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# Juscelino Kubitschek and the Politics of Exuberance, 1956-1961

Sheldon Maram

The traditional social sciences have contributed enormously to the study of the past. Sociology, economics, and political science have helped scholars navigate through a plethora of data by providing patterns and structures that help focus and organize research and writing. They have also moved history away from an almost exclusive concentration on the actions and lives of so-called great men, by showing how political, economic, and social structures affect society. This emphasis has provided historians with new tools with which to make comparisons spatially and temporally.

But the structures of the traditional social sciences have also hindered the understanding of the past. In recent decades, the attractiveness of focusing on patterns and structures has led to a neglect of the role key individuals have had on the historical process. Structures and patterns have replaced human beings.

The research on the era of the Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961) during the past two decades is a perfect illustration of this phenomenon. All the literature has, at least, alluded to the role of Kubitschek. Indeed, it is virtually impossible to ignore. But most key works have drawn on the questions and methods of the traditional social sciences and have failed to provide us with a precise understanding of Kubitschek's role and the forces that molded his actions and thought.

In her insightful book on the Kubitschek era, Maria Benevides (1979) sketches, but does not develop, the role of Kubitschek in producing economic development and political stability, despite all the centrifugal forces in operation when he came to power. Kubitschek's role is subsumed under an analysis of the structure of the executive branch of the Brazilian government. For Benevides, Brazil's development with stability "was a product of special circumstances" in which the two parties who dominated Congress, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), converged with the military "in the sense of supporting the economic policy of the government" (Benevides 49). The potential for this cooperation was actualized by Kubitschek and

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the economic and administrative policies of the Executive branch (Benevides 26, 251). But structural forces were clearly the strongest ingredients in bringing about this unique era.

According to Benevides this convergence of political and economic interests of the military and the political parties was carried to its "maximum point" during the Kubitschek era. The possibilities for this convergence of interests were exhausted by the end of his administration. Circumstances were created that would lead Brazil into political and economic crises during the rest of the period. Benevides ends her study with the suggestion that what happened during the Kubitschek era must necessarily be considered a cause of the subsequent instability, and ultimately, the military coup of 1964. Hence, her approach leads almost ineluctably to that common error in logic that posits that if one phenomenon precedes another it must be somehow a cause (118, 251, 256). It also provides an insufficient understanding of what Kubitschek brought to the presidency and what factors molded his thought and actions.

In part of the literature (Leff 1968) there is a tendency to see the Kubitschek era as only a minor variant in the period from the end of World War II to the military coup in 1964, even minimizing the importance of Kubitschek by suggesting all the "major economic policy decision of the post-1947 period . . . had been taken by the end of 1954, under the second Getúlio Vargas administration" (Leff 52).

Another variant in the literature is found in the provocative work of Miriam Cardoso (1977). After establishing her theoretical model, Cardoso provides a detailed analysis of Kubitschek's ideology of development. The data is drawn from a perusal of Kubitschek's speeches, messages sent to Congress, and his books. While provocative, the study ultimately fails to provide an overall picture because it artificially develops an ideological construct out of Kubitschek's thought. Kubitschek had a general philosophy in which ideas were used pragmatically to communicate his message. But he did not have a disciplined overall intellectual structure that the concept of ideology signifies. The artificiality of this construct leads Cardoso to the problematic interpretation that the underpinning of Kubitschek's ideology was anti-communism. While anti-communism was certainly present it hardly appears to have been the basic underlying premise of Kubitschek's thought (Cardoso 124). There is much evidence that vitiates such an interpretation. Inter alia, Kubitschek received the support of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) during his campaign for the presidency and in his campaign against the austerity program suggested by the International Monetary Fund. During the Kubitschek era, the PCB flourished, holding public rallies, publishing newspapers and magazines, and performing as an active and public participant in the key issues of the time (Benevides 97-98). Cardoso has the tendency, like many other traditional social scientists, of divorcing Kubitschek's thought from the sound and fury of his life, and the past that shaped his thought and actions.

