

Panic Twice in the City
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“São Paulo is a dead city. The populace is alarmed; faces register panic and apprehension because everything is closed, without the slightest movement. Besides a few scurrying pedestrians, only military vehicles occupy the streets. ...Troops armed with rifles and machine guns have orders to fire at anyone who remains on the street.” This city emptied by fear is not the 21st-century megalopolis that on May 15, 2006 imposed a humiliating curfew on itself, prompted by a wave of attacks whose chain of command — no pun intended, despite its relevance — originated from inside an immense penitentiary system, following rebellions in at least 73 of the 105 prisons recently scattered all through São Paulo State by a carceral policy of unheard-of proportions. No, the city in question, even though the industrial center of the country, is still provincial, the factory system having been a lever recently added to the more traditional mechanisms of dispossession characteristic of a colonial economy. Even so, it is a city alarmed and held at bay by an uprising of classical European cut: nothing more or less than a workers’ general strike, which in July 1917 paralyzed São Paulo for several days.

At the height of the conflict, which for the first time brought the working-class masses into direct confrontation with the repressive apparatus of the factory owners (themselves a novelty within the oligarchic power structure), the number of uprising strikers reached the sum, terrifying for the time, of 50,000. The state government was forced to seek help from the federal

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government, which sent troops and dispatched two war ships to the port of Santos. The strike had become total, and the city, for the first time, a disorderly battleground paralyzed by the surprising strategy of direct action employed by the rebellious masses.¹ The clashes between the unruly multitude and the Public Forces (something like today's Military Police) multiplied; public transportation came to a halt, partly due to a lock-out on the part of the owners and partly due to attacks on vehicles. The train services joined the strike. The uprising expanded to the suburbs, interrupting the supply of the central area. The labor leagues, which were organized in the workers' neighborhoods, erected barricades and set up strongholds in the tenements and alleys of those zones of ostracism and social confinement. There was no lack of gunfire: for example, between police and union workers entrenched on the construction site of the new cathedral, or barricaded in a popular coffee shop. Also disconcerting were the attacks on authorities: not only were there attempts to assault police stations, but the police chief's own car was shot, not to mention the expedition of a column of rebels to the residence of the Secretary of Justice, which was put down by his personal guards. The rebels' predilection for attacking gas streetlamps — there is more to this story, even though the description is in the sympathetic words of Everardo Dias, a former union militant and now historian of social conflict in Brazil — contributed to the phantasmagoric impression of a dead city lit up in flames.²

While it is undeniable that in this vision we can already make out urban terrors to come, not to mention those already crystallized by the feared anarchist immigration, it would be necessary to add to this ghostly scene certain elements that today seem to belong to another world: like the fact that the gaslights were merely the targets of street kids having fun, a caprice which happened to help the nocturnal mobility of the insurgent workers, or the continuous hijacking of buses, which allowed for free transportation and itineraries dictated by the whim of the passengers. A dead city? A question of class. In that time of struggle against absolute surplus value, a looming state of siege — but who was besieging whom? — was hard to distinguish from a world turned upside down by an ephemeral libertarian release.

To say that the real thing was in the offing would be an exaggeration, but even had it been at hand, this never to be repeated surge announced the decline of anarchism in the Brazilian workers' movement. It was also the beginning of the end of our long nineteenth century. We should recall that the dynamic nucleus of the first industrial revolution, the textile sector, reached us about 100 years later than in Europe. To compensate, we lived a very short twentieth century: exactly fifty years of a nationalist developmen-

