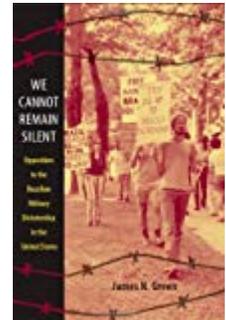


James N. Green. *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States.* Radical Perspectives Series. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. xiv + 450 pp. \$26.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8223-4735-4.



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Commissioned by Dennis R. Hidalgo (Virginia Tech)

Early in the introduction to *We Cannot Remain Silent*, James N. Green sheds light on the rich history of the United States' simplistic views of Brazil. From associating Brazil with Carmen Miranda in the 1940s or bossa nova in the 1950s to images of the Amazon and scantily clad women during Carnival today, Americans' perceptions of Brazil have often been monochromatic (when they think of Brazil at all). At the same time, Brazilian scholars have often viewed the United States suspiciously, often relying on equally simple portrayals of Americans as politically disengaged from the rest of the world.

Green's monograph seeks to complicate these mutual misunderstandings in multiple ways. Focusing on the period during Brazil's military dictatorship (1964-85), Green examines the ways that academics, activists, artists, clergy, and Brazilian exiles in the United States challenged the military regime. Drawing on his activist past, Green reveals the ways in which a small number of activists were able to influence American opinion and directly challenge the Brazilian dictatorship's

use of repression. In doing so, he counters the popular belief that the United States simply ignored Brazil or aided the dictatorship. Rather, individuals almost immediately mobilized against the dictatorship, and played an important role in challenging the regime's legitimacy in the international community.

Green's work can be roughly divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the period between 1964, when the military overthrew President João Goulart, and December 1968. In this period, opposition in the United States was relatively slight. The U.S. press was overwhelmingly supportive of the coup, claiming the overthrow of Goulart had saved Brazil from chaos and Communism. Even Senator Wayne Morse, who objected to the 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic, initially praised the military coup of 1964, though he would quickly change his stance on the matter. In spite of overwhelming support for the military government in both Brazil and the United States, a small number of graduate students and academics began to mobilize against

the regime. While their efforts were initially scattered and often ignored, they laid the groundwork for future broader mobilizations.

The majority of Green's book focuses on the period between 1969, when the dictatorship issued the Institutional Act No. 5 and entered its most repressive phase, and 1974, when Ernesto Geisel's administration ended the military hard-liners' control of the government. In this period, the government suspended political rights; indefinitely closed Congress; purged universities of "subversive" professors; restricted artistic expression; and, most important to Green's narrative, employed widespread use of torture. Collectively, this repression led to a major shift in opposition in the United States. Scholars and activists launched letter-writing campaigns to major U.S. newspapers and Congress, decrying the use of torture and denial of free speech and habeas corpus. Brazilian nationals who had been tortured and entered into exile joined American activists, providing harrowing tales of their experiences and strengthening the anti-dictatorship movement. By the early 1970s, major newspapers like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* were critical of the Brazilian government, members of Congress began to question U.S. funding of the military regime, and individuals like Arthur Miller and Jean-Paul Sartre rallied against the imprisonment of Brazilians. According to Green, this mobilization most likely reduced the instances of torture. Certainly, these efforts did not lead to a radical transformation in Brazilian policy in this period, but Green takes care to avoid making such a sweeping argument. Rather, he demonstrates the ways in which activists in the United States played a key role in undermining the regime's legitimacy in the international community and caused consternation within the dictatorship.

