



ORIGINAL PAPER

**Marxism and democracy: a new approach to
comprehending the relationships between intellectuals
and politics by examining the life and works of the
Brazilian “activist” and theoretician Francisco
Weffort**

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Abstract

Our aim in this article is to explore the role played by Francisco Weffort in the intellectual and political field before and after the left-radicalization between the 1960's and the 1980's in Brazil. His initial intellectual formulations departed from a radical Marxist/'class-ist' perspective by arguing for the necessity for a drastic rupture of the Brazilian political and economic system. His ideas indirectly contributed to the Brazilian politics in two ways: in favor of the armed struggle against the military dictatorship; in favor of the foundation of a “new kind of politics” able to overwhelm the archaic Brazilian political tradition, having as its main consequence the foundation of the Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT (Workers' Party) in 1980. Weffort helped to found the PT, which had a radical socialist orientation, but with the end of the Brazilian dictatorship in 1980 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Weffort's theories changed substantially. He began to privilege democratic representative institutions instead of a communist/socialist voluntarist activism. Our intention is to use a new analytical perspective to evaluate Weffort's influence in the political processes. We have as assumption the idea that he played a role less as a university researcher than as a “public intellectual,” energizing Brazilian left-wing political practice. We are leaving aside for a time his textual production regarded in strict academic terms, and in contrast taking into account his political role during the decay and collapse of the USSR. We will demonstrate that as a “public intellectual” his formulations contributed to the foundation of the PT and informed the role taken by some left-wingers in the armed struggle.

Keywords: *Marxism – Post-communism – Democracy – Intellectuals – Francisco Weffort*

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Introduction

Our intention in this article is to analyze the role played by Francisco Weffort in the intellectual and political field before and after the left-radicalization of 1960 to 1980 in Brazil. His initial theorizations departed from a ‘class-ist’/ Marxist perspective by arguing for the necessity for a drastic rupture of the Brazilian political and economic system. Weffort developed the greater part of his theories and formulations between 1960 and 2010 at the University of São Paulo - Brazil. His ideas indirectly contributed to the Brazilian politics in two ways: in favor of the armed struggle against the military dictatorship, albeit argued in indirect terms, and thus to fight over the long term for communism in Brazil; in favor of the foundation of a “new kind of politics” able to surmount the archaic Brazilian political tradition, having as its main consequence the foundation of the Workers’ Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) in 1980. Weffort helped to found the PT, which had a radical socialist orientation – and he worked as its general secretary between 1983 and 1987. With the end of the Brazilian dictatorship in 1980 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Weffort’s theories changed substantially. He began to privilege democratic representative institutions over voluntarist activism.

Our aim is to use a new analytical perspective to evaluate Weffort’s influence in - the pre and after dictatorship’s period and post-Cold War political processes. Our hypothesis is that he played a role less as a university researcher, working within the empirical and theoretical formulations of political science of the time, than as a “political publicist” or “public intellectual,” energizing Brazilian left-wing political practice. We are leaving aside for a time his textual production regarded in strict academic terms, and in contrast taking into account his political role during the decay and collapse of the USSR. We will show that as a political publicist and public intellectual his formulations – even more radical than the Brazilian Communist Party’s theoretical elaborations – contributed to the foundation of the PT and informed the role taken by some left-wingers in the armed struggle.

Francisco Weffort’s trajectory is a significant example of the relationships between intellectuality and politics in Brazil between the 1960’s and 1990’s. Studies on populism and syndicalism developed by Weffort and the group of intellectuals gathered around him were begun in the University of São Paulo in the context of the military rule set up in 1964 and the decay of communism in the USSR and its satellites. In the national context, his investigations were developed in the middle of a period of increasingly authoritarian rule that began with the establishment of the AI5 (Institutional Act), with the curtailment imposed on “left wing” intellectuals who attempted to oppose to authoritarian rule in any way, and, further on, with the re-democratization perspectives of the late the 1970’s (Chilcote, 2014; Baptista, 2009; Lahuerta, 1999; Pécaut, 1990; Sorj, 2001; Vianna, 1986).