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talist project, between 1930 and 1980. It began under the ascendant sign of communist revolution, and would end without the recently-founded Partido dos Trabalhadores [Workers' Party, or PT] — all exaggeration aside, the repository of all the hope in the world — having the slightest suspicion that its eventual debut as the hegemonic organization on the Brazilian Left would inaugurate our precocious entrance into the disorganized capitalist system of the twenty-first century. (It must be remembered that the unraveling began in the periphery before reaching salaried, well-structured societies.) After a brief and glorious anarchic summer, followed by communist mistakes that had their own productivity, to the PT cycle would fall the highs and lows — until the current profound low, which a presidential reelection only makes gloomier — of the mere *administration* of a political vacuum filled until now by 25 years of socioeconomic decadence. This is not statistical rhetoric: current income per capita in Brazil is one fifth of that in the US; in 1980 it was close to being one third of it, and income from work made up half of the national income. Meanwhile, the wealthiest population quantitatively duplicated itself, with about 40% of the wealthy achieving their status through patrimonial inheritance: a revealing feature, since such wealth is decreasingly generated by licit, productive activity. In the past 25 years of stagnation and deindustrialization, the country has become urbanized, with the urban populace reaching an unbelievable 80% of the population. Unfortunately it's been quite some time since urbanization ceased to be synonymous with development, rather than with favelization and the informal, if not openly illegal, economy.³ This is a sign that the urban frontier has also reached its limit, provoking a wave of marginalization within marginality as occupiable land becomes saturated.⁴ In the metropolitan area of São Paulo alone, there are three and half million young people whose social vulnerability can be measured by the one million who can't get into school, which means they can't get any work. As the journalists, whose philanthropic spirit attains a pathetically Victorian quality, are wont to say, they simply do nothing.⁵

Without any future, the youth are the first to succumb to the seduction of crime and "its hard easy gains."⁶ Extrapolating within the limits of the reasonable, one could say that the human nebula in which the slum population and the new informal proletariat orbit each other — these are far from being the same thing, except for the dramatic circumstance of being no longer a reserve of anything — and which populates the urban frontier mapped out by Mike Davis, constitutes, in today's totally changed terms (and with apologies again for the word), the weakest link in the imperialist chain.⁷ To be more precise in this birds-eye view of the end of the line, we must add

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that at the heart of this strategic link is the vertiginously growing mass of the prison population. That dam broke during the mega-revolt of May 2006, which however was confined, if not deliberately contained, within its urban floodplain. Thus we turn to the historical time lag between the social alarms that sounded in each of the two extreme periods of social warfare in São Paulo, which are serving here as a term of comparison.

The general strike that paralyzed and terrified São Paulo in 1917 blossomed in the midst of police management of the so-called social question, when the belabored classes seemed as foreign and dangerous (in the case of the immigrant population, the demonization of the poor was magnified exponentially) as barbarians of a new era camping out on the margins of civilized society. Nonetheless, the factory owners of São Paulo enlisted a commission of journalists to negotiate with the rebelling masses, which were represented by a Committee of Proletarian Defense. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the frontal clash, the struggle between the two fundamental classes, both clearly identified as such, imposed an order on the fear and gave it a tangible significance. At the other extreme of the historical cycle of the fears inherent to capitalist urbanization, the belabored class — and now I refer to the jailed subclass of surplus humanity — finally proved to be what bourgeois fear had always claimed they were, namely dangerous. No longer through the voice of a working-class militant, but through the megaphone of the mass media, São Paulo for the second time declared itself scared to death. The local press reported that the city had been swept by “the largest wave of violence in its history.” Illustrating the perverse symmetry, there was indeed a kind of negotiation in this final chapter as well. At some point — dates vary — the command in charge of the rebellion gave the order for all jail mutinies to end and for all street attacks to cease, even though police retaliation continued to escalate. This time, however, the classic antagonistic classes did not sit at the table. Not because they had disappeared, but simply because the mechanisms of social representation had become unrecognizable. And, in contrast to what had happened in the previous century, it is quite probable that the populace felt a rather more moral panic than less — a panic carefully nourished by those who govern and by their media extensions — when it realized that the penal arm of the state (assuming there is any other) was able to reach a deal with the parallel powers inside the prison system. Such a deal is an open secret, at least according to a classic of hip-hop literature: “Do you really think that the party members [Party of Crime, also known as First Command of the Capital, or PCC, the name taken by the majority faction in the prison system] were taken out of jail to simply contain

