Riots, social movements and the "making of the working class":

forms of popular organization and urban protest in São Paulo (1945-1964)

Quebra-quebras, movimentos sociais e a "formação da classe trabalhadora":

formas de organização popular e protesto urbano em São Paulo (1945-1964)

Marcos Virgílio da Silva
Centro Universitário Belas Artes de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brasil
UniFIAM-FAAM Centro Universitário, São Paulo, SP, Brasil

Abstract: *The present article investigates the expressions of popular demands and discontent within three forms of manifestation: riots, non-class-based "social movements", and movements organized by the "working classes" or "workers". By examining these different movements we expect to problematize the recurring literature surrounding these movements, which has often characterized them as being insufficient or incomplete, reactive and subordinate to higher authorities, thus being void of any transforming power. It is therefore hoped that this article may contribute to a debate that would seek to transcend the very frequently encountered viewpoint that popular protests have been sporadic, rare phenomena throughout Brazilian history.*

Keywords: *protest; social movements;* São Paulo*; urban movement; Social history.*

We have come to view the history of Brazil as an evolutionary timeline punctuated by supposedly peaceful events. A friendly "discovery", as independence as a "friendly separation" or "an agreement between the elites", the proclamation of a republic watched over by a "bestialized" people, two dictatorships installed with no immediate resistance and overturned with no popular insurrection, with an opposition that was open to authoritarianism, and the work of isolated groups – "idealists", when not "terrorists." Advances in human rights and citizenship have always come from the top down: from the very first constitution handed over by the Emperor, to the last, fruit of a political opening controlled by the authoritarian regime, through Abolition as a godsend from a princess and through labour laws granted by the Father of the Poor. Behave yourselves and social progress will come by itself, protest and progress is interrupted – this is the moral of our history.

[...] For example, "Vandals", "barbarians" and "bandits" were some of the names used to deny the political character of Cabanagem (1835) and Balaiada (1838). "Activists", "subversives" and "terrorists" were the labels that the post-1964 dictatorship foisted onto those who faced up

> *to it. The strategy is not new: dismantle popular power, to which existence as a political force is denied and the history of which is erased. Once done, police brutality ensures that voices coming from the streets are suffocated. (CALENDÁRIO, 2014, n.p., author's translation).*

THE *SPASMODIC VIEW* OF POPULAR PROTEST

Until recently, it would be hard to say that there is a Brazilian "historiography" of riots and popular uprisings in contemporary Brazil: there are references to popular uprisings in the colonial period (FIGUEIREDO, 2005) and during the Empire (QUEIROZ, 1977) – during which certain uprisings deserve special mention, such as the Malian (REIS, 2003) and *Sabinada* (SOUZA, 1987; LOPES, 2013) revolts in the state of Bahia, the *Praieira* Revolution in Pernambuco (FARMS, 1982; amongst others), and *Cabanagem* in the state of Pará, (PINHEIRO, 2001). During the Republican period, important production may also be encountered regarding the Vaccine Revolt – see, for example, the works of José Murilo de Carvalho (1991), Nicholas Sevcenko (1993), José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy (1995) –, the Revolt of the Lash (MOREL, 2009; amongst others) or the Canudos Rebellion (MONIZ, 1978). From the substantial existing historiography of the Brazilian labour movement, it is impossible not to mention the anarchist-inspired revolts (LOPREATO, 2000).

Despite the growing tendency, currently available production regarding this particular subject may still be considered relatively insignificant and greatly fragmented, thus leading us to consider that in Brazil the topic continues to be seen from what may be referred to as a "spasmodic view". This term, coined by the British historian E.P. Thompson (1998), is herein taken up intentionally: there has been a noticeable impact of Thompson's work on recent production regarding social history and explains, at least in part, the interest in less organized or institutionalized forms of collective action.

Urban and regional studies have conferred less prestige towards popular uprising than in social history, particularly concerning work. Studies regarding social movements, especially those in housing, are much more frequent, and most of them either problematize state action in relation to these movements, or even the relationship between the state and capital, together with the implications of this relationship for the production of social housing. Several of these studies are referred to in this article, within the context of research into the forms of protest and demands in São Paulo during the period referred to as "populist", between the Getulio Vargas and military dictatorships.

This article seeks to investigate the popular expressions of discontent and demands encountered within three forms of demonstrations – riots, non-class-based "social movements" and movements organized by the "working class" or "workers". While much has been written on each of these forms in recent times this article does not intend to deal with all the available literature, and will most certainly not exhaust the themes explored. However, by examining the different movements, and their various forms of interface both with the state and the varying degrees of "organising" or formulating policies, we trust that this article may contribute to a debate that will seek to transcend the frequently-held viewpoint that popular protests have been

sporadic, rare (if not exceptional) phenomena throughout Brazilian history.

