to prepare for a clandestine delivery of arms of non-U.S. origin, to be made available to Castello Branco supporters [organizers of the coup] in São Paulo... [to be delivered by] unmarked submarine to be off-



A bird's eye view of the city of São Paulo. Population: about twenty million.

loaded at night in isolated shore spots in the state of São Paulo.”

—U.S. Ambassador Lincoln Gordon,
March 27, 1964

Brazil under Dictatorship

On April 1, 1964 the military took over the Brazilian government. Unlike Vargas's military take-over, there were no doubts that this was a dictatorship from its very beginning. The military government introduced repression and censorship on a scale never before seen in Brazilian society. Over the next twenty years, a series of military administrations governed Brazil.

What sort of repression did the dictatorship practice?

While the media and press remained free in the early days of the regime, as the years passed the regime grew more and more hard lined, regulating even music and art. The government sought out potential threats, torturing some and exiling many.

The Brazilian security police raided allegedly communist newspapers, labor unions, and even student organizations. They subjected countless people to psychological and physical torture—often withholding food, clothing, and heat, and delivering beatings and electric shock to the victims. Brazilian officials were in close contact with the United States government throughout this time. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) provided information on potential security threats and dissidents.

What was life like under the military dictatorship?

Much of the Brazil-

ian population did not know of the brutality taking place behind closed doors, but the effects of dictatorial rule were felt throughout Brazilian society. School textbooks were rewritten to support the military's views of the country and of the world. Many civil liberties and the freedom of expression vanished in what was called the "national security state."

Opposition to the military grew, but for the most part simmered below the surface as people felt that outright protest was sure to provoke a government response of some kind. Before complete state censorship, artists used various media to express themselves. Intellectuals used books. Others used violence. Guerrilla groups took on the military regime in organized acts of sabotage, burglary, and kidnapping. The government was ruthless in its suppression of these uprisings. By 1974, nearly all armed opposition dissolved.

“[Brazil is the] graveyard of the revolutionary.”

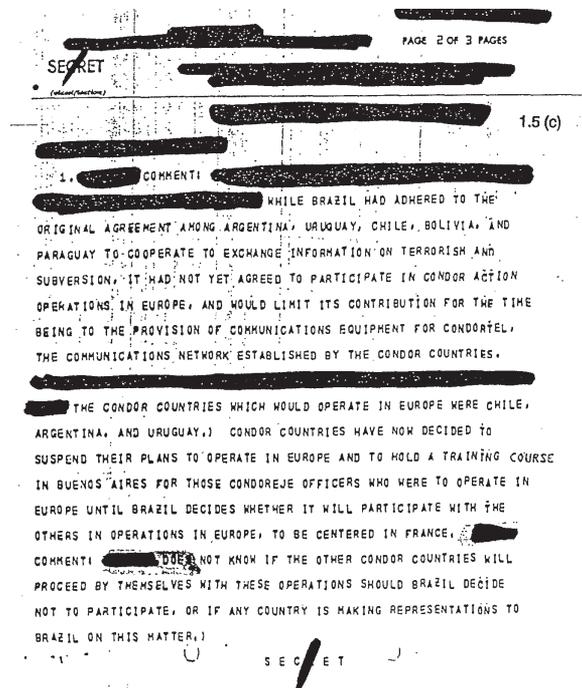
—Cuban President Fidel Castro

Did other South American countries have dictatorial governments?

By the 1970s, five other South American countries were dictatorships: Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Brazil joined these countries in what was called “Operation Condor.” In Operation Condor, these six countries organized anti-communism efforts across their national borders, coordinated assassination missions, and shared information about presumed threats and techniques for inflicting torture. Some believe that as many as tens of thousands of people died in Operation Condor. Recently declassified CIA and FBI documents confirm that the United States was aware of Operation Condor and, in some cases, supportive of its activities.

How did Brazil's economy grow during the dictatorship?

Economically, this era in Brazil's history has been called the time of the “Brazilian miracle.” The 1960s and 1970s saw extraordinary economic growth.



This recently declassified CIA cable from 1976 details Brazil's role in Operation Condor.

“There is a contradiction between economic development and political underdevelopment... At the time of greatest political repression we had the greatest economic growth in Brazil.”

—Political activist Luis “Lula” da Silva

A number of things accounted for Brazil's economic performance at this time. First and foremost were large international loans, particularly from the United States. The rate of borrowing increased significantly in the 1960s. This trend has continued in the decades since, as borrowing has increased faster than the country's capacity to repay the loans. Today, Brazil's debt amounts to \$215 billion.