At the international level, the fragility and disintegration of the “Soviet empire” expressed by the period of crisis between the 1970’s and 1980’s – arising out of the American arms race, the economic stagnation that was starting to jeopardize favorable social indexes, and the collapse of the “soviet agricultural cellar” caused by Chernobyl disaster – greatly contributed to the change in Weffort’s and other Brazilian Marxist intellectuals’ understanding of communism/socialism reality and of the general worldwide “left wing” (Ramos, 2013; Chilcote, 2014; Araújo, 2012).

In the academic environment, Weffort’s “view of Brazil” was initially influenced by the reception of Marx’s works during his participation in the *Capital* seminar. Studies

of this group have attempted to interpret reality through Marxist theory. Their methodology was based on Western Marxism, and their major concern was not to be contaminated by the national-populist left wing, which were acting in concert with the orthodox Soviet Marxist view presented in a great deal of the interpretations expressed by Isebian intellectuals and the Brazilian Communist Party (Soares, 2011; Lahuerta, 1999; Schwarz, 1998). The Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies – ISEB was initially “... a grand intellectual and political front that included liberals, communists, social democrats, progressive Catholics, and others. Its participants followed various theoretical lines, among them Marxism, existentialism, and other philosophical tendencies, and its objective was to formulate an ideology for national development. During its nine years of existence, it moved from a theorizing phase to a militant leftist phase, but throughout, it maintained a continuity in its defence of national sovereignty and democratic politics” (Chilcote, 2014: 63).

This attempt at intellectual withdrawal from and criticism of orthodox Marxism – typical of the Marxism current at the University of Sao Paulo (USP) – contributed to the emergence of a new line of theoretical interpretation and production that proclaimed the need for a “new” “voluntarist” break with the political institutions that Weffort and other intellectuals considered to be contaminated by the elitism and alliance practices of Brazilian politics. This pursuit of the “new” (Perruso, 2008) had as its consequences, on the one hand, the entrance of left-wing militants and intellectuals into the armed struggle, and, on the other hand, the alignment of intellectuals with the social movement responsible for the constitution of the PT. PT was constituted at first as a “socialist party” – without the pretensions of traditional Marxist political parties in formulating theories and ideologically guiding for merging different sectors of society: workers, union leaders, intellectuals, ecclesiastically-based communities, among other associations and movements (Meneguello, 1989; Floriano, 2008; Keck, 1991; Secco, 2011; Hunter, 2010).

Francisco Weffort was one of the main agents in the foundation of the party and acted as its general secretary from 1983 to 1987. Because of programmatic and ideological divergences, he withdrew from the party in 1994, and took on a position in the Ministry of Culture during President Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s government up to 2002, when he left politics and started to dedicate himself to the academic/intellectual life.

Political grammar: Populism, nationalism and democracy

In this paper, we have attempted to show that a considerable portion of articles written by Francisco Correa Weffort from 1963 to 1984 had as their motivation an attempt at political transformation rather than a strictly academic/scientific intention. This significant fraction of his papers had an important transformative effect on the scope of actual politics in Brazil. Through an epistemological investigation, allied to a historiographical perspective, we intend to analyze the use of a specific grammar (Pocock, 2003) employed by Weffort when building his political arguments during that period. The specific terms we use in our review are nationalism, populism, and democracy. The articles are: *Política de massas* [Mass politics], written in 1963 and published in 1965, in *Política e revolução social* [Politics and social revolution] (1965); his professorship thesis, *Sindicatos e Política* [Unions and politics] (1972), defended at the University of São Paulo; his article *Participação e Conflito Industrial: Contagem e Osasco 1968* [Participation and Industrial Conflict: Contagem and Osasco], (1972), published by CEBRAP; and his book *Por que democracia?* [Why democracy?] (1984), published by Brasiliense publishing house.

Marxism and Democracy: a New Approach to Comprehending the Relationships...