Nonetheless, an understanding of the structures in place during the Kubitschek era as well as insights into the general patterns of his ideas have contributed to the knowledge of the period. Still, relatively little serious work has been published thus far focusing on how Kubitschek's style and actions shaped the era.<sup>1</sup> An ideal study would incorporate insights gained from a more biographical approach with those gained by utilizing the questions and methods of the traditional social sciences. The goal of this paper, however, is more modest--focusing on Kubitschek's style and the tools he used to mold Brazil. The paper will show that Juscelino Kubitschek, through deeds and symbols, practiced a politics of exuberance, designed to enhance his popularity while convincing Brazilians that they could build a modern, industrial society. His talents and personality are central to an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of his program and the political process during his presidency.

Given the obstacles Kubitschek overcame to become president and the achievements recorded during his administration, it is remarkable that he has received so little attention from scholars. To become president, he had to surmount strong opposition within his own party, the PSD, to his nomination and to the alliance he put together between the PTB and the PSD. Before the election, he faced intense pressure from elements in the military and in the government to withdraw in the interests of national unity. He was elected by the smallest percentage of the votes (33.8 percent) in the history of the period, 1945 to 1964. After the election, rumors abounded of military plots to prevent him from taking office, rumors only quashed by a military coup to guarantee the constitutional process and Kubitschek's entry into the presidency.<sup>2</sup> These difficulties notwithstanding, Kubitschek in his five-year term established a remarkable political and economic record, making his administration one of the most important in Brazilian history.

The relative political stability that characterized the Kubitschek presidency was certainly not a foregone conclusion when Kubitschek assumed the presidency in 1956. When faced with a military coup to remove him from office, President Getúlio Vargas committed suicide in 1954. From that time until the Kubitschek administration, it appeared that the political system established by the 1946 constitution would collapse. Nonetheless, Kubitschek was able to bring a remarkable degree of stability to the political process while operating in a democratic milieu.

The economic achievements of the Kubitschek administration are well known and impressive. The policies of the administration helped produce an average annual GDP growth of 7 percent from 1957 to 1961, higher even than the generally boom years from 1947 to 1955, when the average annual GDP increase was 6.1 percent (Goodman 1967, 84). Yet the growth in the earlier period was accomplished when the price for Brazil's chief export, coffee, was high on the international market, while growth under Kubitschek took place during a time of depressed coffee prices. Kubitschek, through his so-called Target Plan, determined that

industrialization, not agricultural exports, would be the dynamic factor in Brazilian growth. With government stimulus, industry overall grew at an annual rate of 11.2 percent from 1956 to 1961 and its contribution to GDP (in 1947 constant prices) increased from 21 percent to 34 percent from 1947 to 1961, while agriculture's share dropped from 27 to 22 percent of the GDP (Baer 1965, 72).

When Kubitschek entered office, import substitution of nondurable consumer goods was well-advanced. By the end of his presidency, it was virtually completed (Goodman 104). The Kubitschek government committed Brazil to produce in Brazil the intermediate and capital goods it had formerly imported. The results were dramatic. The machine tool industry grew at an annual rate of 14.7 percent between 1955 and 1961. Whereas the cruzeiro value of imports of machinery was greater in 1949 than the value of machinery made in Brazil, by 1958 the ratio between imports and the supply of machinery was less than a third (Bresser Pereira 1984, 31). Motor vehicle production rose from 31,000 in 1956 to 200,000 by 1962. Even more significant, in 1962, 90 percent of the value of motor vehicle production came from Brazilian manufacturing, while in 1956 almost the entire production consisted of assembly of parts manufactured abroad. Installed electrical capacity rose from 2.8 million kws. in 1954 to 5.8 million in 1962. There was also a remarkable increase in highway construction. The kilometers of paved roads, for example, tripled from 1956 to the early 1960s (Baer 67). Despite the high velocity at which this economic program was implemented, it produced a surprisingly well-integrated industrial base for Brazil (Baer 149).

