

# Historical Comparisons: The “Foiled” U.S. Fascist Coup Plot of 1934, The “Successful” Brazilian Fascist Coup Plot of 2016

By [Leonardo Boff](#) and [Dr. Gary G. Kohls](#)

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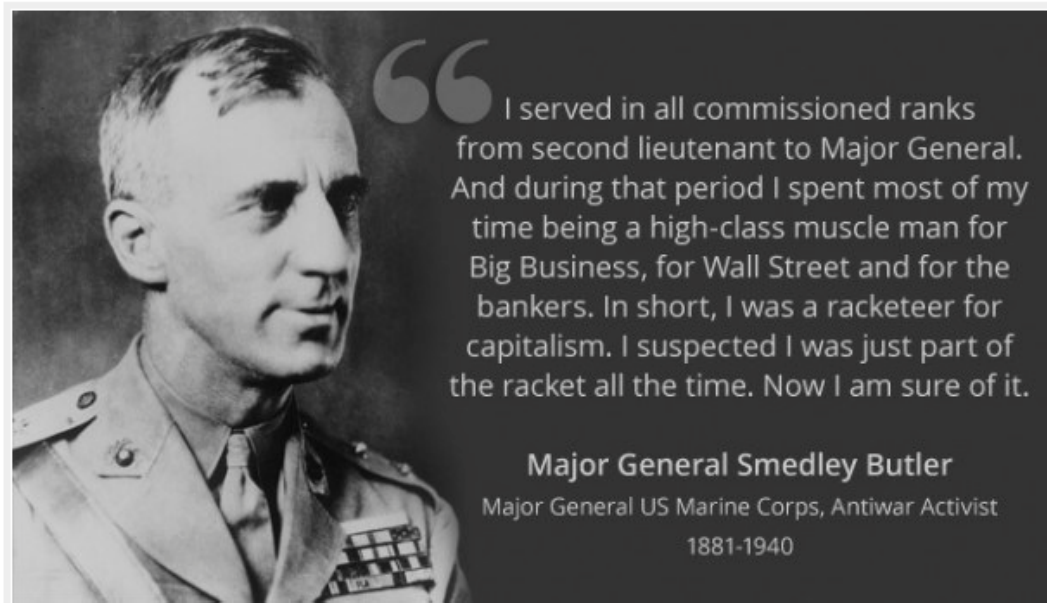
Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

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*If ever needed, the American Legion stands ready to protect our country's institutions and ideals as the Fascisti dealt with the destructionists who menaced Italy!... The American Legion is fighting every element that threatens our democratic government – Soviets, anarchists, IWW, revolutionary socialists and every other red.... Do not forget that the Fascisti are to Italy what the American Legion is to the United States. -- American Legion Commander Alvin Owsley (1923)*

*We need a fascist government in this country... to save the nation from the communists who want to tear it down and wreck all that we have built in America. The only men who have the patriotism to do it are the soldiers, and Smedley Butler is the ideal leader. He could organize a million men overnight. — Gerald MacGuire, former commander of the Connecticut American Legion and coup-plotter in the “Business Plot” to overthrow FDR (1934)*

*A clique of U.S. industrialists is hell-bent to bring a fascist state to supplant our democratic government and is working closely with the fascist regime in Germany and Italy. I have had plenty of opportunity in my post in Berlin to witness how close some of our American ruling families are to the Nazi regime. ... A prominent executive of one of the largest corporations, told me point blank that he would be ready to take definite action to bring fascism into America if President Roosevelt continued his progressive policies. – William Dodd, U.S. Ambassador to Germany, in a letter to FDR (1936)*



In December 1933, retired US Marine Corps Major General Smedley Butler, winner of two Congressional Medals of Honor, toured the country on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He was urging WWI veterans to organize in order to win the benefits promised to them after the war. Butler apparently believed that the American Legion was controlled by Wall Street financiers, and he believed that veterans were better served by the VFW than the American Legion. In fact, Butler once proclaimed that he had never “known one leader of the American Legion who had never sold them out-and I mean it.”

In November 1934, Butler testified to a congressional subcommittee that representatives of powerful industrial interests and the American Legion were trying to induce him to lead American Legion veterans and other ex-WWI soldiers in a campaign to lead a military coup d’etat against President Roosevelt.

In 1934, American industrialists, such as John D. Rockefeller, the duPont family, J P Morgan and many other ultra-wealthy conservatives (including George W. Bush’s grandfather), plotted to overthrow newly elected president Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Those billionaire elites were afraid that FDR was going to implement programs of social uplift, which would eat into their fortunes and political power. FDR was indeed aiming to help out the impoverished multitudes that were suffering from the Wall Street Crash-generated Great Depression, which was caused by the financial schemes perpetrated by them in the roaring 20s.

As always, US financial elites from 80 years ago (as is true of the today’s financial elites from Brazil) met the definition of both sociopathic personality disorder AND fascist. America’s 1934 financial elites were admirers of Hitler and Mussolini, and they were more concerned about their own pocketbooks than about the suffering of others.