The concepts of populism, nationalism and democracy were repeatedly applied by Weffort in these works and were given strong political meanings in a context of extreme ideological polarization between the left and the right in Brazil and worldwide. Moreover, this took place in a period of when military rule was strengthening, and, later on, after its downfall and the consequent re-democratization process. At that time, Weffort made use of an intellectual repertory close to that of other academicians from USP, in an effort to understand and launch the basic tenets of a new interpretation of Brazil. We interpret the use of that grammar in the aforementioned works as a rhetorical effort by Weffort to pursue change and transformation in the national political scenario. We will demonstrate that these particular works were motivated by intentions closer to the political field, rather than by the academic context that he had been in up to his integration into the institutional political sphere. This was at the time that the PT was founded in late in 1979. Understanding the use of those concepts by the author, and the manner by which the intellectual has gathered them, allows us to recognize his “speech acts” and respective “intentionalities” (Skinner, 2002). Thus we can understand his theoretical formulations on political events within that context as an attempt to influence the *status quo* through academic formulations legitimated by the seal of the university and study centers where he worked.

Theories dating from the time when he wrote his first works – 1960 and 1970 – were permeated with markedly Marxist and structuralist ideas, and by investigations founded on theoretical bases that were predominantly “economicists” and “sociologizants”. The Marxist dependency theory was one of the most significant representations of these views, and they were common modes of thought in institutions such as the Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros - ISEB, the Brazilian Communist Party – PCB, and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic Commission – CEPAL. These theories would have been germinated early in the University of São Paulo Philosophy, Sciences and Arts School – FFCL - USP, among other movements, through the Capital Seminar and the Center for Social and Labor Economics - CESIT, but they matured in Weffort’s experiences at the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning - CEBRAP, where intellectuals such as Fernando Henrique Cardoso, José Arthur Giannotti, and Roberto Schwarz were prominent. The use of nationalism, populism and democracy as conceptual frameworks within a classist interpretation of political relationships in Brazil formed the *Leitmotiv* in Weffort’s interpretations of the national context.

Nationalism

Weffort’s early ideas constituted the most radical expression of opposition to the nationalist ideological trends. In his criticisms, he proposed an abrupt rupture with the “political tradition” through his theories that denounced nationalism as an ideology capable of disguising the populist character of politics in Brazil, and his conceptual formulations that focused on the inefficiency and the subordinated position of the left wing, represented by the Brazilian Communist Party in relation to official syndicalism. He criticized them for not breaking with the political structure of the time, which was founded on alliances between the middle classes and traditional oligarchies.

Although there is no direct reference to the source from which Weffort absorbed populism and nationalism as concepts, it is likely that his adviser, Professor Paula Beiguelman, directly influenced him. She was from a Jewish family and was interested in totalitarianism and authoritarian personalities at that time. The work on authoritarian personalities developed by Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, Sanford and Adorno excited

Beiguelman and her group of students. Beigueuman's interest in the subject was closely related to the possibilities of a similar phenomenon in Brazil, where power was centralized in President Vargas for such a long time. The mobilization – in a pejorative sense – of populism and nationalism derives from that context. However, the concepts were also being discussed by some Isebian intellectuals and by some Latin-American thinkers, such as Gino Germani.

One of Weffort's main criticisms concerned the close proximity to the state of an intellectual/political fraction. For Weffort, the proximity of these intellectuals to the national-developmental ideology of the populists prevented the left from making an incisive criticism of the alliance-based political classes that constituted the government. From Weffort's viewpoint, this intellectual fraction, contaminated by the national-developmental ideology, would not be qualified to make precise diagnoses of Brazilian political realities. It would therefore be unable to elaborate diagnoses based on concrete and "scientifically neutral" foundations.