Kubitschek's most impressive feat, of course, was mobilizing an estimated 2 to 3 percent of Brazil's GDP during his presidency to build a new capital city, Brasília, in three years and ten months in a location in the interior of Brazil that was 725 kilometers from the nearest major city (Belo Horizonte), and 940 kilometers from Rio de Janeiro. When in 1956 the law authorizing the new capital was passed, this future capital was without roads, buildings, and electricity.<sup>3</sup>

It is essential to an understanding of the era to emphasize that Kubitschek was able to accomplish what no other civilian politician of the period was able to do--that is, bring forth dynamic growth within the context of a relatively stable and democratic system. One could argue that the structural elements were in place for Kubitschek to do this. But one could also make the counter-argument that the grand master of Brazilian politics, Vargas, had many of the same elements in place when he was elected in 1950. Yet he failed, as did Kubitschek's successors Jânio Quadros and João Goulart in their presidencies.

Kubitschek's leadership style contributed enormously to his successes. It incorporated two seemingly paradoxical approaches. On one hand, he was quite comfortable in operating within the traditional patronage-based political system. On the other, he employed the political process to implement a program of economic

modernization, and, when necessary, maneuvered around the traditional system to effect his program.

Nonetheless, he was successful, in part, because he knew how to gain the support of traditional politicians, whether in the PSD, the PTB, or minor political parties that supported his presidential candidacy. He was after all one of them, coming to the presidency after rising through the ranks of the Benedito Valadares political machine in Minas Gerais. Kubitschek first learned the ins and outs of the patronage system, when as Chief of Staff in 1933 for Valadares, the federal interventor of the state, he handled relations with the local political bosses. These lessons were enhanced in 1934 when Valadares had him named secretary of the dominant party of the state. Kubitschek perfected these lessons as a federal deputy, mayor of Belo Horizonte, and finally as governor of Minas Gerais in the early 1950s.

Kubitschek was always able to maintain maximum flexibility in his approach to politics because he had greater loyalty to individuals than political parties. He joined the Progressive Party because Valadares wanted him to join and because he had friends in the party. Joining the Progressive Party of Minas was done, as he later noted, "without whatever doctrinal" considerations (Kubitschek 1974, 1:232-33). Personal ties mattered much more than doctrinal issues among the establishment political parties of the time.

As Kubitschek rose through the ranks, he remained loyal to his patrons and was a man who carried out his promises--qualities highly regarded by traditional politicians. When Valadares ordered his followers in the federal Chamber of Deputies in 1936 to try to remove Antonio Carlos as president of that body, Kubitschek obeyed, despite serious misgivings, because it was what he and others in the Valadares machine owed their leader and friend (Kubitschek 1974, 1:268-69). When Valadares supported the 1937 coup, Kubitschek, despite personal misgivings, did not, as he later put it, let this disagreement spoil his personal relations with Valadares (Kubitschek 1974, 1:319-20). In 1940, Valadares appointed his loyal supporter Kubitschek mayor of Belo Horizonte. During the ten years that Valadares served as Kubitschek's mentor, Kubitschek only challenged him when Valadares sought to take action that would undo a promise Kubitschek had made to one of his other "friends" (Kubitschek 1976, 2:56). Loyalty was a foundation to Kubitschek's political character. For him "the ugliest sin . . . is that of ingratitude" (Kubitschek 1958, 266). Loyalty was also a central characteristic in the advisors Kubitschek chose.

Kubitschek, as president, honored his commitments to both the individuals and parties that either nurtured or supported him. Throughout his presidency, he honored all his pre-electoral commitments as to the distribution of cabinet and other key posts (Benevides 72). When patronage politics interfered with his attempt to effect programs, he honored but maneuvered around his commitments. His commitments to his political allies led him,

when entering the presidency, to having his "hands and feet practically tied because of promises made during the electoral campaign . . ." (Kubitschek 1978, 3:108). He honored his word, but often maneuvered to his advantage. Goulart's PTB, for instance, had been promised the Ministry of Labor. For his first appointment to that ministry, he managed to persuade Goulart to accept Kubitschek's choice from the PTB, the "moderate" Parsifal Barroso. When Parsifal Barroso resigned from that post to run for governor of Ceará, Kubitschek maneuvered successfully to get Goulart to accept Fernando Carneiro da Cunha Nóbrega, a friend of Kubitschek and member of the so-called moderate wing of PTB, for that cabinet post.<sup>4</sup>