To achieve this, we expect herein to problematize the recurring literature surrounding these movements, which has frequently characterized them as being insufficient or incomplete, and that lack any quality that could possibly confer upon them a status which would render them a complete, effective or even legitimate manifestation. Even when they are not directly disqualified (although they mostly are), many studies have described such movements as being devoid of protaganism and agency: always referred to as reactive actions and subordinate to higher authorities (leaders or impersonal socioeconomic processes). Protests are depleted of any transformative power by considering that there is something *lacking*: rationality, direction, awareness. The pitfalls of a certain intellectual authoritarianism should therefore be acknowledged so that they may be overcome.

RIOTS AND POPULAR URBAN UPRISING: FROM "EMBRYONIC" OR "INSUFFICIENT" ORGANIZATION TO THE "COLLECTIVE WORD"

Against a backdrop of discrimination and social stigma where workers experienced weak institutionalized channels through which they were able to express their collective demands, violent *direct action* (the features of which include individual protest and group actions, such as rioting) became a possible instrument with which to respond and apply pressure. These direct actions were the subject of interest during at least two important moments in recent history, where one episode in particular aroused interest and differing interpretations regarding these two moments.

The first moment corresponds to a number of studies conducted during the early 1980s, which detected in the disturbances and riots "a broad spectrum of the most varied forms in which the working classes sought to participate socially and politically" (MOISÉS 1985, p. 96, author's translation). This "direct popular action" came under the analysis of authors such as Licia do Prado Valladares (1983) and José Álvaro Moisés (1985), as well as Edison Nunes and Peter Jacobi (1982).

Licia do Prado Valladares wrote one of the pioneering works devoted to the riots, the article "Riots in civil construction" (*Quebra-quebras na construção civil)* (VALLADARES, 1983). Although dedicated to an event that occurred outside the period of interest of this work (a series of strikes and protests during works on the Rio de Janeiro subway in 1978), the work of Valladares contains two points which are of interest to the examination presented herein. Firstly, she exposed a entire range of expedient reactions to popular actions that recurred with remarkable frequency, which included attempts of a cover-up, repression and/or reprisals, and even attempts to discredit: initially the demonstrations were attributed to "infiltrating agitators", which therefore permitted the riots " to be treated as acts of subversion [...] serving to legitimize the increasing presence of repressive forces" (VALLADARES, 1983, p. 136, author's translation). In second place, the author's assessment was that the riots corresponded to an "embryonic type of organization" (VALLADARES, 1983, p. 143, author's translation), which although they functioned "as an effective instrument of pressure" when the established resources proved ineffective or were depleted as intermediary channels, had not managed to achieve a 'broader political character'

(trade unions or other representative "class" bodies were entirely excluded from any participation in the protests) and had ultimately allowed a certain "awareness" to emerge of the actual potential to "intervene, complain and fight as a collective force" (VALLADARES, 1983, p. 137, 141, author's translation).

José Álvaro Moisés, one of the leading pioneers in studying urban protests, devoted a number of publications to the subject[1]. In his article *Protesto Urbano e Político: O Quebra-Quebra de 1947*, Moisés studied the bus and tram riots in São Paulo in August 1947, triggered by an increase in public transport fares immediately after the creation of the Municipal Company of Public Transport (CMTC) (MOISÉS, 1985). Firstly, it is noteworthy that the author sought to challenge the allegation used at the time, regarding the participation of "traditional politicians" in "inciting the crowds, who had simply allowed themselves to be commanded by them" (MOISÉS, 1985, p. 104, author's translation). This allegation, despite differences of emphasis and even treatment, highlights the same observation noted by Licia Valladares: by assigning the actions of external instigators to the demonstrations, the protests were denied any form of protagonism or agency from the protestors themselves. It is therefore a previously accepted fact that the "masses" are merely passive and reactive.

 For the author, the demonstration revealed a *pattern* that repeated a Brazilian "tradition" of popular revolt[2], and which consists of the following aspects: (i) the character of the popular outburst was economic defence (proven by the fact that it was triggered by an increase in fares); (ii) identification of the state (in this case, the City Council) as the antagonist and the willingness to confront its repressive force; (Iii) the social composition of "angry mobs" specified by the "lower echelons of the pyramid"; and (iv) its significance in "obtaining immediate fulfilment of their aspirations" and marching "against the rich or those with power inside the system" (MOISÉS, 1985, p. 106, author's translation).