According to Weffort's criticisms, the nationalist ideologists remained tied to the state, since they did not have any deep links with the masses, or important interconnections with the political parties' organizations. This distance between the ideology, the political parties, and the masses was due to the fact that nationalism is an ideology rising within the state itself. Thus nationalism served the state as an ancillary force, while being unable to ally with it or to withdraw from it (Weffort, 1965). Therefore, for Weffort, nationalism seemed to be nothing but the consecration of the state. Contrary to expectations – when putting itself forward as people's representative – the state would be disguising true class interests, in fact representing them as a "homogeneous mass" lacking any autonomy or independence. Therefore, it would be responsible for a kind of national mystification, viewing in reformist demagogy a kind of revolution. With this configuration, according to Weffort, even though unintentionally, nationalism would end up by supporting the most reactionary political sectors, having given ideological support to the government of Juscelino Kubitschek in its support for imperialism. For Weffort, nationalism, as well as populism, would be responsible for diminishing the sense of class in the emergence of mass politics, thereby confounding populism with the notion of "people."

Thus: "Surprisingly ... , even nationalist authors, who claimed themselves as identified with people, were not able to go further from the conception forged in the traditional horizon" (Weffort, 1965: 172). Thus, according to Weffort, this ideology, responsible for bringing a feeling of "being Brazilian" to the masses, was hiding class distinctions and paradoxes, which would otherwise be the real combustion points for political change. Nationalism as a homogeneous ideology would not be capable of representing contradictions within the "people", it conceived of it from a generic point of view, without understanding the distinctions and specificities within the population. Weffort's accusation also referred to the nationalists' fascination with the state's oligarchic features, since they had not pursued the fight for autonomous organization of popular movements. Their purpose was to represent masses, however, by putting themselves above them, and not on the contrary to be their "authentic representatives".

Although post-1945 suffrage assured some advances related to democratization, Weffort stated that the masses were still distant from the real political game, due, among other factors, to the exclusion of illiterates and a great part of the "agrarian population". In this sense, his criticism focused on nationalism as an illusory representation of the people. His other criticism is that nationalist sectors of the population acted in a conciliatory way toward the state instead of reformulating their ideology and actions in

Marxism and Democracy: a New Approach to Comprehending the Relationships...

conflict with it. In this way, when attempting to give support to and to adhere to the government's progressive elements, they ended up strengthening even the most reactionary forces. "One result is that the nationalist politics gave ideological support to the government of Juscelino [Kubitschek], including its concessions to imperialism, in the same way that it gives support to the government of Goulart in its policy of balance" (Weffort, 1965: 191).

In summary, Weffort's criticisms of nationalism are as follows: 1) The submission of official syndicalism to the state structure, making it incapable of giving a response to the contradiction of capital vs labor, its main function in developing capitalist societies; 2) The excessive closeness of intellectuality and politics, preventing the former from making sharp but objective criticisms; 3) The inability of a national-developmental ideology to perceive the importance of the autonomy of the workers' movement in relation to the state, and the relevance that this new political agent could have in that political and economic context, since it was capable of breaking and burying once and for all inheritance of corporative syndicalism of Vargas's era – itself a residue of Italian fascism; 4) The "politicization" of strikes and the remaining social movements that ended up neutralizing this new political agent; 5) Class collaboration, the main obstacle for an actual break with the political-economic structure inherited from Vargas era; and finally 6) The misinterpretation of the conjuncture by the PCB, which did not anticipate the coup of 1964 and instead pursued a political strategy of peaceful co-existence.

Populism

Therefore, a classist view of the society would have given the ideal conditions for Weffort to adopt the idea of nationalism when constructing his criticisms of populism. Thus, in a certain way, it would be possible to say that nationalism would have been an essential step for the adoption of populism as a concept by Weffort in his explanations for a most of Brazilian politics. Although populism can still be seen as an analytical concept, may also be considered a political interpretation and the way that Weffort made the use of it as a sort of political interpellation. His formulations on populism varied greatly according to the institutions with which he was involved, such as USP, CEPAL, and CEBRAP. His idea was that the course of national politics in Brazil would be left to traditional oligarchies and middle, with the masses and popular classes having mere supporting actor roles in the process of historical transformation. This kind of narrative would constitute a kind of invitation for masses to participate in the political sphere.