To effect his program of economic development, the so-called Target Plan, Kubitschek also maneuvered around the patronage-ridden bureaucracy he inherited as president. To attempt to reform the bureaucracy would have put him in conflict with the patronage system and his allies and might well have failed. To avoid this conflict and to effect his program, he maneuvered around the system. He honored his political commitments in his cabinet and in the traditional bureaucracy. But to carry out the Target Plan, he followed the nuclei approach that he utilized as governor of Minas Gerais when faced with a similar desire to carry out a program without breaking his commitments to the political machine (Lafer 1970, 109). Under this approach, he employed those agencies where technical competence was already assured, strengthened other agencies by borrowing competent people from throughout the bureaucracy, and established special executive groups and bodies made up of people with the technical skills needed to carry out the individual objectives set in his Target Plan (Lafer 131, 151-52, 156).

To avoid leaving his program to the political whims of Congress, he relied heavily on the special funds that automatically received an assigned portion of tax revenues or fees. He did this by redirecting the mission of already established funds (for example, utilizing the Highway Fund to build roads to Brasília) or by establishing new funds. This approach proved very successful in freeing up funds from the normal political process. Around 55 percent of the public funds needed to cover the estimated costs of the Target Plan from 1957 to 1961 were covered by special funds and hence not subject to the annual Congressional budgetary process (Lafer 121-23). Along the same lines, Kubitschek maneuvered successfully in 1956, when the building of a new capital was extremely popular, to get the law authorizing Brasília to cover all aspects of the establishment of the new capital. By so doing, he consciously eliminated the necessity of returning to Congress for supplemental legislation. And when the law establishing Brasília provided insufficient funding, he gave orders to a number of federal agencies, including Banco do Brasil and Caixa Econômica, to devote part of their budgets to this effort (Kubitschek 1975, 8-9, 39-41, 65).

During his presidency, Kubitschek relied heavily on technical-skilled administrators who, like the president, were willing to

work fast on new bold schemes. He did not hesitate to step outside of normal bureaucratic channels to get things done. When U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon encountered hostile demonstrators in Lima and Caracas in 1958, Kubitschek seized the moment by sending a letter directly to President Dwight Eisenhower outside of the ponderous, regular diplomatic channels, suggesting that this hostility to the U.S. needed to be combated. The letter became the basis of his Operation Pan America proposal, which, in turn, helped spark the Alliance for Progress during the John Kennedy administration (Kubitschek 1978, 3:209-13). At the same time, Kubitschek energized his staff, indeed the nation, by his willingness to personally cut through bottlenecks that were threatening his key programs. In one case, a transportation problem threatened to hold up equipment needed for the construction of the Belém-Brasília highway. He mobilized the Brazilian consulate general in New York, the Brazilian ambassador in Washington and the consulate in New Orleans. Once the vital equipment arrived in Brazil he got the Army's engineering office to transport the equipment to Anápolis, Goiás (Kubitschek 1978, 3:181).

Cooptation was another hallmark of Kubitschek's style. It is apparent in his Target Plan, which promised to aid the material being of all sectors of society by enriching the nation. Also, for a military officer corps already favorable to economic development, Kubitschek made sure that their salary, equipment, and promotional demands were met by his budgets. There was also widespread use of military officers in the bureaucracy, particularly in economic development agencies (Benevides 149). And he apparently suffered the presence of General Henrique Teixeira Lott as his minister of war because Lott worked effectively to prevent the officer corps from meddling in the political process (Kubitschek 1978, 3:108-09; Benevides 149). Through his program and judicious appointments, he gained control of key organizations of industrialists (Kubitschek 1978, 3:94; Gordon and Grommers 1962, 20). Moreover, despite inflationary pressures, real wages and salaries increased during this period of rapid industrialization, providing the promise that workers' conditions could improve while development was pushing forward (Baer 121-24; Goodman 287). Though the Kubitschek administration continued a policy of transferring income from rural to the urban sector via the monetary exchange rate system, he, however, sought to pacify the rural oligarchy. He did not interfere with the social structure in the countryside and he provided favorable exchange rates for the importation of fertilizers and agricultural machinery. Also, at least some of the income taken from the coffee sector was used to purchase surplus coffee to stabilize prices on the international market.

