

**Benjamin A. Cowan. *Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. 340pp. ISBN:978-1-4696-2750-2 (paperback). Price £36.95.**

Benjamin Cowan's extensive research into the archives of right-wing ideologues, both non-military and civilian, fills an important lacuna in the history of Brazil's military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985. While often seen as less repressive than the dictatorship in Argentina where approximately 30,000 Argentines disappeared and never reappeared, in Brazil, by Cowan's admission, fewer than 500 died at the hands of the military, while hundreds disappeared. It is worth noting that Argentina had a population of about 33 million, while Brazil had about 92 million. For these reasons and others, the history of right-wing ideology in Brazil seemed less pressing. Cowan noted in his introduction that the 1930s dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas often sabotaged the efforts of conservatives. But, as Cowen states: 'Right-wing culture warriors were not all powerful.... They did, however, play a key ideological role.' (p. 11)

In the 1960s and 1970s, inspired by 1930s *integralista* fascists, conservative Catholicism, and unfashionable scientific and philosophical writers from all over the world, Brazilian culture warriors had new opportunities to define morality, especially among the young and the sexually liberated. Although Cowan does not mention this, Brazil at this time had a very large proportion of youths under 15 who were already, or about to reach puberty in 1966 just at the time that rock and roll, the pill, and anti-militarism and world youth movements became visible through movies and music.

As Cowen proceeds from topic to topic, it appears that the right was all powerful, placed in important governmental and military positions. By the 1960s they confronted demands for divorce, abortion, birth control and women's rights—all unacceptable. Sexual promiscuity, both heterosexual and homosexual were anathema while the rest of the world extolled sexual rights. No wonder that later military governments subsidized a uniquely Brazilian form of cinema soft porn called *pornochanchadas* to keep the public away from American and European movies. Military governments even considered allowing the sale of contraceptives.

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No wonder the right was defeated not by youths, but by the same military governments that had once promised to enforce morality. By the 1980s many of the children so feared by the right, had become adults and shared the values of world youths. So, they sabotaged the efforts of the right to impose a moralism no longer popular among the majority of the population.

Furthermore, as Cowan noted, the Brazilian left, including the communists, were as socially and sexually conservative as parts of the right. Thus the right's fears of a sexually degenerate Cuba in Brazil, never became a reality, and the fact that most Brazilians lived in the interior, far from the reach of leftist politics reinforced this.

Even though the Brazilian alt-right culture warriors did not win the day, Cowan is to be congratulated for uncovering their extensive publications in a variety of sources. He does a thorough analysis of these diverse writings, and provides a frightening portrait of a possible 'modern' Brazil.

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