According to Weffort, populism was the idea that wide sectors of the population (in this case, the masses) coming from rural to city migrations and from the industrial evolution of the time – a process that started during World War I with the strengthening of Brazilian industry arising from difficulties in importing manufactured products – started to energize a national-political scenario alongside old oligarchies and the urban middle class. This new, more diversified composition, together with a power crisis and greater participation of the masses in politics, provided the state, according to Weffort, with the ideal political scenario for driving the progress of the nation by utilizing typical relationships of domination of the leader over the masses.

When formulating these ideas, Weffort noted the absence of a political agent – typical of traditional bourgeois revolutions – which would have the ability to push capitalist development forward and so lead the Brazilian nation to "modernity", with the state commanding the course of national politics. According to this interpretation, the state

would always be arbitrator of the classes, mediating relationships among political, economic, and ideologically “antagonistic” fractions.

Populism peculiarity comes from the fact that it arises as a form of domination under “political emptiness” conditions, in which no class has hegemony and exactly because no class looks alike capable of assuming it. It is worthy to remember that populism emerges when there is a crisis in oligarchic hegemony and in liberal institutions that impose a wide and unstable commitment among the dominant groups, managed by a strengthened executive, economic and administrative power of the State (Weffort, 1978: 159).

Weffort’s first drafts on populism as a concept appear in *Política de massas* (1965). According to Weffort, populism should be understood as the political expression of given class interests. Specifically in the Brazilian case, this was decaying liberal elite, relying on the most reactionary interests of society. This would be, according to Weffort, a way of masking reactionary interests, by disguising them as mass interests. For Weffort, populism was nothing other than sophisticated nationalist ideals, materialized in the demagogic style of the populist leader’s concrete politics.

Mobilized one year after the Military Coup in 1964 and deploying a very radical class appeal, the term populism is to be understood not only as an explanatory category/concept of the Brazilian politics, but also as a rhetorical apparatus, mobilized to cause political/social transformations.

When looking over his doctoral thesis, *Classes populares e política (contribuição ao estudo do ‘populismo’)* [Popular classes and politics (contribution to the study of “populism”)], which was defended at the University of São Paulo in 1968, we come across questions similar to those of his first work written in 1963, although having a less effusive and more academic tone, perhaps resulting from the scientific accuracy demanded for a doctoral thesis, or even possibly because he was carrying out his researches in an institution considered the birthplace of Brazilian nationalist ideas - CEPAL. In this case, we refer to the Cepaline structuralist perspectives, which helped to transform the nationalist idea in a suitable option for the state and some intellectuals in Brazil. This perspective, which viewed archaic x modern dualism as the best way to interpret reality in Latin American countries, had as belief the idea that the underdeveloped countries should follow the developed countries model as a means to overcome the underdevelopment barriers.

Subsequent working at CEPAL, Weffort was invited to join CEBRAP. In a setting where intellectual freedom was curtailed – on account of the strengthening of military rule – and where the professionalization of social scientists allowed criticisms of national-populist ideology, Weffort was a continued presence in the Paulista intellectual agenda. New research subject matter, such as the questioning of stagnation theories, the deepening of structural theories on dependency, and the characterization of authoritative rule were strengthened through criticism of its institutions, and through a search for understanding the social bases that molded the rule.

At that time, Weffort still focused on studies on the political importance of the working class and the syndicalist movement, and he defended his free-professorship thesis *Sindicatos e Política* [Unions and politics] at the University of São Paulo in 1972. The work presented the results from researches that he had been developing in CEBRAP. In addition, he wrote the work *Participação e Conflito Industrial: Contagem e Osasco, 1968* [Participation and Industrial Conflict: Contagem and Osasco], published by CEBRAP in

Marxism and Democracy: a New Approach to Comprehending the Relationships...

1972. These two works, differently from his doctoral thesis and closest to *Política de massas* (1965) text, had a marked critical character. In those two works, in addition to continued criticism of populism, Weffort announced the importance of a new political performer. Popular classes that had then reached “citizen” status with their inclusion into labor market, with the labor laws created during the New State, and the new consumption possibilities open by the capitalist modernization process, would represent that performer.