Kubitschek was willing to compromise on political and economic issues as long as it did not vitiate the essence of his program. The Tariff Law of 1957, for example, relaxed the nationalization guidelines previously established for the automobile industry in response to pressure from automobile dealers, among others (Gordon



and Grommers 52). Within twenty-four hours after a brief revolt by air force officers had been put down in February 1956, Kubitschek granted amnesty to the revolters that included return to their military posts, despite opposition to such amnesty within the PTB and PSD (Jurema 46).

While an accommodator by nature, there was a toughness about Kubitschek that escaped few. This toughness was apparent throughout his political career. Kubitschek resisted formidable elements that tried to force him to withdraw from the presidential race in 1954 and 1955 in deference to a national unity candidate. He planned, if a military coup were attempted to bar him from the presidency, to use the state army of Minas Gerais to resist any coup attempt (Riedinger 1978, 314). When military officers seemed reluctant to put down the Jacareacanga revolt, he acted decisively to pressure and obtain officers willing to put down this threat to his regime. In September 1956 when there was still doubt whether his government would fall prey to military threats, he fired the police chief of Rio de Janeiro, General August Magessi, when he failed to obey a court order protecting constitutional guarantees and freedom of the press (Kubitschek 1978, 3:27-34, 76-77).

Another aspect of Kubitschek's leadership style was creating a climate of opinion favorable to his development program and his leadership. At that he was a virtuoso. In a way, Kubitschek saw himself as educating the nation. As he noted in his memoirs: "The activity that I undertook as head of state had a revolutionary meaning, oriented to make [Brazil] realize its own potentialities and utilize them to effect economic development." He saw his actions as having a "psychological character." "It was a titanic struggle against taboos--the taboo about the ability of Brazilians to complete anything, the taboo about the impossibility to create heavy industry, the taboo about the inviability of any national integration plan . . ." (Kubitschek 1975, 339).

This sense of communicating the message of development and modernization is very clear in his speeches and writings. We see it clearly, for example, in a 1957 speech to Paulista students in which he appeals to his immediate audience and to the youth of Brazil as a whole to take up the struggle to build a new, modern, and developed Brazil. "The President of the Republic solicits the support of your energy, of your hope, of your capacity to sense and understand our nation. Divulge, explain, and communicate to the whole nation what we desire to do, what we will do. Jolt our country with your faith and you will help me sustain the struggle . . ." (Kubitschek 1958, 75).

He grasped, almost intuitively, the appeal of the symbolism of the word and deed. He knew how to communicate the essence of his message in a few words that could capture the public attention. In his race for governor of Minas Gerais, the slogan was "Energy and Transportation." The slogan "50 years [of progress] in 5" was used to characterize the developmental objectives of his presidential administration. During his presidential campaign, he sensed the appeal of building a new capital, Brasilia, in the interior of Brazil (Kubitschek 1975, 7-8; 1976, 2:368). In his

administration, he made Brasília the symbol of Brazil's ability to build a strong, developed, and prosperous nation. To the Brazilian people, he talked often of the "spirit of Brasília" generated by the adventuresome, hardworking individuals who were making Brazil's dreams of the past the reality of the present (Kubitschek 1975, 82).

When facing a crisis, Kubitschek was a wizard at finding symbolism of broad appeal to the Brazilian electorate. After President Café Filho in a Christmas Eve 1954 address to the nation appealed for a single unity candidate, Kubitschek responded to this attempt to pressure him out of the race, pounding home the theme that his campaign was a defense of legitimacy and democracy (Kubitschek 1975, 82; 1976, 2:328). In 1959 he decided to abandon efforts to effect an austerity program to pacify the International Monetary Fund. He wrapped himself in the mantle of patriot defending the nation from the machination of foreign economic forces to keep Brazil from progressing. He gathered broad support for his position, including Luís Carlos Prestes, the leader of the Brazilian Communist Party, and Plínio Salgado, the former leader of the fascist-oriented movement of the 1930s (Jurema, 70).

Kubitschek was the master of the dramatic gesture. Two weeks after the law was passed enabling the building of the new capital in the interior, Kubitschek flew into the site of the proposed city in an ancient DC 3, landing on a field just carved for that purpose. Along with him were the key aides who were going to design and construct its buildings, roads, and communications systems (Kubitschek 1975, 45). Immediately after his inauguration he suspended press censorship in Brazil. The next day Kubitschek presented his advisors with a preliminary list of economic targets for his administration, which were released immediately to the press, and created the National Development Council to coordinate his Target Plan (Lafer 70; Baer 65).