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revolts? The whole thing revolves around money, the one and only cause of the whole situation, a failed extortion that ended with hundreds of deaths.”⁸

At this point is not really important to know who is blackmailing whom. The point is that it is now a matter of a private war between powers either parallel or converging. This war is, however, of maximum scope — not only in terms of the collateral damage caused by the shock waves between them, but in terms of its structural function in the containment of the Brazilian slum-planet.⁹ It is all the more symptomatic of the current disintegration when outlined against the background of the former historical shutdown of the city, when class struggle was anything but a private deal between workers and owners, as the present war between police protection and the agents of illicit markets seems to be (but isn't).¹⁰

So, shootings and skirmishes aside, the history of the first “Battle of São Paulo” registered only one casualty: the assassination of a young anarchist shoemaker, whose funeral cortege fanned the flames of the strike, at once turning it into a general strike. In contrast, the eight days of private war of the PCC against the Prison State, and vice versa, saw 1978 shots fired and 492 people dead. On May 15th alone, on the day that São Paulo came to a halt — 5 million passengers without access to transportation, not to mention gigantic traffic jams aggravated by police blockades, businesses, shopping centers, and schools closing, etc. — 117 people were shot to death by an average of four shots per death. At worst, one person alone was shot 22 times. By way of comparison, in the massacre committed by the shock troops of the Military Police when they invaded the rebelling prison of Carandiru in 1992, executing 111 people, the average of fatal shots was five per victim. Confronting a paroxysm of this size — the present one — the president of the Regional Council of Medicine declared that we were living through a “catastrophic period” unparalleled for as far back as he could remember. When the rebel cease-fire was called, which seems to have been on Mother's Day (May 14), between 25 and 30 security agents had been downed by the insurrectional criminal faction. As for those officially killed by the police, which numbered about 130 (poor, black, mulatto, for a change) — independent organizations reported that 60% of the victims presented evident signs of having been executed.¹¹

The dead unrelated to the PCC seem to number around 350. According to some testimonies, hooded men would arrive and open fire; they are alleged to have been extermination squads that involved members of the police. Security specialists and human rights activists are still trying to understand this spasm of violence, including all the isolated homicides (if one can refer to them as such) as well as all the suicides. When the average daily death toll

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is 20 and it reaches 60 per day, this catastrophic outbreak could well indicate the uprising of the notorious dangerous classes deciding to do wholesale what they've always done retail.¹² The current theory invokes the opportunist action of different types of criminals, operating under the shadow of the larger organizations' prestige, confident that their responsibility would go unnoticed at a moment when the authorities themselves are most interested in the amalgam of "organized crime," the popular demon of the moment.¹³ This can be used to explain the truly horrific numbers, but not so much the real novelty, a rupture in the patterns we are accustomed to. In the opinion of a specialist — who is far from alone in his thinking — "we have reached a new level. The capacity to organize things on the outside from within the jail system, to coordinate the burning of buses, attacks on buildings and banks, and to disrupt the life of the city, was for me an immense surprise... It also confirms that the profile of spontaneous criminality organized around gangs is a thing of the past."¹⁴

A concomitant new level has been reached on the scale of old and new urban dread — security having long since become the main commodity of the political industry of fear. The same applies to the anti-commodity of systemic insecurity, needed as much by the state as by its mediatic extension: the former to sell protection and the latter to nourish social alarm campaigns and punitive clamor. One of the first measures taken in this vein was the announcement made by the chief of police, in a dozen obviously rehearsed interviews, that the entire prison population of the state of São Paulo (about 140,000 prisoners) was under the formal control of the same organization that outside the prisons can mobilize about 500,000 people (including family, sympathizers, and professionals). So, the populace is panicked and in disbelief¹⁵ — or better, it says that it is panicked, when asked, because that is what it hears, sees, and reads with respect to its own state of mind.¹⁶ Comparisons with 9/11, now a prestige brand in the scarecrow bazaar, were words practically put in the mouths of fearful secretaries and janitors alike, and even in those of renowned social thinkers who joined the bandwagon of "our" September 11.