In his free-professorship thesis, Weffort launched his criticisms of syndicalist corporatism and of the political relationships that unions were subjected to, an expressive message from the “official left wing” to nationalist ideas and supporters. In *Participação e Conflito Industrial: Contagem e Osasco, 1968* Weffort called attention to workers’ autonomy in the social movements that were taking place then and to the need for workers’ movements to break with the populist syndicalism, which was the prevailing political trend in Brazil from the 1950’s. He also called attention to the important fact that strikes in Osasco e Contagem would have been movements outside the official syndicalism at that time. Thus, he was stating the relevance of “thinking independence” by the working classes of the time. According to Weffort’s view, these were the political performers that would be able to (and should) take the lead in radical transformations that were about to take place, both at the institutional political level, and at the level of disputes not linked to the scope of official politics. Weffort was betting then on the independence of cutting edge sectors of the working class (Weffort, 1972). His basic assumption was that those performers would be able to break with the national-popular political tradition and with its corresponding syndicalist structures.

Thus, one may see that nationalism and populism walked hand in hand in Weffort’s early formulations from 1965 to 1972. Allied to those formulations was the emergence of a new political performer, who, in Weffort’s view, would be able to transform the power relationships of traditional national politics. This independent and self-governing performer would be Weffort’s bet both on the plane of political transformation, with a view to re-establishing democracy, and in relation to the economic system, opening a way to lead Brazil to the socialist horizon that permeated intellectual ideas of the time. Criticisms of nationalism and populism had an essential role as a theoretical-ideological substratum and “ideological justification” in Brazilian politics, paving the way for part of the left wing to make an armed fight and for the other part to move towards a “new politics” within the context of institutional legality, which was opening up with the promise of re-democratization.

Democracy

In addition to Weffort’s work on nationalism and populism, his account of democracy is also notable. This was an important point in his trajectory, since from that specific stage he turned even more strongly towards social movements and towards viewing the working classes as the political leaders required for Brazilian historical transformation. This provided further energy for the formation of the Workers’ Party. This may be viewed as a change in the author’s “political choice”. This gradual transformation – marked by the events within the national and international scope – was consistent with his support for institutional politics with the foundation of the Workers’ Party late in 1970, gradually leaving behind his radical rhetoric of break with the traditions of Brazilian politics. Although leaving behind this specific radical rhetoric, Weffort started acting “politically” again, but from now writing in defense of democracy after the left defeat..

From 1972, in *Sindicatos e Política* (1972) and *Participação e Conflito Industrial: Contagem e Osasco, 1968* (1972), Weffort supported the new social movements represented by a new syndicalism, district associations, and communities of the church in making an opening for democratic politics in Brazil. In addition, he called attention to the significant elements that these new forces could add to the development of a new political associations not contaminated by vices of the past politics and that could turn the representative process of the democratic system into a reality within the national context.

With the ebullient social movements and the progress of the democratic transition, Weffort started to focus on institutional changes in the democratic sphere. Thus, subject matter such as “democratic transition”, “citizenship”, “political representation”, “economic growth and democracy strengthening”, among others, were included in his agenda.

Following his radical criticisms of nationalism and populism, Weffort produced texts related to a “*de facto* democracy” and the strengthening of the democracy as a “value”. At that time, Weffort used the formulations of Carlos Nelson Coutinho, who had developed theories of the importance of democracy for socialism that were inspired by so-called Eurocommunism. This set of considerations was induced and influenced by the failure of Soviet rule and the concern of Brazilian intellectuals with re-democratization process, among other things. Such formulations may be conceived as cause and effect within the historical-political events within the national and international contexts. In addition, Weffort periodically wrote analyses of the political situation, relating democracy to economic, social and cultural politics.