His own energy and boldness seemed designed to personify the energy and promise of the new Brazil. Throughout his public career, Kubitschek seemed a man almost in perpetual motion. In his presidential campaign he covered 200,000 kilometers of Brazil, mostly by plane, but also by ship and horseback. He made more than 1000 speeches, took part in 100 television programs, participated in 300 round table discussions, and had about 500 press interviews. All this in a 59 day campaign (Kubitschek 1976, 2:372). To focus the nation's attention on the great progress Brazil had made under his Target Plan, in January 1958 Kubitschek travelled the length and breadth of Brazil, dedicating public works and improvements, making 13 major speeches, including a dedication of a bridge between Goiás and Mato Grosso, new buildings at the University of Rio Grande do Sul, and improvements in the port of Santos in São Paulo (Kubitschek, 1959, table of contents).

Kubitschek was also an enormously effective speaker. In his speeches, he commonly cited development statistics in such a way as to establish his expertise with his audience and make concrete his vision that Brazil was becoming a modern and developed

society. Characteristic of his speeches was an attempt to establish common bonds between himself and his audience and to indicate that the audience was part of the struggle to create a new Brazil. Witness his January 1957 speech to businessmen assembled at the Copacabana Palace Hotel in which he told the audience that "we can understand each other, since ours is the same goal, working for the affirmation of an autonomous and powerful Brazil. . . . Your fight [for economic progress] is my fight." In the same speech, he told these businessmen, who regarded themselves as decisive men of action, that he was not a president who sat in the national capital signing documents, but one who travels throughout Brazil's "8 1/2 million square kilometers of our territory," overseeing the progress of the nation. After citing statistics on the progress of his Target Plan, he reached a rhetorical high: "I feel that Brazil is marching forward; I know that Brazil marches forward and that no one will hold Brazil back" (Kubitschek 1958, 36-45).

Kubitschek was enormously talented in taking a controversial and complex message and communicating it simply and effectively. This ability is shown quite clearly in a September 1956 speech defending the need for participation of foreign capital in the development of Brazil. He first established that "all planning studies made in Brazil show us clearly that the investment needed to accelerate our development greatly exceeds our capacity to save." If we do not attract foreign capital, we would have to reduce our standard of living "which would be cruel and difficult, or reduce our investment, sacrificing economic development. . . . The collaboration of foreign capital is thus not material for emotional debate; it is a technical necessity" (Kubitschek 1958, 246).

He used other techniques as well to spread his message. Upon assuming the governorship of Minas Gerais he established the state government's first public relations agency to publicize the activities of his government (Sodré 1960, 11). His presidential administration is notable for the volumes of its publications, including the annual compilation of his speeches, his messages to the Brazilian Congress, and summaries of his activities as well as publications regarding the results of the Target Plan, special speeches, and a multi-volume compilation dealing with his major foreign policy initiative, Operation Pan America.

Through his energy, symbolism, and speeches and writings, Kubitschek helped mold an optimistic attitude about Brazil's future. As one American businessman in Brazil noted at the end of Kubitschek's administration, "I would say that the future of Brazil would be a bright one, but I sometimes get a bit uneasy about the faith the Brazilians themselves have in the general idea that this bright future will come automatically and inevitably" (Gordon and Grommers 154).

The appeal of Kubitschek was hardly based solely on his extraordinary rhetoric and sense of public relations. What was extraordinary about him was his ability to match extraordinary rhetoric with extraordinary accomplishment. Whether as governor

or president, Kubitschek reveled in setting bold targets and exceeding them. And Kubitschek thrived on seizing the opportunity to take audacious steps to create development. While governor he lobbied the Vargas administration to get a steel mill for Minas Gerais. When a German firm expressed interest in building one in Brazil, Vargas, reminded by an aide of Kubitschek's lobbying, suggested Minas Gerais as a location to the German firm. But the firm established as a precondition that the state would guarantee that it could provide the steel mill within 3 years with electrical energy that would have been the equivalent at the time of nearly half the state's consumption. The state's energy chief said that was too big a commitment. Not to Kubitschek, however; he made the commitment to the company and delivered the energy on schedule (Kubitschek 1976, 2:237-38). With less than a year to go in his presidential term, Kubitschek embarked on a program to build a road connecting Brasília with Acre. When he encountered criticism in the press on the feasibility of his completing it during his term, Kubitschek had a special commission established to oversee its construction. And the 3,335 kilometer road in Brazil's interior was completed nine months later (Kubitschek 1978, 3:324).