In light of the predictable flood of silly claims, it would not hurt to review the basics. A specialist on this geography of fear had us remember that in a class society characterized, like Brazil, by a high tolerance for violence, the wealthy middle classes are the principal consumers of the main product of the industry of fear, namely the phantasmagoric "security bubble." "Every morning cars leave their gated condominiums (bubble 1) to go to private schools with guards at the entrances (bubble 2); later, they continue on to entertainment zones or private leisure areas (bubble 3)." It is not surprising

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that the basic concept of the city has disappeared, and that the cordon sanitaire formed by such bubbles externalizes the latent insecurity. This became evident in the incidents of May, when retaliatory counter-violence expanded in a disorganized way, not surprisingly affecting anyone living outside the bubbles.¹⁷ A week before the above-cited article appeared, on the day following the Great Fear of the PCC no less, another observer of the São Paulo scene had anticipated the argument regarding the psychological effects that the fear industry had on its main consumers — who were, for that very reason, the first victims of the information war declared by the PCC. The latter had made, quite at random, threatening telephone calls that were immediately reproduced by the media, who seemed to be performing involuntarily the role that the PCC had planned for them. "The middle class that forbids its children to take buses or the metro and surrounds itself with security cameras, alarms, etc., ran to its domestic bunkers.... In the early hours of the night a mantle of silence descended over the city."¹⁸ The next day, the news reported that "São Paulo awoke sad, quiet, and confused." From embarrassment? The author just cited thinks so.

It is almost funny, considering the height of social disconnection that characterizes the so-called elites — from the financial to the labor elite, passing through respectable white society interpellated by its own local governor, himself amazed by the level of moral alienation — that civic energy should be demanded of the Brazilian middle class: unless, out of pure nostalgia, we remember that such energy provided the human base for armed struggle against the dictatorship. A supercharge of objective irony comes from the fact (remembered now and again in the columns of the same old cultural apparatus as always) that the Party of Revolution and the Party of Crime crossed paths over thirty years ago, in the depths of the terrible prison at Ilha Grande, in the unheard-of condition — utopic? dystopic? — of "almost brothers," in the inconclusive statement of Lúcia Murat's 2004 film about an encounter that, of course, nobody had sought. Returning to the subject: "It is a terrorized city, perplexed and feeling low," says the administrative assistant, "who yesterday left her job early, like millions of Paulistas, and could not believe what she saw on the streets" — in the words of a reporter on the hunt for what she had been told to find. The young woman in question was more suburban than urban — in the good working-class sense — but even so, that "low," with its flavor of idiomatic English in the subtext, offers an opportunity to reintroduce the hyperbolic comparisons of our author of a moment ago, who was infuriated with the lack of nerve of the Paulistanos. "London wasn't paralyzed during the Blitz. But São Paulo cowered before vulgar delinquency. Shame!" Quite. A less absurd compari-

son would be to what we saw after the bombings in London on July 7, 2005. Despite the complacency of the Blair government and its media, who prattled on about “standing united” as in the heroic times when the city firmly withstood Hitler’s bombings, London simply disappeared, holed up at home, frightened not of radical Islam but of its own compatriots. This and other significant observations are found in Charles Glass’ article *The Last of England*, where he offers the following explanation: “In 1940, Londoners believed they would forge a fairer and better world after the war. Today, no one believes the world will be better than before the war on terror began.”¹⁹

So it is. As in peripheral São Paulo, metropolitan London was also terrorized, or better yet, terrorizable for the same reasons: everyone is floundering in the mousetrap of the political vacuum that accompanies the mental and material eclipse of not being able even to imagine an alternative future to the recurrent disaster of the present. In Jacques Rancière’s excellent definition, societies today, assembled under the questionable and ambiguous protection of a state redefined exclusively by the administration of a strategic and collective feeling of insecurity, are increasingly nothing more than “communities of fear.”²⁰ For this reason — we might add this on our own account, since Brazil is the laboratory for a worldwide disintegration — they are decreasingly national societies, in the plausible sense given us by Benedict Anderson of imagined political communities. Hence we have a perverse integration based on fear, and its underside of illegalities and conflicts always on the verge of a violent explosion. The notorious voice of command saying “There is no alternative” expresses not an objective, unappealable restriction — or not only this — but also a real atrophy of the ability to imagine an alternative: a paralyzing atrophy provoked by fear, above all by the fear that any change could only be for the worse.²¹