To the American coup-plotters, the quickest answer to “the FDR problem” was a military coup, which is probably what the ultra-rich think of first when it looks like their government is threatening to interfere with their preferred unregulated crony capitalist economic system.

The plotters tried to recruit Butler to lead the coup. He was a war hero who was trusted by

his soldiers, but he was not a friend of Wall Street. In his short book, "War is a Racket", Butler wrote:

I spent 33 years and four months in active military service and during that period I spent most of my time as a high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. I helped make Mexico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the International Banking House of Brown Brothers in 1902-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for the American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went on its way unmolested. Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents.

The "Business Plot" was to be secretly financed by members of the Morgan and Du Pont empires. A partial list included the following (from <http://www.huppi.com/kangaroo/Coup.htm>).

"Irene Du Pont – Right-wing chemical industrialist and founder of the American Liberty League); Grayson Murphy – Director of Goodyear, Bethlehem Steel and a group of J.P. Morgan banks; William Doyle – Former state commander of the American Legion and a central plotter of the coup; John Davis – Former Democratic presidential candidate and a senior attorney for J.P. Morgan; Al Smith – Roosevelt's bitter political foe from New York. (Smith was a former governor of New York and a co-director of the American Liberty League); John J. Raskob – A high-ranking Du Pont officer and a former chairman of the Democratic Party; Robert Clark – One of Wall Street's richest bankers and stockbrokers; Gerald MacGuire – Bond salesman for Clark, and a former commander of the Connecticut American Legion. (MacGuire was the key recruiter of Butler.)"

Many American millionaires of that era, following the Banker's War of 1914-1918 (WWI), were not ashamed to admire fascists like Hitler and Mussolini. Fascism provided the stability that favored capitalism over socialism. The most outspoken pro-fascist millionaires were Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller, John and Allen Dulles, along with many others with ill-gotten gains who thrived following the Wall Street Crash of 1929. (Besides being millionaires, the two Dulles brothers would later become Eisenhower's Secretary of State and CIA Director.)

Butler cleverly pretended to go along with the plan at first, deciding to betray it to Congress when the time was right.

When Butler went public in 1934, the plot fell apart. Under oath, he revealed the details of the coup before the House of Representative committee that would later become the infamous House Un-American Activities Committee in the paranoid 1950s. The HUAC was the committee that destroyed the careers of hundreds of innocent Americans in communist witch hunts.

The Wall Street-friendly House committee never called any of the named coup plotters to testify. They whitewashed the final report, actually deleting the names of powerful elites whose reputations "needed to be protected". Just like today, Wall Street controlled Congress

also was in bed with military groups, including Butler's enemy, the American Legion. None of the guilty were indicted, tried or executed, despite the fact that the treason they were guilty of was a capital crime. And of course, just like today, none of the Wall Street or War Street fraudsters went to jail, and so the corruption goes on and on.

Today's financial elites in Brazil probably learned a lot from America's Business Plot. Below is the evidence from Brazilian liberation theologian and truth-teller Leonardo Boff.

Please note the many similarities between the cunning paths that the multinational moneyed elites in both Brazil and America have taken in order to undermine their respective constitutions and protect their own wealth and power at the expense of the 99% – whom they despise. I have minimally edited portions of Boff's original article.

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## Brazil's "Saddest Day": The Parliamentary Coup of President Dilma Rousseff

By Leonardo Boff – 26 September 2016

The first half of this combined article was published at the TRANSCEND Media Service:

<https://www.transcend.org/tms/2016/09/brazils-saddest-day-the-parliamentary-coup/>

(The second half was emailed to me by Boff)

And it happened in those days that hired assassins disguised as Senators decided to attack an honorable and incorruptible woman who blocked their path to State power. Once in power, they would do what they had always done: take the public goods for their personal enrichment, escape the reach of Justice and carry on with their privileged situation, as always, at the expense of the people they want to exclude and marginalize as chattel.

They took sadistic pleasure in hurting an incorruptible and honorable woman, on the pretext that some of her fiscal practices had been criminal, something that the great majority of legal and economics specialists denied. They staged a farce and betrayed the Constitution.

Removing a President without having proven a crime is a coup. The correct term for it is: a "parliamentary coup." They were petulant, hypocritically claiming that it made them feel bad, even as they spoke of ushering in "a new spring, the beginning of a new Brazil, prosperous and just." A lie!

Keeping the Poor Illiterate and Unhealthy by Privatizing Education and Healthcare

The (*coup-plotter's*) published plan, "A Bridge to the Future", is in fact a bridge backwards, because it would eliminate the gains that the workers, women, Blacks, indigenous peoples, the LGBT communities, the poor and the invisible, had won for the first time in our history in terms of social inclusion, better salaries, health, education, labor law, retirement and access to technical and higher education. And what is worse: they want to keep the people illiterate, so that they will be silent and unable to demand their rights and dignity.

