



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**History**

**TROPICALISM AS A MOVEMENT OF RESISTANCE TO NORTH AMERICAN STEREOTYPES IN BRAZIL**

**KEY WORDS:** Tropicalism, Cold War, Dictatorship

**Rafael Valladao**

Master In Education By University of State of Rio de Janeiro, 20550-900 São Francisco Xavier Street 524, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

**ABSTRACT**

The Tropicalist movement emerged in the 1960s and was an important tool for resistance to the status quo, combining verbal, musical, physical, and verbal languages. The musicians Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil were the great precursors of the tropicalist movement in Brazil. This research had as objective to analyze the American influence, in the period of the Cold War, in the Brazilian music, in the performance in the stages and the resistance to this expressed by the tropicalist movement. In addition to identifying American acculturation by the media, imposing corporal and musical stereotypes on Brazilian society.

**INTRODUCTION**

The submission of the rest of the world to the political, economic, ideological interest of two nations - a socialist, another capitalist - occurred in the period of the Cold War, which lasted almost half a century until the fall of the Soviet Union to the US block in 1991. They began research programs to produce atomic bombs on both sides and the possibility of nuclear war was imminent.

On one side were the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), composed of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Turkey. On the other side, the Soviet, the socialist countries of the Warsaw Pact: Soviet Union, Albania, East Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia (Vicentino & Dorigo, 2005).

The Cold War inspired a series of revolutions in countries that were not directly involved with it. In the case of Cuba, the government influenced by American political-ideological ideals, was deposed by the revolutionaries Fidel Castro and Ernesto Guevara, of socialist inspiration. In Brazil, the "revolution" took place on the part of the conservative elite of the country, with the help of the Catholic Church and the military enterprise, with the "God, Fatherland and Family" parade, with a promise of containing the "threat" communist.

The military coup was a consequence of a displeasure of some parts of the Brazilian society in relation to the then president of the country João Goulart. On March 31, 1964, Jango was deposed and exiled in Uruguay. Institutional Act No. 1 (AI-1) granted absolute power to the military for constitutional changes. Thus, Marshal Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco would assume the position of president of Brazil (Caldeira et al, 1997).

With the military regime, the government assumes a dictatorial role in all sectors, including in the artistic and cultural scope. The march of the "Hundred Thousand" was a demonstration created by university students, artists from various areas, journalists and dissatisfied with the current government. On December 13, 1968, Institutional Act number 5 (AI-5) was established, conferring full power on the Executive, and therefore Congress closed, arrests, deportations, disqualification, and censorship of the media.

From this great urban concentration, there were some movements, such as labor and trade unions. And the United States was concerned about the possibility of strikes and communism. With the dictatorship properly installed in the country, a climate of terror is established. Student, labor, and musical movements were able to resist the AI-5 decree by conducting marches that united thousands of people for freedom and democracy. Repression reacted violently by consolidating a regime without minimum individual guarantees such as that of coming and going. The years of dictatorship imposed censorship on the press, the suspension of freedom of expression, the illegality of opposition parties, trade unions and working-class associations.

As a result of the Cold War and the military dictatorship, American aesthetic standards begin to be imported into Brazil. Technological

advances from the US began to be part of the life of Brazilian families during this period. The São Paulo capital then had 14 movie theaters and six theaters. At the time, it was the second most inhabited city in Brazil and alone housed a third of the country's industrial workforce.

**COLD WAR AND BRAZILIAN DICTATORSHIP**

In the early 1960s the North American cultural presence spread all around. In the artistic and musical scenario, the "truth" imposed by consumption was also present. "At the same time, they raised (the artists) a central question: where would the national identity be in this swirl of new possibilities, in the radical changes that affected the world?»

However, this American influence on dress, habits, and tastes in the Brazilian's body culture began well before the Cold War and the dictatorship. From the 1940s, with the end of World War II, the United States began a political turnaround in order to relate to Latin America.

According to Pontarolo (2009), there was a massive propaganda of the American way of life, much explored by cinema and American music that arrived in Brazil. The reactions unleashed were manifested by the cultural body of Brazilians in various ways. The urban mass of middle class in Rio de Janeiro, manifests through this body a culture that was not forged in the country, but imported from another. The same author cites the influence of rock n 'roll, the use of Ray-Ban glasses, blue-jeans and whiskey consumption, as well as the dark and closed nightclubs, almost always built in the basements of Copacabana buildings, in life that characterized "modern amusements".