So here we are — and at the head of the parade, intellectuals scared to death to open the Pandora’s box of non-trivial transformations. Trying in his turn to understand the nature of the panic that gripped the city of São Paulo on that fateful day of May 15, 2006, another journalist, not a little embarrassed by the fiasco of the middle class, ends up at the same end of the line drawn by Glass. It is not by accident that he resorts also to an analogy that encompasses the sensation of total insecurity, an increasingly uncertain future, and obscene indifference to the destiny of the poor who remain outside the security bubbles. Because in the end what we are talking about is the fear experienced by the poor themselves, in the midst of a war between two groups that are not only organized but above all indiscriminate within their adjacent zones. In his opinion, the fear that spread among the “excess population” originates in the perception of the evident “lack of concern of the

State for those who can’t afford private services, something similar to the unconcern shown by the Bush government towards the victims of Katrina in 2005, when the poor were left to their own devices.”²² One could continue to argue whether the poor blacks of New Orleans were as abandoned and unprotected as the Brazilian mass of “useless to the world,” but the point is that “the panic was already there, and was only waiting for the occasion to explode.” On the horizon: the disbelief that the world will be better than before this new war against the brotherhoods of crime began. This is the political vacuum usurped the Party of Crime.

Notes

¹ For the reconstruction and interpretation of the 1917 strike, see Boris Fausto, *Trabalho urbano e conflito social [Urban Labor and Social Conflict] (1890-1920)* (São Paulo: Difel, 1976) Ch. 6. For another account of that memorable strike, with a focus on the anarchist hegemony of the period, see Francisco Foot Hardman, “Anarquistas e anarco-sindicalistas no Brasil,” [“Anarchists and Anarco-Sindicalists in Brazil”], *República velha*, ed. Antonio Mendes Jr. and Ricardo Maranhão (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1979), vol. 3 of *Brasil história*, 4 vols.

² Foot Hardman 319.

³ Márcio Pochmann, “Decadência e enriquecimento” [“Decadence and Enrichment”], *Folha de São Paulo* 12 Nov. 2005: A3.

⁴ Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2006). Interview with Fabiano Maisonnave in *Folha de São Paulo* 26 Mar. 2006. See also Antonio Luis M.C. Costa, “Planeta favela” [“Planet Slum”], *Carta Capital*, 10 May 2006. The last report UN- Habitat report titled *State of the World’s Cities Report 2006-7*, presented during the opening of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, on June 19, 2006, predicts that at the present rate of growth, within the next 20 years the slum will be main form of housing in the world. Today, 1 out of 3 urban dwellers lives in a slum — the percentage is 90% in so-called developing countries.

⁵ Gilberto Dimenstein, “O problema não é o PCC” [“The Problem Is Not the PCC”], *Folha de São Paulo* 17 May 2006: C12.

⁶ To use the title of a study in opposition to conventional wisdom: Vera Malaguti Batista, *Difíceis ganhos fáceis: droga e juventude pobre no Rio de Janeiro [Hard Easy Gains: Drugs and Youth in Rio de Janeiro]*, 2nded. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Revan, 2003). *Seductions of Crime* is the title of a well-known book by Jack Katz, who argues that the vocation for crime is not provoked by a utilitarian calculation, but is rather seen as an end in itself, along with its uncontrollable extra-economic attractions, including the extraordinary profits of anomie. Since we have entered in this topic, it would be fair to reshuffle the filing cards of current stereotypes. According to one of the many commonplaces of the so-called postmodern sociology