The third section, loosely covering the period between 1975 and the return to democracy in 1985, is the briefest, comprising one chapter. By this time, the number of people aware of and op-

posed to military regimes in Latin America had increased significantly, thanks in no small part to the 1973 overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile. In many ways, the final chapter serves as the denouement, revealing the ways in which the efforts of activists across the previous ten chapters ultimately led to a broad political awareness of the conditions in Brazil. Green contends that this shift is best summarized in the Carter administration's relationship with Brazil, which was strained due to Jimmy Carter's push for human rights. However, rather than succumbing to the traditional narrative of Carter ruffling feathers in Brazil, Green demonstrates the ways in which the activists' efforts influenced many inside Washington DC. While some may suggest that his discussion of the 1974-85 period seems hurried, his framing makes sense. Although torture and "disappearances" continued during the early years of the Geisel administration, by the late 1970s these practices had greatly declined, due in part not only to Geisel's own successes in outmaneuvering the hard-liners, but also to the efforts to mobilize people and politicians in the United States against the dictatorship.

Green's transnational study provides several new insights into Brazilian and U.S. history. He successfully counters the misconception that Americans only supported the dictatorship or completely ignored Brazil. Those who did mobilize were in the minority, something Green himself admits; yet that did not make their efforts any less important. As he compellingly argues, even a small number of academics and activists were able to spread awareness of the repression in Brazil, in turn pressuring the Brazilian government. These efforts were initially scattered and failed to stop the systematic use of torture, particularly between 1968 and 1974. Nevertheless, by employing various methods to challenge the regime (and the U.S. government's support of it), these individuals laid the groundwork for future human rights protests against authoritarian regimes in the 1970s. He convincingly shows how

isolated pockets of resistance in the 1960s led to a broader national network of opposition by the 1970s, improving the opposition movement's ability to increase the American public awareness of the regime's repression. By looking at the role academics, artists, and others played in challenging Brazil's dictatorship, Green also reminds us that politicians are not the only important actors when studying foreign relations. While the military dictatorship enjoyed the support of the Johnson, Nixon, and Ford administrations, there were other actors who pushed against the dictatorship's policies. These individuals ultimately laid the groundwork for future human rights struggles in the 1970s. By the early 1970s, individuals like Senators Ted Kennedy and Frank Church had begun to question the United States' role in Latin America, revealing that even the U.S. government was divided over how to treat Brazil and other military dictatorships in Latin America. Finally, Green's analysis of a broad range of forms of resistance, from editorials and telegrams to off-Broadway plays and fashion shows, reveals the multiple political and cultural forms these protests assumed.

One of the perils of transnational histories is that it is easy for scholars to lean too heavily on sources from one country at the expense of another. Green avoids this pitfall, relying heavily and equally on a broad range of scholarship on Brazil and the United States. His archival materials range from secret police files, diplomatic memos, and CIA documents to leftist bulletins, human rights investigations, and telegrams. Additionally, Green draws from over eighty-five interviews he conducted across thirteen years. Collectively, this vast number of interviews is appropriate to the geographic and topical breadth of Green's study, providing his narrative with a poignancy that greatly elevates the work.

We Cannot Remain Silent is an important contribution to Brazilian scholarship, as it represents part of a new wave of studies that move beyond

the traditional political and economic studies of the dictatorship to focus on the complex social and cultural histories of the regime. Yet its value goes well beyond the field of Brazilian history. Green's study reminds Latin Americanists of the importance of looking beyond the geographical boundaries of authoritarian nation-states when analyzing opposition movements. For U.S. scholars, his work provides insight into an oft-overlooked aspect of American responses to military regimes in Latin America, one that moves beyond official foreign policy to look at the ways in which other actors entered the fray. Green's balanced integration of scholarship and resources from both Brazil and the United States provides a useful model for transnational history. By looking at how torture attacked victims' psyches and dehumanized them through physical violations, and how performance troupes reenacted torture to spread awareness and reclaim some of that humanity, Green provides a useful gendered analysis of bodies and the regime that will be of interest to anybody who studies performance theory or gender. His innovative use of oral history, particularly in the "Capítulos" that bridge the chapters, points to new ways scholars can use oral interviews in their own work. And scholars interested in activism or human rights have much to learn in the stories of how a small number of people were able to have a direct impact on an authoritarian regime. These various contributions make Green's work an important and enjoyable study for scholars throughout the Americas.

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