Nonetheless, the Kubitschek administration is almost as notable for what it did not focus on as for what it did. Kubitschek thrived on programs that produced highly tangible results in a relatively short time: a new capital city, an automobile industry, new roads, and the like. Projects that tended to be regarded as building up traditional areas or that did not construct physical objects tended to be neglected.

Agriculture production for the domestic market lagged behind the aggregate demand. According to one estimate, the domestic demand for food grew at a rate of 5 percent a year from 1957 to 1961 while Brazil's food supply grew at an annual rate of 3.6 percent. What is particularly striking is that, while demand rose, the growth in the output for livestock and animal derivatives declined in the years 1955 to 1961 period compared with the years 1947 to 1954. The increased income, particularly in the urban sector, thus increased demand for food, including relatively expensive items like animal protein, while the rate of growth of the food supply declined or at the very least did not keep pace with rising needs (Goodman 115; Baer 150-52). The failure of supply to keep up with the demand for food produced inflationary pressures that fueled unrest in the late 1950s.

The relative lack of emphasis on agriculture can in part be explained by the fact that Kubitschek and his advisors put their prime emphasis on developing the modern sector of the economy--industry--regarding agriculture as belonging to the traditional sector. But such an explanation does not hold for the paucity of resources devoted to education during the era. Education is obviously a concomitant of a modern industrial society. Yet the percentage of the federal budget devoted to education actually dropped from 9.5 in 1950 to 6.1 in 1960. The failure of sufficient resources to be brought to bear was particularly acute in

primary education. As late as 1962, an estimated 51 percent of the population between the ages of ten and nineteen were illiterate (Baer 187-88).

While it is apparent that increases in educational resources could increase productivity by raising the value of Brazil's human capital, such increases would not build the identifiable and physically visible structures that figured so prominently in Kubitschek's programs, whether as governor or as president. Kubitschek was devoted to material things that people could see, whether automobiles, power plants, or roads. Kubitschek was enamored with projects that could produce immediate results; the payoffs in education were long-term and produced no visible monuments to his abilities. He certainly favored education and did include it in his Target Plan, but the estimated resources he planned to devote to it were meager, just 4.3 percent of those allocated in the plan (Lafer 207).

Finding the resources was not the problem. Kubitschek had a rather cavalier attitude toward government revenues when it came to spending on high priority projects. In his memoirs, he was proud of his response while running for governor to those who wanted to know where the money would come from to finance his promised projects: "When a governor is determined to carry out a project, he should not secure the resources from the public coffers, but from the interior of his own head" (Kubitschek 1976, 2:238). Even as mayor, the projects that particularly commanded his attention were programs that brought immediate results, like the road linkage that he had completed in Belo Horizonte in 72 hours (Kubitschek 1976, 2:42-43).

Economic stabilization programs became an anathema to Kubitschek. The surface reasons are obvious. As president he feared that programs designed to curtail inflation would hurt the nation's drive for modernization and leave many of his precious projects to an uncertain fate in the hands of his successor when his term ended in 1961 (since constitutionally a president could not run for immediate reelection). An austerity program could threaten his political chances in his planned race for the presidency in 1965 and it could and did provoke enormous political pressure on him.

One overlooked explanation for his resistance to austerity, however, lies in an analysis of his personality. He was a man with both an enormous desire to be liked and enormous skills in making friends and pleasing people. Austerity brought criticism and unpopularity, not praise and popularity which Kubitschek craved. As he was not reluctant to admit, he always needed to be surrounded by friends. In his home he left the disciplining of his daughters to his wife, Sarah, preferring to assume the role of "friend" and "confidant to his children" (Kubitschek 1974, 1:16; 1978, 3:295-96).