of violence, young poor people of the periphery enter into drug-trafficking because of a dream of consumption whose realization involves extreme violence, characterized today as a total social fact. But some extraordinary research shows the opposite: when he gets involved in drug trafficking — quite at the bottom of the power structure — the poor young man, left to the flies in the contemporary social landfill, has not opted for crime but rather, as incredible as it seems, has simply landed himself a job. He thinks of himself as having entered a branch of the world of work. See Marisa Feffermann, *Vidas arriscadas: um estudo sobre os jovens inscritos no tráfico de drogas em São Paulo* [*Lives at Risk: A Study of Youth in the Drug Trade in São Paulo*] (Petrópolis: Vozes, 2006) and also Phydya Ataíde in *Carta Capital* 17 Aug. 2005.

⁷ For a characterization of this new imperialism as an interrelation of accumulation by dispossession on the peripheries of the South and North with a new production of space as an expression of the territorial power of global capitalist governance, see David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (New York: Oxford, 2005). For a succinct discussion of Harvey's thesis see my article "Último Round" ["Last Round"] *Margem esquerda* 5 (2005). According to Mike Davis in *Planet of Slums*, Pentagon strategists and their affiliated think tanks have, more or less since the Mogadishu debacle in 1993, discussed the implications of a world of cities with no jobs. The discussion of the new and complex irregular wars begins with the admission that the "mega-slum" — representing a strategic arc of instability, not accidentally extended over the heart of the remaining energy resources of a planet covered by an urban stain of bankrupt cities — "has become the weakest link in the new world order" (204). In a previous article published in 2004 in *TomDispatch.com*, during the battle for Fallujah, Davis referred to the Pentagon as a "Global Slumlord." We must wait and see: meanwhile let's take note of the fact that we live in one of the biggest world laboratories of this planet of slums.

⁸ Ferréz, "Meu dia na guerra: ou vamos atirar nos entregadores de pizzas" ["My Day in the War; Or, Let's Shoot the Pizza Boys"], *Caros amigos* June 2006: 15. The work referred to is Ferréz's *Capão Pecado*, [*Sinful Thicket*, a novel based on life in Capão Redondo, one of São Paulo's largest slums. — Trans.] (São Paulo: Labortexto editorial, 2000). Rapper D.J. King speaks with the same certainty about the agreement between the government and the insurgent faction: "it is very simple, bro, in this country money rules;" in *Carta Capital*, 24 May 2006: 12.

⁹ The thesis of a "private war" between the repressive forces of the state and the armed retail sector of the drug trade, entrenched in the segregated space of the urban poor, can be seen, possibly not for the first time, in the documentary by João Moreira Salles and Kátia Lund, *Notícias de uma guerra particular* [*News from a Private War*], 1998-1999. Were there any doubt about the private character of the war — leaving aside what we could call in classic terms its regulatory function in the administration of risk — it suffices to mention the institutional nature of the targets of attack during the May rebellion in São Paulo: police posts, police vehicles, centers

of judicial power, etc. There were some attacks on banks: outside of business hours however, and usually at night — perhaps for sentimental reasons, since the founding nucleus of this criminal brotherhood, as well as of its precursor of the 1970s (the Comando Vermelho or Red Command), was formed primarily by bank robbers.

¹⁰ If I am not oversimplifying the extremely illuminating outline of Michel Misse, *Crime e violência no Brasil contemporâneo* [*Crime and Violence in Contemporary Brazil*] (Rio de Janeiro: Lumen Júris, 2006), especially Ch. 9. With regard to the recent battle for São Paulo — what the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, with heroic spiritual elevation, calls the Mothers' Day Uprising, a formula that escaped a historian who was possibly thinking of the bloody rebellions of the 19th-century Brazilian Regency — Misse reminds us again that this is a private war caused by dangerous liaisons between the "illicit markets that specialize in orgiastic commodities (bodies, luxury, drugs, and arms) and political commodities (extortion and corruption practiced on the basis of state agents' excess of power)," Michel Misse, "Profunda e antiga acumulação de violência" [An Old and Profound Accumulation of Violence], *Folha de São Paulo* 20 May 2006: A3.