Now it is the Market that matters. Someone who wants medical treatment must go to the Market and pay. Whoever wants to go to a University must first go to the Market and pay. Everything will be turned into merchandise to be bought and sold....

At the beginning of the conquest and domination of Mexico, there was “the saddest night”, in 1520, when much of the Spanish army was destroyed. Now we have “the saddest day” when a woman President was unjustly divested of the power she gained through the ballot. In the Senate chambers and in the hallways there is spilled blood. A “political sad night” has fallen on Brazil, stealing hope from those who had climbed out of misery, and who now risk falling back into it.

And those who struggled to consolidate democracy of a social kind and to respect the will of the people, as expressed at the ballot boxes, were betrayed again. This is “the night of the long knives” using weapons raised against an honorable woman and gravely wounding the sovereignty of the people.

Today, August 31, 2016, is a day of sadness. Those who mounted that spectacle, along with their assassin-Senators, will carry the stigma of “golpistas” for the rest of their lives. (*Ed note: Golpistas is Spanish for fraudster, scammer, swindler, or one who takes part in a coup d'état.*)

Their consciences (if they have any) will haunt them, and their legacies will be destroyed....They smothered truth under the mantel of justice.

They will be in sinister company, the company of those who, years ago, assaulted the State, oppressed the people, tortured many, as they have done now with President Rousseff They have murdered those who sought to restore democracy.

And, at the end of their lives, they will face a greater Judge, who will expose all the injustice they have consciously committed.

#### The Coups of 1964 and 2016: Coups by the Same Class

The coups of 1964 and 2016 share a common structural nature. Both were class coups, by the holders of money and power: the first used the military, the second used the parliament. ...

The assault on the State happened in 1964 and hardened in 1968, with police state repression, brutality, torture and murder. The National Security Regime became the Capitalist Security Regime.

The 2016 coup has been thorough investigated by author Jesse Souza. In his “Radiography of the Coup”, Souza unveils the mechanisms that allowed the moneyed elites to organize the coup, which was carried out in their name by Parliament....

As in the Rest of the World, the Elite 0.05% of Brazil are Undermining the Well-being of the Bottom 99.5%

Souza emphasizes “*that all the coups, including the present one, are a fraud well perpetrated by the owners of money, who in fact are the true ‘owners of power’*”.

Who makes up that elite class?

The elites are before anything the financial elites, that direct the great banks and investment funds and lead other moneyed sectors such as agribusiness, industry and commerce, supported by the means of the mass media that

systematically twists and falsifies the social reality as if it were a 'devastated land and bankrupt country' (this is an exaggeration), hiding the corporate interests behind the fraudulent coup.

The engine of the whole process, Souza states again, is the greed of the moneyed elite, who easily appropriate the collective wealth, with other partners such as the ultraconservative means of communication, the juridical-police complex of the State, and a portion of the Supreme Federal Tribunal....

The process of *impeachment* went to the Senate. The Senate moved to *impeach* the President for the crime of fiscal responsibility. Principal jurists and economists, besides notable testimonies during the hearings and in the official reports of several institutions, roundly denied the existence of responsibility. The majority of Senators did not even bother to attend the meetings with the highly qualified specialists, because they had already made the decision to *impeach*....

One of the motives behind the coup was also to put beyond the reach of Justice the 49 senators (out of 81) indicted or implicated in corruption. In this way, with the exception of the courageous defenders of President Rouseff, amoral politicians decided to remove an honest and innocent woman who had been elected president with 54 million votes.

Back in 1964, and now in 2016, be it through the military or through Parliament, the same logic functions: the economic elites and the conservative political caste undertook the theft of a great part of the national treasure. Souza counts 71,440 people, only 0.05% of the population, as undermining the lives and well-being of the large majority of the people who have been reduced to poverty. A large part of Congress is complicit in this coup. In this Congress the same structural intent of guaranteeing the *status quo* that favors their privileges and earnings.

The coup-plotter's project, cunningly and misleadingly called "*A Bridge to the Future*", is a (neo-)liberalism so shameless as to make one blush. The document reveals the purpose of the coup:

...to minimize the State, reduce salaries, liquidate the policy of revalorization of salaries, slash monies for social programs, privatize state enterprises, exclude obligatory expenses of health and education, reduce to a minimum everything that relates to culture, human rights, women and minorities. The ministry is made up of Whites, and a great part of its members are accused of corruption. There are no women, Blacks, or representatives of the minorities.

We are in the midst of a terrifying retrogressive political-social movement, that worsens inequality, our perverse social wound, and erases the social achievements of the 13 years of the Lula-Dilma governments.

There is massive resistance and opposition in the streets, by strong social groups and intellectuals who do not accept a conspiratorial president who has no credibility. The solution would be general elections, and through popular sovereignty, a new President would be chosen who would truly represent the country.

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*his advocacy of social causes and environmental issues. Boff is a founding member of the Earthcharter Commission.*

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*[http://duluthreader.com/articles/categories/200\\_Duty\\_to\\_Warn](http://duluthreader.com/articles/categories/200_Duty_to_Warn)*

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