He had an immense desire for praise. His memoirs, though in many ways a masterfully crafted work designed to leave a positive view in history of his legacy, shows his extraordinary thirst for praise. These books are replete with quotations of praise he

received from his mentors, whether in politics or education, and from the young and old in Brazilian society. But the praise he cherished most came from two sources. One was from foreign dignitaries. Reading his memoirs gives the impression, at times, that he remembered every compliment he ever received from European leaders and royalty.<sup>5</sup> The other was from his mother, Júlia. Though clearly quoted by Kubitschek for effect, it suggests that the praise he seemed to cherish the most came when his mother upon seeing Brasília for the first time, exclaimed "only [Juscelino] would be capable of doing all this" (Kubitschek 1978, 3:367).

His mother was a proud and ambitious woman, in many ways atypical for her generation. Though she came from a family with ties to the political elite of Minas Gerais, she continued working after her marriage. When her husband died, leaving her with two small children to raise, she insisted on remaining in her own home and raising her children on her meager pay as a schoolteacher rather than retreating to her father's house or seeking help from relatives (Kubitschek 1974, 1:17-23).

If her husband's amiable, but somewhat carefree manner had not produced the success she wanted, she was bound and determined her son and daughter would succeed. And they did, especially the son. She apparently was reticent about giving him praise, yet not averse to giving him advice on how he might do better, when he was already successful by many standards (Kubitschek 1974, 1:155-56). Indeed, Kubitschek, who kept his maternal surname as his own, was a man of extraordinary ambition. Given his enormous struggle to obtain an education with limited financial resources, a less ambitious man would have been satisfied with becoming a doctor, as he did in the late 1920s. But not Kubitschek. He wanted to become a surgeon and study in Europe, which he did in 1930. Throughout his life he seemed driven to go from one goal to another. One crash program would lead to another. Kubitschek was a man who would not hesitate to add, in the midst of a presidential campaign, the building of a new capital city in the wilderness to his list of already ambitious campaign promises, and, once added, be bound and determined to build it. The retreat that austerity would imply went against what was deeply ingrained in his personality.

For many scholars today, the models and structures of the traditional social sciences offer a sophistication of analysis and a research cachet not available through humanistic approaches. It is evident that a thorough analysis of Brazil in the years 1956 to 1961 would be incomplete without a discussion of the structural forces in operation. But, at the same time, it is clear that an understanding of Brazil during these years also necessitates a discussion of the policies, actions, and personality of Juscelino Kubitschek. Through his policies and the exuberance of his personality and actions, he tried to please, or at least to pacify, the rural *coroneis*, the bureaucrats of the Vargas-built bureaucracy, the military, and the modernizers of the cities. His achievements, in a way, embodied aspirations of the rising middle class, who could empathize with his struggle for success. Without

doubt, Kubitschek's program was created in response to the political pressures of the time. But it was also an extension of his own personality.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>There are some notable exceptions. Indeed, some of the ideas developed in this paper on Kubitschek's style have been, at least, raised by other scholars. One of the earliest to discuss these themes is Thomas Skidmore in his classic, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 163-86.

<sup>2</sup>On Kubitschek's drive for the presidency, see Edward Anthony Riedinger, "The Making of the President, Brazil 1955: The Campaign of Juscelino Kubitschek" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1978).

<sup>3</sup>See Celso Lafer, "The Planning Process and the Political System in Brazil: A Study of Kubitschek's Target Plan--1956-1961" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1970), 210-11; Juscelino Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília* (Rio de Janeiro: Bloch Editores, 1975), 42.

<sup>4</sup>Juscelino Kubitschek, *Meu caminho para Brasília* (Rio de Janeiro: Bloch Editores, 1976), vol. II, *A escalada política*, 457-58; Abelardo de Araujo Jurema, *Juscelino & Jango PSD & PTB* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Artenova, 1979), 50.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Juscelino Kubitschek, *Meu caminho para Brasília* (Rio de Janeiro: Bloch Editores, 1974), vol. I, *A experiência da humildade*, 109, 112; vol. II, 312, 468.

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