This form of "popular participation" is characterized as being "completely marginal in relation to the policies of the time, even to those policies pursued by leftist groups", and also due to the "impetus that broad sectors of the population adhere to" along with their "simultaneous eruptions in different parts of the city" (MOISÉS, 1985, p. 99, author's translation). Even so, José Álvaro Moisés recognized the political nature of these manifestations, which consisted of the people refusing to formally integrate themselves with a regime that called itself democratic, and which in turn, paid no heed to "the problems, real or illusory, that they were affected by" (MOISÉS, 1985, p. 107, author's translation).

However, in the view of the author, the movement was unsuccessful in achieving a solution for the immediate problems, and failed to create an *organizational tradition*. In this respect, he concluded that the use of violence "raises more problems than it solves," even when it produces political effects and obliges the state to provide the masses with some kind of answer (MOISÉS, 1985, p. 108, author's translation). The author observed that the emergence of such events placed a demand on certain sectors of the lower classes "for their own social organization and direction," lamenting that "the various political forces [particularly the left] had nothing to offer," thus frustrating the masses and their "spontaneous emergence." Such frustration seems especially problematic for the author, since the "spontaneity" of this kind of manifestation is directly associated with a "situation of insufficient organization" in which "organizational criteria have not yet been established, which could be considered

1 Amongst his most important works, those that deserve special mention are: Moisés (1977), especially the chapter written in association with Verena Martinez Allier; his doctorate thesis on political science (MOISÉS, 1978), and Moisés et al (1981), as well as the article cited herein – *Protesto urbano e política: o quebra-quebra de 1947*.

2 The allegation that direct collective action is a *tradition* is of great interest. Moreover, it is stated that "explosions of popular fury [...] are quite common in Latin America and even in Brazil, are a firmly established tradition" (MOISÉS, 1985, p. 107, author's translation).

rational in relation to their ends" (MOISÉS, 1985, p. 98, author's translation). The riots, although spontaneous and political, were violent and disorganized (almost *irrational*), and symbolized popular outbursts, "the ultimate significance of which was to seek political expression or, in other words, organization and direction" (MOISÉS, 1985, p. 109-110, author's translation).

The second valuable moment of *direct popular action* may be considered both as a deepening and reassessment of previous contributions. In the late 1980s, Sidnei Munhoz presented a study that caste new light onto the debate regarding rioting as a political expression of social dissatisfaction. In his master's dissertation, Munhoz examined an episode, which occurred at a time outside the period of interest of the present study (the São Paulo riots in the early 1980s, during the time of economic crisis and democratic beginnings). Nonetheless, some of his findings may be highlighted herein. Firstly, through a veritable historical reconstitution of Brazilian mutinies and riots, Munhoz reinforced the argument of a "tradition" of direct action, to which José Álvaro Moisés had already referred (MUNHOZ, 1989, p. 26-32, author's translation); and secondly, the presence of looting and rioting in fiercer moments of social conflicts (MUNHOZ, 1989, p. 25, author's translation). Thirdly, and perhaps more decisively, the historian embodied the notion of *ritual* into understanding the relationship between political control and social protest, for which E. P. Thompson's work proved deeply inspiring[3].

A relevant example of new contributions may be observed in the work of Luiz Adriano Duarte (2005), who analysed the same episode in 1947 previously examined by Moisés, but went on to highlight the manner in which the bus and tram riots in São Paulo were interpreted.

Duarte demonstrated that the riot was initially portrayed as a *direct result* of "a long sequence of political and administrative blunders, both by the state government and the city council" (DUARTE, 2005, p. 45, author's translation). This was the perspective to which the mainstream press aligned itself, "for two reasons: it openly criticised the Adhemar government and depoliticized the riot, redirecting the discussion towards the established channels" (DUARTE, 2005, note # 44, author's translation). This depoliticization was due to the fact that such an interpretation avoided "confronting the conditions of social exclusion that had actually produced them, as well as the need for solutions that addressed them," and at the same time limited and fitted into the universe of possibilities for understanding collective action: or economic rationality or total irrationality (DUARTE, 2005, p. 46, author's translation).

"Economic reasons" for the *turmoil* as being the only possible rational motivation was identified by the author in an editorial in the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* (DUARTE, 2005, p. 45-47, author's translation). Here, Adriano Duarte emphasized the interpretation that the *turmoil* had lost its character of being a "legitimate popular protest" and had been transformed into "rampant disorder." Up to this point, it would have been possible to recognize a parallel with the evaluation by Álvaro Moisés, that the action "produced more problems than it solved." But the editorial, as could be expected, went even further and depicted the crowd involved in the riot as "irrational, unstable and destructive," their actions as "a manifestation of complete primitivism and of low intellectual development," and its agents as " the riffraff and scum of the city, and matched to common criminals":

3 References to the writings of Thompson recur throughout the work of this second "generation" – particularly from the article "The Patricians and the Plebs" – *Patrícios e plebeus* (THOMPSON, 1998).