This tendency did not only occur in the artistic-cultural field of the country. There was a process of "Americanization" of the school curricula where the aim was to train the labor force to work in the industries, which would initiate a process of exacerbated technical training in schools, in the period - End of the Second World War and the course of the Military Dictatorship in Brazil. One of these manifestations can be observed by the tendency to replace History and Geography by Social Studies, which would lose the character of a civic and moralizing nationalist project, and would mark the penetration of the American vision in national school curricula (Ribeiro, 2003).

North American stereotypes begin to take root in Brazil, and to be potentialized in the Cold War and dictatorship. The Brazilian's body, which was formerly the expression of his own culture, historically constructed throughout the discovery, was beginning to incorporate a new behavior into the set of his acts, a new knowledge, a new word to his cognitive repertoire. More than an intellectual learning, the individual acquires a cultural content, that is installed in its body, in the set of its expressions, which Daolio (2007) classified with a process of incorporation.

To this process of incorporation of North American stereotypes there were several opposition movements. Tropicalism is an example of this type of movement that, from the most diverse

forms, expressed, through the body of its artists, the resistance to the imposed model.

**TROPICALISM AS RESISTANCE MOVEMENT**



**Fig. 1** - Tropicalia or Panis et Circencis is a studio album released in July 1968 by Philips Records (now Universal Music)

Between 1967 and 1968 artists such as Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Os Mutantes, Tom Zé, among others inaugurated a musical tendency predisposing to think critically about Brazilian culture and art.

The expression "Tropicalismo" began in the press after the Third Festival of Popular Brazilian Music on TV Record in 1967. The songs presented by Caetano and Gil, respectively *Alegria, Alegria* and *Domingo in the Park*, achieved the second and fourth place causing impact among viewers for not being considered as MMPB (Modern Brazilian Popular Music). The Bahians were transformed into sensation by the newspapers that denominated them of Tropicalistas.

Tropicália seems like a living thing, it's happening. Tropicalism looks like a school, a movement in a more conventional sense. The word Tropicalismo appeared in the press in a text by Nelsinho Motta and another by Torquato Neto, similar to Nelsinho. It tended more to the universal sound, another nickname that we listened to and also adopted during a period, more for the idea of global village of Marshall MacLuhan, very present at the time. We had a lot of interest in space conquests, rock'n'roll, electric and electronic music, in the vanguards and in the entertainment industry. All this was experienced as an international novelty that we wanted to approach in such a disconcerting way. (Oliveira, 2010)

The Movement created a relationship between Brazilian culture regarding the rescue of some famous artists abjured by Bossa-Nova as Pixinguinha and Francisco Alves and the aesthetic standards imported from the United States since the Cold War.

The Tropicalist mix was able to bring together national and international, scholarly and popular, urban and rural, taking advantage of all that this amphibious was able to produce. Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil assumed roles in the political field and in 1969 were exiled due to the decree Institutional Act No. 5 or the AI-5.

The two musicians exceeded the limits of cultural transgression when they performed together with Os Mutantes in 1968 at Sucata, a nightclub in the Southern Zone of Rio de Janeiro. Dressed in green and black plastic clothes, they interspersed excerpts from the National Anthem in their music, choreographed on the floor and exposed a banner of the artist Hélio Oiticica with the face of Cavalle, known bandit, with the inscription 'Be marginal, be a hero. (Naves, 2004)

The work of the Tropicalist Movement brought to light the advent of electric guitar imported from the rock style. The members of the

band Os Mutantes: Rita Lee, Arnaldo Baptista and Sérgio Baptista assume this role among the members of Tropicalismo. The guitar represented attitude. It is said to be more than a musical instrument for Tropicalists. It helped to compose the spectacle of colorful clothes, curly hair and a lively scenic presentation and parody, which is, for the time being, eccentric. On the other hand, extracted from the rock universe and taken to the tropicalist scene, the guitar appears as a symbol of cultural movement. (Naves, 2004).

**CONCLUSION**

Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil actively participated against the dictatorial regime in both the lyrics of their songs and of the present body. Letters like *Alegria, Alegria* de Veloso demonstrate the political stance of the members of the Tropicalist Movement.

For Favaretto (1979), Caetano intrigued with its apparent neutrality, with its political and social connotations that had no greater relevance than Brigitte Bardot or Coca-Cola, jumping from the facts narrated to the multiplicity in the songs. This is the case of *Alegria, Alegria*, which presents one of the marks that would define the activity of the tropicalists: a relation between aesthetic enjoyment and social criticism, in which it moves from the theme to the constructive processes.

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