

## THE CAPE, THE CAPTAIN AND THE CAPITAL<sup>1</sup>

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A Professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro with a doctorate in History from the University of São Paulo and long professional experience dedicated to teaching and research, Professor Lincoln de Abreu Penna has been offering the study public essays that stand out for their relevance and originality, among which is the recent publication of the book “*The Cape, the Captain and the Capital - an exercise in comparative history*”. In this work, the author examines some coincidences between the political trajectories of Adolf Hitler and Jair Messias Bolsonaro. This is by no means to say that he considers the latter's political procedure reducible to that of the former, who is responsible for a crime of genocide only comparable to that of which black Africans were victims during the centuries in which they were brought as slaves from their native land to the lands of the new world.

The main idea that the author uses to initially approximate and establish parameters that make a comparison between the German and the Brazilian politicians possible is that, although the actions of both men took place at historical moments that were chronologically quite distant, they both started at times when there were strong crises in capitalism.

Another point in common pointed out by Lincoln is the fact that both have in common a radical intolerance for their opponents, whom they consider and treat as enemies, not opponents in democratic elections. Hitler and Bolsonaro can, therefore, be understood as "authoritarian personalities", according to the concept constructed by German sociologist Theodor Adorno in a classic study of almost a thousand pages originally published in the United States in 1950 (“*The authoritarian personality*”). Among the most striking characteristics of the authoritarian personality are intolerance, self-centeredness,

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aggressiveness, simplistic thinking, indifference to the needs of those who oppose their leadership, narcissism, and an unbridled thirst for power

The crisis of capitalism in Germany, which led to the then unexpected rise of Hitler to power, is directly linked to the country's defeat in the First World War, followed by a humiliating peace imposed by the Treaty of Versailles (1919) and the Great Depression of 1929. This led the already weakened German economy, which had to pay heavy postwar indemnities, to experience an inflationary spiral that led to bankruptcy, causing high unemployment and widespread discontent. These were the circumstances that enabled Corporal of Bohemia, a leading figure in the Nazi Party - an inexpressive party in terms of popular support in its first years of existence - to see his organization, promising national reconstruction, rise to prominence in the elections of 1930 and 1932 and become a political force in the country. In 1933, the conservative, nationalist, and anti-liberal President of the Republic, Paul von Hindenburg, appointed Hitler Chancellor. With Hindenburg's death the following year, Hitler became Fuhrer (leader), president, and chancellor at the same time. With strong military and civilian support, he acquired absolute power in the country.

In Brazil, the occurrence of the crisis of capitalism, which would open space for the also unexpected arrival of Bolsonaro to the presidency of the republic in 2019, begins with the collapse of the Workers' Party (PT). This occurred in 2016, after 14 consecutive years in power through two presidential terms of Lula and one and a half terms of Dilma Rousseff - who had succeeded him and suffered impeachment, accused of fiscal pedaladas. In concrete terms, the downfall of the PT was due to a complex set of internal and external political and economic factors, including errors by the PT administration in combating inflation, corruption, and the use and abuse of the abundant biased material published by the mainstream press, the spearhead of ruling class interests. This campaign encouraged the overthrow of the PT government and its replacement by a government committed to the economic measures of the so-called neoliberalism, which, once in power, began to dismantle the national state by selling profitable public companies at demeaning prices. A government that also took away rights historically hard won by workers, both in the public service and in the private sector.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, also contributed decisively to the arrival of Bolsonaro to the presidency of the republic the wear with public opinion suffered by the PT due to the use and abuse of fake news in advertising campaign Bolsonaro, in addition to the frantic persecution moved against Lula by Lava Jato, as it became known as the Curitiba task force that investigated irregularities committed in Petrobras during the PT governments.

Investigations that culminated with the conviction and imprisonment of the former president, which stripped him of his right to run for president of the republic in the election held in 2018, the opinion polls prior to his imprisonment pointed to his leadership in the dispute.

It is worth remembering that, in a recent decision, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) not only annulled Lula's convictions - putting his case back to square one - but also considered that the former judge and justice minister, Sergio Mouro, did not act with the integrity and independence that characterize the magistrature.

Lula's imprisonment and the wear and tear experienced by PT, evidenced in the factors listed so far, caused a power vacuum that paved the way for Bolsonaro's election. This is associated with the enigmatic stabbing of Bolsonaro during a rally he was holding in the city of Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, shortly before the elections. Whether the stabbing was real or not, creating popular commotion and emotionally affecting the population's ways of thinking, feeling and acting, it was also a fundamental factor in his election, since it undoubtedly earned him thousands of votes from voters who, until then, were undecided or simply moved, migrating from Haddad to the prematurely retired military officer.

In his comparative analysis, Professor Lincoln also highlights the common professional origin, i.e., military, of the German and Brazilian politicians, as well as the serious problems they both had with the courts. Both responded to disciplinary proceedings and, although initially found guilty, were eventually acquitted.

Hitler served in the German army during the First World War. He joined as a soldier and soon after was promoted to corporal. In 1923 he led an attempted coup d'état by fomenting a strong disturbance in a Munich beer hall, where he was accompanied by militants, like himself, supporters of Nazism. He was arrested, accused of high treason for attempting to subvert the constitutional order and, for this reason, he remained in prison for about a year until he was tried. The defense, which lasted for hours, was made by the defendant himself, an excellent orator who, in emotive language, assured that the act that had led him to prison was done out of love for his country and in defense of a people humiliated and impoverished by the desperate situation in which Germany found itself in the post-war period. The prosecutor asked for eight years in prison for Hitler, but the judge sentenced her to five, with conditional release in six months.

As for Bolsonaro, professor Lincoln informs, in his historiographical work, that in 1986, when he was an active duty captain in the Brazilian army, he published in the magazine *Veja*, in the section *Ponto de Vista*, a small article entitled "The salary is low", where he made clear his dissatisfaction with the salary he received. It is evident that such a manifestation was

against the disciplinary principles that make the army an institution highly respected and admired by Brazilians. The captain's serious disciplinary transgression could not have passed or passed in a cloudy light by his hierarchical superiors. The three colonels who judged him unanimously proposed that he be expelled from the glorious ranks of the homeland army. Bolsonaro appealed the decision to the Superior Military Court (STM) and, like Hitler, made his own defense, obtaining an opinion that not only exempted him from the humiliating expulsion, but also preserved his pay as long as he requested immediate transfer to the reserve, which he did. This was the beginning of Bolsonaro's career as a professional politician. He was first elected as a city councilman in Rio de Janeiro and then, for two decades, as a congressman and finally as president of the republic. In parliament, he always presented himself as a representative of the interests of the military and as a patriot, a staunch anti-communist, a defender of dictatorships, of torturers, and completely averse to human rights. In general terms, Bolsonaro's parliamentary profile did not change when he became president, where he made the armed forces the heart of his so-called patriotism, relegating the civilian population, especially public servants and the poor in general, to the position of absolute second class.

After the initial chapters, where the author reports and comments on central aspects of the trajectory of Hitler and Bolsonaro since the barracks times until they reached the highest position of executive power in their respective countries - the first as dictator and the second as president - facts that occurred at different historical moments, In the chapters that follow, the author turns his historian's gaze to the reception of Hitler inside and outside Germany, seeking to analyze how the fascist and antidemocratic ideals of international origin had repercussions in Brazil, being present to this day..

In sum, the book reviewed is a timely publication, written in the heat of the moment, aimed not only at the academic public, but for all true patriots concerned with the future of our people and with the positive and impolite role that Brazil must play in the concert of nations.

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