¹¹ The syncopated statistics of the rap group Racionais MC serve here as a counterpoint: "60% of the youth without criminal records have suffered police violence. Three out of four people killed by the police are black. Every four hours a young black man dies violently in São Paulo. The one who speaks here is Primo Preto, another survivor;" Racionais MC, "Capítulo 4, versículo 3," *Sobrevivendo no inferno*, Cosa nostra, 1997..

¹² See José de Souza Martins, "A ordem do avesso" ["The Order of the Underside"], *O Estado de São Paulo* 21 May 2006: J3.

¹³ This theory is endorsed by the author in the previous note. In the end, the argument goes, this is less about the opportunism of the small fry than a convergence of interest between smaller and bigger criminals. "A substantial part of the apparent force of the latter is due less to the articulation of a powerful and large organization, than to the cascade effect of larger criminal actions affecting the disposition towards crime and violence in independent groups."

¹⁴ Sérgio Adorno, "Claro enigma" ["Clear Enigma"], interview in *Folha de São Paulo*, *Mais!* magazine, 21 May 2006: 4. Another researcher from the Violence Study Group at the University of São Paulo, Fernando Salla, argues in the same vein in "Uma dura lição" ["A Hard Lesson"], *O Estado de São Paulo* 16 May 2006: C13.

¹⁵ The same goes for intellectuals. One can well imagine the Amazon of nonsense born of the fear of Brazilian intellectuals, whose political and mental timidity is certainly nothing new. But that is a topic for another occasion. Stupidities that lay dormant in the depths of their souls for a generation were awakened in a number of veteran intellects, stupidities of the "proud to be citizen of the state of the Bandeirantes" type. [The *bandeirantes* were colonial scouts based in São Paulo. They were also slavers of the Indian population. — Trans.] I am a Paulista, but it has been at least half a century since I heard a colleague honor the "vigor" of our state, not even in a graduation speech. But that our capital is "a magnet that attracts

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everyone from models to migrant workers” — that’s a new one. One must have studied a great deal, or have tremendous fear, to reach a conclusion of this caliber. As it is often said, and with reason, fear paralyzes intelligence. Let the rest remain unsaid — at least by me, since I don’t want to be identified with the aggressor, much less to libel the police abstractly.

¹⁶ “Day of terror in São Paulo” was obviously among the most common headlines. Just one example of this rhetorical contagion is the opening of the special issue of the *Folha de São Paulo* on the day after: “A wave of panic yesterday paralyzed the largest and richest city in the country, and sent shock and fear reverberating throughout the state of São Paulo.” For the average reader the eloquence of redundancy is enough; for the happy few acquainted with geopolitical talk shows, it refers to the decapitation strategy announced during the first hours of the attack on Baghdad in the second Gulf War: shock and awe (a fiasco, however, since in that first spectacular push, all of the big fish escaped unharmed.) The most interesting thing in all this is that nobody bothered to point out — and above all to draw the proper conclusions from — the real and fundamental continuities among the various and new private wars being fought around the world.

¹⁷ Vânia Ceccato, “A indústria do medo” [“The Fear Industry”], interview in *Folha de São Paulo, Mais!* magazine, 21 May 2006: 6.

¹⁸ Demétrio Magnoli, “Pânico no galinheiro” [“Panic in the Peanut Gallery”], *Folha de São Paulo* 16 May 2006: C20.

¹⁹ Cited by Tom Nairn, “The New Furies”, *New Left Review*, 37, Jan.-Feb. 2006.

²⁰ Jacques Rancière, “O princípio da insegurança” [“The Principle of Insecurity”], *Folha de São Paulo, Mais!* magazine, 21 Sept. 2003: 3.

²¹ Frank Furedi pursues this argument about the exhaustion of contemporary politics in *Politics of Fear* (London: Continuum, 2005).

²² José Arbex, Jr., “O Katrina nosso de cada dia” [“Our Everyday Katrina”], *Caros amigos* June 2006.