In other words, by refusing to target only the acceptable economic aspects, the actors within the turmoil lost their human feelings and were transformed into the masses. Therefore, they were no longer a group of popular anonymous individuals at an economic protest, which was reduced to a simple riot, but merely an ungoverned mob, without law or order, and devoid of human feelings: the masses, which, in the absence of clear proposals, became transmuted into a horde. From this viewpoint, events on 1ˢᵗ August could not be simply explained through economic, political or social factors, since they all assumed some rationality in the manner in which it was conducted, and the mob was above all, the result of irrationality. Thus, to Gustave Le Bon the key to understanding the event was in the psychology of the masses and the behaviour of the crowds[4] (DUARTE, 2005, p. 46, author's translation).

Duarte observed that, according to the perspective adopted by Moisés, the actors in the riots lacked both the "structural" ability to fully comprehend the political and social significance of the actions then practiced, and the "effective political leadership" that was capable of preventing demonstrations from becoming "mindless" and ineffective. Thus, they went on to become at most a "spontaneous explosion of popular anger" until, through the populist policies of Jânio Quadros, Adhemar and Vargas, "the actions of the lower classes acquired certain meaning and encountered resonance" (DUARTE, 2005, p. 47, author's translation). While both the interpretations by Moisés' and the newspaper editorialist of the *O Estado de São Paulo* described the riots as a "flash in the pan", lacking any organized political motivation, by contrast, Duarte acknowledged a pattern in the actions of the rioters, and stated that "there was no uncontrolled violence or anything resembling a demented mob at any given moment" (DUARTE, 2005, p. 51, author's translation). Hence, Duarte observed that the episode had more lasting effects than is often supposed:

> The attack on buses and trams on 1ˢᵗ August 1947, only lasted for one afternoon, but for more than a decade it left a profound mark on the life of the city [...] and, for several years, any accident involving buses or trams in the capital was immediately investigated as "potential sabotage" [...]. Over the following years, there was a constant fear that buses and trams would be smashed or other types of urban riots would be repeated. Each year, when talks began on fare increases, the DOPS agents prepared several reports in which the possibility of fresh, imminent rebellion would be announced. [...] In addition, the implications of this placed the elite on its guard because, whether or not they were organized, the lower classes were sometimes acting violently. (DUARTE, 2005, p. 48-55, author's translation)

Works such as those by Munhoz and Duarte, in addition to those by Chalhoub (2001) and Fontes (2002, 2008), amongst others, helped to take class actions beyond expression or formal political organization, and to recognize the participants as agents that "did not only speak and act through the mouths of populist leaders, but through the collective *word* and common *action* they built a public sphere that was continuously created and recreated" (DUARTE, 2005, p. 48, original emphasis, author's translation). The importance of the disturbances, riots and other forms of "spontaneous" popular protest – that is, without explicit direction or formally established, stable leadership – took on particular significance in the work of a

[4] At this point it would be appropriate to reproduce a quote by Duarte concerning Le Bon's formulation: "Through the simple fact of being part of the crowd, man thus descends many degrees along the scale of civilization. In isolation, he would perhaps be a cultured individual; in a mob, he acts instinctively, and is therefore a barbarian. He has the spontaneity, violence, ferocity as well as the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings. They are also easily attracted towards being unimpressed by words or images, and practice actions that only harm their most obvious interests." (LE BON apud DUARTE, 2005, p. 58, nota #47, author's translation).

generation of historians aligned with the so-called "social history of labour", in which the British Marxist history, especially with authors such as Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, is presented as a fundamental reference.

POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS: HOUSING AND BLACK CULTURE

According to Marco Antonio Perruso, the 1970s marked the emergence of intellectual interest, notably from sociologists, anthropologists and social scientists linked to the *Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento* (CEBRAP), through the so-called "social movements", considered "new political spaces of participation and learning" (PERRUSO, 2004, p. 143, author's translation). At least two forms of popular organization observed by historiography since this period deserve special mention: the neighbourhood organizations – especially the Societies of Neighbourhood Friends (*Sociedades de Amigos de Bairro* (*SAB*)) – and the black organizations.

The neighbourhood movements were, according to Paul Singer (1982, p. 83-107, author's translation), "forms of solidarity and communal cohesion, and of the struggle for better living conditions for the poor", and were capable of expressing themselves to the "outside world" i.e., "to complain to public authorities about their demands arising from the specific requirements of urban life" (SINGER, 1982, p. 83, author's translation). Emerging from the conglomerations of residents, mainly in poor areas and on the outskirts of the city, during the period herein under consideration, the Societies of Neighbourhood Friends (SABs) were a characteristic expression of these movements. According to the author, this corresponded to the "first phase" of neighbourhood social movements (the "second phase" emerged at the end of the military regime, with the Basic Ecclesial Communities – (*Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* (*CEB*)). Less enduring, but nonetheless also important during the period 1945-1964, is the Popular Democratic Committees (CDPs) linked to the Communist Party, and also acting in neighbourhoods[5].