These theories stressed the need to include the working class – previously excluded from the typical oligarchic alliances of the national authoritarian politics – into the political sphere, which was changing due to the process of capitalist modernization since the early 1950s. In other words, according to Marilena Chauí and Marco Aurélio Nogueira, this concern with democracy had its foundation in “... the process of system rearrangement and enlargement, of social integration and incorporation, of democracy expansion and consolidation in a large sense” (Chauí, Nogueira, 2007: 198).

Weffort started to strengthen his role as a political performer when discussing democracy theory in Brazil, trying to give answers to the concrete political challenges. As a PT member (between 1980 and 1994) and general secretary (between 1983 and 1987), he wrote contributions to the Party National Bulletin and articles for major newspapers of the time. In these texts, he addressed several subjects, from the need for structural reforms in the Brazilian institutional politics, to the importance of the National Constituent Assembly for the advance of democracy.

The excerpt below – a contribution by Weffort to the *V Seminar on Latin American studies* that produced the work *Os intelectuais nos processos políticos da América Latina* [Intellectuals role in Latin American political processes] (1984) – shows the political/intellectual paradox experienced by the author. His “change of position” was accomplished with an accurate self-reflection on his place as an intellectual in and out of concrete politics:

We, as intellectuals, with the burden of this History and this tradition, have been engaging in democratic movements in this country; have been practicing the exercise of a democracy, at least one of an elementary nature, but still have not been capable of developing a truly democratic thinking about this country. It is as if we were

Marxism and Democracy: a New Approach to Comprehending the Relationships...

empiricists: empiric, primary and primitive democrats. There is something serious about this; we engaged in democratic processes and so, in fact, assumed given democratic commitments, but we have difficulty to clearly recognizing them and this results in certain misunderstandings. (...) Our contribution to democracy theory and to the deepening of the perspectives of our fight for democracy will take place insofar as we have the ability and courage of breaking off with the aspects of an authoritarian tradition which all of us inherited in any way. The first rupture, which, as I understand it, must take place, is that with the idea that democracy is not only an instrument, but also a value in itself (Weffort, 1984: 237-238).

In other words, integrated into the Workers' Party core and with greater political prominence, Weffort proclaimed the need for democracy as a "general value" that required an improved conceptualization of the concept and a "position taking" by the author in institutional politics. Weffort used the expression "democracy as a general value" in *Por que Democracia?* of 1984 and its sense largely approaches the "democracy as a universal value" concept used by Carlos Nelson Coutinho in an essay of same title published in 1979. Coutinho's text resulted from the influence of the PCI theories studied by the author in the course of his exile in Italy during the 1970's. More details on these theories will be shown in specific chapter on Weffort's formulations on democracy. In other words, although his work contained some criticisms of the alliance-based character of the Brazilian politics, when the toughest phase of the military dictatorship was over, his thoughts turned with more emphasis on the concern with advancing democratization in the country and in Latin America, and with the threats of a possible regression in the process.

This interpretive change by (ex) Marxist intellectuals – previously concerned with contradictions in the capitalist production and conflict between its corresponding classes, with the populism as a political farce, and with the incongruities of nationalist ideas – to arguing the importance of democracy, admits that radical changes "outside the order" were no longer practicable. At this particular time, intellectuals, who in the past had taken more radical positions, proceeded in some cases to change their horizons, their interpretations of political reality and their role as "public intellectuals". These intellectuals (having Weffort as one of the most important examples) started to formulate theories and analyses of the situation in order to have a *de facto* democratic sphere in Brazil that would definitely break with the authoritarian political culture present at the national level at all times.