During the 1960s, all eyes were on the money coming into Brazil rather than how it would be paid back in the long-term, and things looked promising. Both agriculture and industry boomed in Brazil. Agriculture fared particularly well because producers had begun experimenting with new crops and were diversifying production. Brazil became a top

global producer in several agricultural crops. Since the colonial era, the countryside had not undergone any sizable land redistribution (called land reform), so profits from the agricultural boom were enjoyed almost exclusively among large estate owners.

At the same time, industry became busily involved in global production, capitalizing on the cheap labor in Brazil. Additionally, the government sponsored large infrastructure projects, building enormous bridges and extravagant buildings, for example, which required a great deal of labor and other resources. These endeavors were called “projects of the pharaohs” because of their extravagance. The projects made starker the grave economic inequities in Brazilian society.

“Whoever stands still will be run over.”

—Common saying among industrialists

For some Brazilians, the debt accrued under the military regime weakened its legitimacy; for others, the way that resources were distributed within Brazilian society discredited the regime.

Who benefited from the “Brazilian miracle”?

The 1960s and 1970s were dramatic decades in terms of social polarization. Many argue that the era represented a “miracle” only for those who were already well off and that those who were poor remained poor. People in the government responded by saying that “the cake has to rise before it can be divided up and served.”



A young girl walks in a favela high above Rio de Janeiro.

“You can’t put distribution ahead of production. If you do, you’ll end up distributing what doesn’t exist.”

—Antônio Delfim Neto, minister of finance, 1972

Others challenged Brazil’s path of economic development.

“They said let the cake grow and when it’s really big everyone will get a piece. Our piece was to continue without running water, without electricity, without sewage.... You call this a miracle. I call this a horror. A tragedy. The capital sin of Brazil.”

—Benedita da Silva, Brazilian politician

As many waited for the Brazilian miracle to reach them, some grew skeptical of the government’s promises of “cake” for all. Many came to question whether Brazil was in fact a land of the future at all, or whether, as a common saying proclaims, “it is a land of the future and always will be.”

1984: The Moment of Decision

By the mid-1970s criticism of the military regime abounded as the regime's promised economic success continued to elude those who most needed it. Incidences of brutality grew. Among those daring to speak out against the government were workers, politicians, activists, and religious leaders, as well as professors, students, and intellectuals. In 1975, a dramatic event hardened the opposition's resolve to fight the military regime, and inspired other citizens to join their efforts.

On October 25, a Brazilian journalist and television reporter named Vladimir Herzog was abducted, tortured, and killed. The thirty-eight-year-old father of two was presumed to be a member of the Brazilian Communist Party and considered a threat to the government. Graphic pictures and accounts of his torture were leaked; the story caught the attention of the country. Tens of thousands of Brazilians attended his funeral. The government declared his death a suicide.

In 1974 President Ernesto Geisel had begun a process of loosening the military's tight hold on society; the government slowly relaxed censorship and surveillance controls. Nevertheless, in the years that followed, stories of brutality, like that of Vladimir Herzog, persisted. Opponents of the military regime used the military's relaxation of control to voice more freely their opposition. Workers, activists, priests, and professors joined forces in a campaign for democracy. This campaign culminated in a nationwide movement for

diretas já, or direct (democratic) political elections, beginning in 1983. Workers were a critical component of the opposition and the first to take to the street to demand *diretas já*. Workers, throughout Brazil but particularly in Brazil's large cities, had forged a widespread movement organizing strikes and agitating for workers' rights. A trade union president named Luiz Inácio da Silva (called simply "Lula" for short) led the workers' movement and began a new socialist political party called the Workers Party in 1980. Another important political party in the *diretas já* movement was the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement, which attracted many esteemed politicians.

Many in the religious community, particularly the Catholic clergy, were also outspoken in opposition to the military. The strongest basis for their resistance was the issue of human rights: they pleaded with the government to respect human dignity and end the torture of its own citizens. Professors, students, and intellectuals were also involved in protesting the government. Many renowned intellectuals were forced to do so from outside of the country because they had been exiled or had chosen to leave. Some Brazilians were wary of an abrupt transition to democracy. Others believed that the country's stability and prosperity rested on its military leadership. Citizens engaged in a national debate about the future of their country as the military government considered its next move in an increasingly contentious political environment.