Although the link has previously been highlighted in the literature (BONDUKI, 1998; amongst others) between the SABs and the public powers as a kind of "co-optation" of popular movements by the so-called "populist" political mechanisms and, from within the promiscuity of such a relationship, with reports regarding the origins of clientelist practices that proved long-lasting in the political life of the city, it is necessary to recognize its role as an organizational form of expression during the period. We only have to observe that in the period 1955-1970, the number of SABs in the state of São Paulo totalled 1,100 (with 500 in the capital alone), of which almost 88% were created after 1955 (SINGER, 1982, p. 87-88, author's translation). According to Maria da Glória Gohn (GOHN, 2004, p. 4, author's translation)[6], in São Paulo, during the ten years between the fourth centenary of the founding of the city and the military coup in 1964, numerous neighbourhood associations were created in the city, and served as the nucleus for the residents movement "which grew dramatically in the 1960s," especially in the city suburbs. Such neighbourhood movements were of an "inter-classist" nature with a very heterogeneous social composition, including workers and the "petty bourgeois" (local merchants, owners of service establishments, landowners, etc.).

5 With regard to the CDPs, vide the work of Adriano Duarte (especially his doctorate thesis: Duarte (2002)).

6 Maria da Glória Gohn has produced much regarding the social movements in São Paulo. Her master dissertation (GOHN, 1979) is of particular direct interest to the present article, together with an overview of the social movements elaborated by the author (GOHN, 2004).

After the coup of 1964, work from this line of research heralded a certain decline. According to these works, the emergence of new popular movements concerning the housing issue in the 1970s, with the CEBs and movements against the illegal land squats, would be characterized by an "inside" proposal, i.e., the creation of a "new awareness, a mind-set for self-help in the population". According to this perspective, the characteristic taken on by these "outside" actions is that "of demanding rights, and not hand-outs obtained by bargaining with representatives of the state" (SINGER, 1982, p. 104-105, author's translation). Although not explicitly, comparison between the two moments of neighbourhood organization would seem to suggest that its participants had received a qualitative gain of "awareness". The organizations active in the 1950s and 60s still appeared to be fully linked and subjected to the logic of populist clientelism. This interpretive scheme imposes a certain passivity onto a process without a subject, or – even worse – subordinate to the "political leadership", in which the housing movements only respond, but do not propose. If a reinterpretation of the turmoil and riots was possible, and which provided a more complex understanding of the social tensions and political character of collective action during the so-called populist period, the same review for the housing movement would also seem to be a task to undertake.

In yet another line of work, we should not overlook the organizations linked to the *black movement* in São Paulo. Although recognition of a major mobilization of ethnic motivations has already been seized upon by the available historiography[7], it is important to mention herein some of the characteristics identified in these studies. Clovis Moura, stating that "the Brazilian black has always been an organizer," notes that resistance to marginalization was achieved through the "fragile, somewhat disjointed, although always constant, organizations" (MOURA, 1982, p. 143, author's translation). George Reid Andrews, in turn, sought to reconstruct the history of black political protest in São Paulo in the century following the abolition of slavery, so as to perceive black mobilization not as something formed of isolated moments, but rather as "chapters throughout a long-term history, progressing with the black fight and protest in Brazil" (ANDREWS, 1992, p. 148). Andrews observed the characteristics of this movement in São Paulo of the "populist republic" (1945-1964): the end of the New State created conditions for the resurgence of an active black press, which had virtually disappeared during the Vargas dictatorship. Thus, just in Sao Paulo the periodicals entitled *Alvorada* (1945), *Senzala* and *O Novo Horizonte* (1946) were founded, to which may be added other publications throughout the 1950s[8]. However, the author observed the absence of a political movement defined in terms of race, as occurred in the early 1930s with the *Frente Negra*, crediting the following features to the structural transformation of Brazilian society of the time: a growth in the industrial economy, a corresponding reorganization of the workforce, especially visible in São Paulo, and a slowing down in competition for manufacturing jobs with immigrants (ANDREWS, 1992, p. 162). Andrews notes, incidentally, that in 1950 the participation of Afro-Brazilians in the labour force in São Paulo was "virtually identical" to that represented within the population as a whole – around 11% (ANDREWS, 1992, p 162, note # 52). With the establishment of the military dictatorship (1964-1985) there was a period with a certain decline in the political nature of black mobilization – since it was not possible to speak of "demobilization". As a result, in the "populist" period, the black organizations were "almost exclusively

[7] An article by Petrônio Domingues (2007) may be cited, as well as important studies by George Reid Andrews (1992; 1998) and Clóvis Moura (1982; 1992).