In *Por que democracia?* (1984) Weffort presented democracy as a general value, endorsing Carlos Nelson Coutinho's idea of democracy as a universal value in his essay of the same title published in 1979. Carlos Nelson Coutinho's text, which in 1979 opened the discussion on the theory of "democratic socialism" in Brazil derived from the Eurocommunist view, was a turning point in the renewal of the Brazilian Communist Party. It had a strong influence on formulations by Weffort, by the research group accompanying him, and on the theoretical formulations of the PT – which he became a member of in 1989, but with which he already had conversations since its foundation ten years earlier. This text is perhaps the high point in representing the dilemma of the intellectuals of the time when thinking about the paradoxical relationship between socialism and democracy. This was a clear expression of the historical and political impasse experienced at that time by intellectuals divided between ideas and politics, searching for responses for the historical and political impasses, and strongly influenced

by these. According to Weffort, democracy differed from a simple instrument of power, used by oligarchic elites from the time of the Old Republic (1889 – 1930). What Weffort tried to explain in this case was the sense that democracy should assume in Brazil in the present. According to him: “A value that belongs to everyone, a space for achievement of human dignity that cannot be given up.” (Weffort, 1984: 61-62) This was a democracy valued in itself that surpassed the any merely instrumental character.

Democracy according to Weffort should be founded on the notion of giving rights and citizen status to individuals in an absolute way. Thus, inequality and economic-social polarization, responsible for excluding the masses from culture, would instead be a spur to their achievement. The existing abyss between elites and the least-privileged groups precludes democracy as a general value. Therefore, in this sense, society would be compelled to overcome these obstacles in order to achieve a new political/social order, which would necessarily be founded on a democratic basis.

In addition to his theoretical efforts, this work consisted of almost an “official document” signed by Weffort – who had taken on the position of general secretary of the PT exactly one year before the publication of the book – arguing for the defense of democracy in Brazil. According to Weffort, “This book is an argument for democracy in Brazil. ... And I hope it fulfills a political function and stimulates discussions on democracy in Brazil.” (Weffort, 1984: 9) In addition to the support and theoretical efforts for democracy, the book addressed subject matter such as the authoritarian tradition in Brazilian politics, the fragility of Brazilian democracy from 1945 to 1964, the dilemmas of post-1964 democratic transition, the ideological and state traditions preceding conservative transitions in Brazil, and the role of the working class in political and social transformations. The text *Por que democracia?* written by Weffort in 1984 was a milestone, a clear attempt to resolve the paradox between democracy and socialism, and therefore a clear demonstration that Weffort – independently of the subject (nationalism, populism or democracy) – had the intention of transforming the field of political practice.

Marxism, post-communism and democracy

By considering these concepts - nationalism, populism and democracy - we are able to trace Weffort’s shifting path in Brazilian political history. He was a motivator of a radical change, following left-wing radical ideas (nationalism and populism) and later after the 1980’s as an intellectual/politician who tried to calm the polarization that occurred when communism fell and democratization appeared on the horizon (with the idea of democracy). Once he perceived the defeat of the armed struggle in Brazil and the consequences of that, he started to encourage – through a rhetorical turn – democratic institutions, instead of a voluntarist orientation in politics.

The uses of nationalism, populism and democracy made by Weffort can be considered an important influence in Brazilian political transformations. If we considering nationalism and populism it is possible to see a Marxist intellectual concerned with radical changes and avoiding any kind of political alliance/conciliation from the perspective of ideas. If we consider democracy then this allows us to understand the political shift in Weffort’s specific case. Weffort implied specific meanings in different vocabularies and managed to act politically though he was outside the institutional political sphere or social movements. Later on, when he joined the Worker’s Party, his ideas of nationalism and populism had already taken hold in workers’ thoughts, which embedded his theories in a movement which assembled intellectuals and workers together for the first time in Brazil.

Marxism and Democracy: a New Approach to Comprehending the Relationships...

These vocabularies were part of a constellation of ideas which justified albeit indirectly the actions of different subjects in politics.

During the last few years of the dictatorship Weffort realized that the “socialist dream” would not be possible and so he reconsidered his position within the panorama of ideas. It seems that though he did not succeed in his “game of words” against the class’s alliances between political and economic oligarchies, he kept fighting, but at this time for a new ideal called democracy. We brought forward some evidence that more than a strict academic intellectual Francisco Weffort was a “political intellectual”, who tried to act from a different field and with different resources in the battlefield of politics.

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Rafael Marchesan Tauil, Terrell Foster Carver

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