[8] Domingues (2007, p. 110) cites, in São Paulo, *Notícias de* Ébano (1957) and *Níger* (1960).

cultural in orientation, focusing on literacy and other educational projects, the promotion of black literature, and theatrical and artistic activities" (ANDREWS, 1992, p. 162).

A different interpretation was offered by Antonio Guimarães: the black protest during the period had in fact increased, for reasons that included racial discrimination, the persistence of prejudices and stereotypes, and the continued marginalization in "slums, shacks, swamplands and subsistence farming" (GUIMARÃES apud DOMINGUES, 2007, p. 108, author's translation). However, Petronius Domingues recognized that this phase of the black movement "would not have the same conglomerating power as before" (DOMINGUES, 2007, p. 108), and was in fact politically isolated, without being able to effectively count on the support of political forces, whether from the right or from the Marxist left[9].

In Brazil, from amongst the most important black organizations of the period, the *União dos Homens de Cor*[10] and the *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (*TEN*)[11] deserve special mention. In São Paulo, the most prominent black organization of the period was the *Associação Cultural do Negro*, founded in December 1954 and presided over by the journalist Geraldo de Oliveira Campos. It remained active until the late 1970s. Although the black movements did not manage to attain greater "political expression" during the period considered herein, we should mention the emphasis placed on appreciating black culture as a significant element of identity, and it is possible to discuss the extent to which the *Movimento Negro Unificado*, which was formed later, was not a branch of those created previously. Thus, events such as the writing and publication of *Quarto de Despejo (*published in US and UK as *Child of the Dark)*, by Carolina Maria de Jesus, the movement to institutionalize carnival parades and organize the samba schools and samba bands in São Paulo, took on a new "political" meaning, in the broader, baseline sense of the word. This is precisely the "formative" period which seemed to be based on the quest to reinstate black traditions that during the 1970s, marked the work of Geraldo Filme – the samba composer from São Paulo[12].

Finally, it is worth noting that black identity as a significant element of social organization, and its importance to urban studies, has gained greater academic prominence, as demonstrated by the recent completion of the "*Negros nas Cidades Brasileiras (1890-1950)*" Symposium, promoted by the *Centro de Preservação Cultural* and *Centro Universitário Maria Antônia*, both at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP). The presentation text of the symposium declared that:

> Traditionally, in the field of human sciences, studies relating to racial issues have given emphasis to the historical-temporal dimension, observing the inequalities between the races and their transformations throughout time, according to the social and political conjuncture of the country. Within this context, there has been little investigation into issues related to the disputes of different ethnic and racial groups over space. On the other hand, since the 1970s, the focus of studies in relation to the struggles for urban areas has given greater emphasis to the subject of social class. Therefore, it has become necessary to exert extra effort: on the one hand, to broaden the field of discussion surrounding race relations, in order to incorporate aspects of production and disputes for urban territory; and on the other, to reconfigure the debate on urban space itself, so as to observe the historical construction of inequality and segregation from racial viewpoint. Examining the urban object from a racial viewpoint brings a perspective that enables us to construct

9 In 1946, according to Domingues, Senator Hamilton Nogueira (UDN) presented a draft bill to the National Constitution Assembly that outlawed discrimination, and received opposition from PCB (the Brazilian Communist Party), who argued that the law would divide the worker's struggle (DOMINGUES, 2007, p. 111, author's translation).

10 Founded by João Cabral Alves in Porto Alegre, in January 1943, which by the second half of the 1940s had spread to the states of Minas Gerais, Santa Catarina, Bahia, Maranhão, Ceará, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, Espírito Santo, Piauí e Paraná (DOMINGUES, 2007, p. 108-109, author's translation).

11 Founded in Rio de Janeiro, in 1944, with Abdias do Nascimento as the leader, *TEN* was one of the pioneers in bringing proposals to Brazil from the French *Négritude*, which was mobilizing the international black movement.

12 Moura (1992, p. 159-161, author's translation) highlights the important role of these entities as "meeting points for blacks which, apart from the parties, activate their associative spirit and enliven their ethnic awareness".

new meanings for the debate on the creation and use of urban spaces in Brazil, and segregation and citizenship, placing these problems within a new prism and assuming new viewpoints, periodization, and methodological and epistemological orientations (SIMPÓSIO, 2015, n.p., author's translation).

THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE "MAKING OF THE CLASS"

While it is impossible to include herein all the existing literature concerning the trade union movement and the workers' struggles during the period, some important aspects may be observed briefly for the purposes of this investigation. First, we see an intense debate emerging on the notion of *class*, particularly the Brazilian *working class*, which takes the *formative* process into account as an historical (and historiographical) problem. Paoli, Sader and Telles, for example, note that the workers,

> [...] traditionally viewed as characters subordinate to the state and incapable of acting on their own impulses and who after 1964, were silenced and politically atomized by the military regime, burst onto the political scene in 1978 speaking with their own voices revealing forms of social organization, which they had woven onto the edges of traditional mechanisms assembled in order to represent them and that served for cooptation, inclusion and control (PAOLI, SADER; TELLES, 1984, p. 130, author's translation).

The expression acquired by the social movements of the period studied herein is often dealt with from the perspective of "new unionism" from the late 1970s, which deeply marked production on the theme of redemocratization. This emergence runs through the work of British Marxist historians, especially Eric J. Hobsbawm, and E.P. Thompson, with regard to the concept of *making* the class[13]. From the perspective of a formative process, the movements discussed in the previous section may be related to the strikes and mobilizations of urban workers in the 1950s and 1960s as part of the same general context. This context may be understood as the organisation, mobilization and accentuated action of these sections of the population across a broader political landscape. With this observation, it is not our intention to confirm the interpretation that the previously discussed "spontaneous" movements were the "embryonic" forms of the organized labour movements. The view adopted herein considers the very coexistence of these forms of manifestation as the different possibilities from within a broader repertoire of actions. It is possible to construe that this more organized, established manner of workforce mobilization did not correspond to a "stage" (as an evolutionary process) of organising the workers, but is rather an indication of the complexity of this class. This "new" complexity required the recognition of the multiplicity of identities mobilized by the people who are either part of the *crowd* (or "mob"), or the organized struggle of the trade unions and political parties. In other words, the class did not "evolve" from the crowd, but emerged from inside: "If we are interested in historical transformation, we need to pay attention to minorities with articulate speech. But these minorities appear from a less articulated majority, whose consciousness can currently be considered 'sub-political'" (THOMPSON, 1987, p. 57, author's translation).

13 The expression "the making of the working class" is borrowed from *A formação da classe operária inglesa (*The making of the English working class) (THOMPSON, 1987), a primordial reference of this new debate. Discussion on the theme as proposed by Hobsbawm (1974; 1988) also deserves mention.

One indication is in the denominations applied: from the *collective*, *popular* actions, to the *class* movements (working) what may be seen is the identity of a general social condition being displaced towards greater specificity. The idea of a state "protectorship" over the working class, identified in the historiography by Paoli, Sader and Telles, seems as such to have conditioned the problematization of the issues relating to the political activities of these social actors so that it is still difficult to bypass the chronological references with which the issue is addressed: it seems almost inevitable to remain obedient to the periodization of Brazil's "official story" and consider April 1, 1964 as a breaking point or inflection. Even when trying to recount the history of the struggles of workers from its own point of view, such chronological references are adhered to without further questioning or problematization[14]. In any event, the coup of 1964 led to major revisions: firstly, the left and the then active workers movements sought to undertake "self-criticism" and a review of the "errors" and the causes of political defeat. On the other hand, the 1964 coup would also signify a break with regard to academic research on the working class, in which the new regime would symbolize the end of "developmentalist optimism" and the "collapse of the democratic national project and the end of the previous belief in the possibilities of a democratic transformation of society through the state", in such a manner that poverty or marginalization appeared "no longer as the residue of a past moving along routes to overcome, but as constitutive realities – structural" (PAOLI; SADER; TELLES, 1984, p. 143-144, author's translation).

CONCLUSION

It has been considered that Brazil was "a country without people" (COUTY, 1988). Nonetheless, there was "something". Moreover, within the studied period, this *something* has made its presence known on the Brazilian political landscape, either through the direct, "*uncontrolled*" action of popular uprisings – riots, mutinies and other forms of protest – or through the more established means of representation and participation within the "official" channels. Heloisa de Souza observes that "the hierarchical tradition of Brazilian society implies the non-recognition of the lower classes as subjects with legitimate demands," a "perverse logic" surrounding the figure of the needy, thus becoming a "a target for help (rather than rights), protection (in place of participation) and charity (instead of justice), attributing to poverty the stigma of being excluded from the development process" (SOUZA, 1995). Perhaps perversity is still a little greater and for a long time, may have implied an imposed silence regarding other forms of popular protagonism that did not fit in with the given a priori interpretative schemes[15].

Throughout this article, we have observed some of these forms of popular political expression, together with the manner in which they have been treated in various historiographical aspects that have addressed them. We have sought to highlight aspects of the different interpretations assessed that were implied within the imposed silencing of that which was to be problematized. This emphasis does not intend to ignore the methodological and interpretative differences: the assessed historiography presented methodological diversity, and even hermeneutics, which should not be ignored. By emphasizing the points of convergence instead of the differences, we have not intended to homogenize this production, but rather highlight a problem that

14 In Giannotti (2007), this vision of being "inside" the movement may be considered an interesting manner with which to enter the theme, by making the workers actors integrated in the general political process.

15 Her influence has been considered as an "interpretative paradigm of Brazilian history": "the absence of defined classes in the Brazilian case would have only produced a void to be filled by the demiurgic action of the State" (CULTURA, 1997, p. 15, author's translation).

has only recently been revealed, either through new lines of research or through the emergence of new research themes, but there are still obstacles to overcome.

The first form of popular protagonism highlighted herein was only recognized by the literature of a relatively contemporary period (a little more than thirty years ago), riots; another line, which was initiated almost at the same time, presented "social movements" as the object (the causes of which escape from and go beyond parties, trade unions and traditional forms); and the third, is in fact the sacred line of thought in studies on popular struggles, and for that exact reason that which is subject to more extensive production and more consolidated debates.

In the three forms of popular expression examined there was a recurrence of one interpretive scheme that should be questioned: in this scheme, there is a fault, an insufficiency, a deficiency that prevents the "full" expression of popular struggle or its success. The riots either lacked the "leadership" that conferred upon them a rational direction or even any rationality at all. The black movements lacked a more explicitly "political" character, while the housing movements were in need of protagonism in order to deal with the manipulations of populist clientelism. Finally, for a long time, the Brazilian "working class" was seen as being merely subordinate to the dictates of the state, and was therefore unable to cope with the establishment of a dictatorial regime in 1964. In each case, we have attempted to present some pathways that indicate how to overcome this vision of perpetual incompleteness / inadequacy.

It is possible that the organisation of these views under a common denominator is missing. This may be perceived as the understanding of a complex of manifestations that expressed both desires and dissatisfactions in many different forms. These forms should not be prioritized (in order of importance) and do not constitute an "evolutionary line" – that is, social movements do not represent the "maturation" of the riots, and in turn are also not the embryo of a classist movement formally constituted and stable. It must sound like an obvious contradiction to juxtapose the idea of "movement" to "stability": it is essential to understand that forms of protest are interchangeable, provisional, always being reconstructed and remodelled. Their goals are also moved by the most immediate quotidian to a perspective of the most remote future (or to the memory of the past), from the individual to the broadest collective interest, and from the space of private life to the broadest public sphere. Even if it were possible to identify predominions in certain manifestations or in determined places and moments, it is essential to recognize that these same agents may participate in these various movements, more or less congruently.

Assigning a "political" character to such manifestations also deserves some problematizing. With regard to the negotiation or dispute over cohabited, shared space, "politics" should be understood as any organization that expresses collective demands, designs, discontent and dissatisfaction. It is possible to discuss the effectiveness of each form in each case examined, but there is no guarantee, a priori, that one form is necessarily always right or more legitimate. If, on the other hand, "politics" is understood surrounding the asymmetries of power and the resulting dispute between unequal parties, here too it is useful to consider that actions which are more "tactical" or more "strategic" (using the terminology proposed by Michel de Certeau (1998)) may be added and complement depending on the context, and that all the holes, cracks and fissures are capable of being exploited and occupied.

Recognising the plurality of possible actions, possible contradictions and manners

Marcos Virgílio da Silva:
marcos.silva@belasartes.br
marcos.v.silva@fiamfaam.br

with which to act collectively that escape the pre-established models should serve two purposes: firstly, to recognize that popular demonstrations are not easily predictable (and therefore controllable); and secondly, that they should be examined on their own terms, at the risk of once again imposing domination and silence upon them, which in our threatened democracy should long ago have been overcome.

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R e s u m o : *O presente artigo objetiva investigar as expressões populares de demandas e de descontentamento, organizadas em três formas de manifestação: os quebra-quebras, os "movimentos sociais" de caráter não-classista e os movimentos organizados da "classe trabalhadora" ou "operária". Ao articulá-los, espera-se problematizar uma leitura recorrente em torno desses movimentos, que os caracteriza como insuficientes ou incompletos, reativos e subordinados a imperativos superiores e, assim, esvaziados em sua potência transformadora. Desse modo, busca-se contribuir para um debate que poderia superar a visão, ainda recorrente, de que os protestos populares são fenômenos ocasionais e raros na história brasileira.*

P a l a v r a s - c h a v e : *protesto; movimentos sociais; São Paulo; movimento urbano; História Social.*