


The past in the present: the Dictatorship Military in the educational context among sensitive topics

ARTICLE

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Abstract

The Military Dictatorship in Brazil is a sensitive subject, especially in the educational context, due to the intentional erasure of evidence and memories dating back to the events of that period. Conservative groups tend to disqualify humanities disciplines with frivolous attacks that have no scientific basis. They suggest historical revisionism without a theoretical and/or epistemological basis to structure a reflexive critical analysis of the facts. The aim of this article is to contribute to studies on the subject, as well as to highlight the importance of humanities teachers in strengthening educational practice around human rights by establishing critical reflections on themes such as the Dictatorship, an event that seemed to have been overcome by time, but which still remains in the shadows in the present. To this end, we will establish dialogues with Reinhart Koselleck, Maria Lígia Coelho Prado, Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta (2021), the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 and the Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

Keywords: Military Dictatorship. Human Rights. Teaching History. Memories. Sensitive Topics.

O passado no presente: a Ditadura Militar no contexto educacional entre os temas sensíveis

Resumo

A Ditadura Militar no Brasil engloba o arcabouço dos temas sensíveis, sobretudo, no contexto educacional em decorrência do apagamento intencional de provas e memórias que remontam aos acontecimentos desse período. Haja vista que grupos conservadores tendem a desqualificar as disciplinas das humanidades com ataques levianos e sem fundamentos científicos e sugerem o revisionismo histórico sem embasamento teórico e/ou epistemológico que estructurem a análise crítico-reflexiva dos fatos, o objetivo deste artigo concentra-se em contribuir com os estudos relativos ao tema, bem como trazer à tona a relevância dos docentes das humanidades em fortalecer a prática educacional em torno dos Direitos Humanos estabelecendo reflexões críticas de temáticas como a Ditadura, evento que parecia ter sido superado pelo tempo, mas que ainda permanece às sombras no presente. Para tanto, estabeleceremos diálogos com Reinhart Koselleck, Maria



Lígia Coelho Prado, Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta (2021), Constituição Brasileira de 1988 e Declaração dos Direitos Humanos (1948).

Palavras-chave: Ditadura Militar. Direitos Humanos. Ensino de História. Memórias. Temas Sensíveis.

1 Introduction

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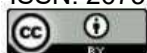
In Brazil, we experienced complicated times in the first decades of the 21st century. Not by coincidence, several members of Brazilian society have called for the return of the Military Dictatorship¹. Seeing these events gain popularity and occupy the columns of the main national and international newspapers, we ask ourselves: Where do we fail as historian teachers? The answer to this question has proved to be more complex than we realize. In order to answer this question, we need to look back at the history of the subjects, especially history in Brazil, which during the Dictatorship period was dismantled and transformed (especially at the high school stage) into Social Studies, the aim of which was to strengthen the power of the Armed Forces and patriotism, guaranteeing an emphasis on the study of Army symbols and those pertaining to national representations.

Among its representations, we highlight the anthem of the institution (Army) and the coats of arms, as well as the National Anthem and the Brazilian Flag, among other representative forms that confirmed the Army as the patron of Brazilians and created the figurative and illegitimate memory of its strength in defense of its people. However, this political and power strategy sought to affirm and consolidate the Army's authoritarian power over other Brazilian institutions.

It was only after the country's redemocratization² that history gained a place in the high school curriculum again. Gradually, it gained more strength and new studies gave rise to its teaching and learning in the school environment. In the late 1990s, the subject of

¹ A modern dictatorship is a constitutional regime whose principles subvert the pre-existing political order. The structures are based on a high degree of concentration of power in the Executive, exercised by an individual or a smaller group close to the dictator. Contrary to democratic rule (Prado, 2021, p. 62).

² The period of redemocratization is fundamental in the reconstruction of the History of the redemocratization of Brazil, because the memory of the past portrays the present, allowing us to understand the continuity of the facts in the present, because it is a lived past that has left its mark on a people (Medeiros *et al.*, 2022, p. 2).





history took on a critical, investigative character through legal documents such as the Law of Guidelines and Bases (Lei de Diretrizes e Bases – LDB – 9.394/96), the law that governs education in Brazil; the National Curriculum Parameters (Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais – PCNs), guidelines for teachers to work on themes linked to society, citizenship and the environment, seeking to strengthen basic education; among others.

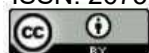
The 1964 coup³ is still a current prerogative in Brazil, considering that conservative groups still deny/reject the naming of the event as a “coup”. For this more radical and authoritarian group, the fact that the military took power in 1964 can be considered an act of bravery worthy of celebration, and so they defend the thesis that it was for the “good” of democracy and the economy. They claim that the overthrow of the left was a milestone that ushered in the political regime guided by the expression “order and progress”. Often referred to as a revolution or a movement, these seem to be more pleasant connotations that suggest the “positivity” of these changes.

The reception⁴ of these speeches in defense of the coup d'état⁵ and the Dictatorship has only happened again today because the politicians who were at the forefront of the transition from the Dictatorship to the redemocratization of the country in the mid-1980s avoided a more radical confrontation with those responsible for such a tragedy. In this sense, the government failed to fulfill its investigative role and lead the process by revealing the violent events to society. At that time, they failed to highlight the uses and abuses of the military's authoritarianism between 1964 and 1985 and to bring to light the human rights violations that occurred during the Military Dictatorship in Brazil. Likewise, the guilty parties must be held accountable for taking away the right to freedom of speech and expression, for censoring musical, artistic and theatrical culture, for inflicting

³ The overthrow of Jango and the seizure of power was an action supported by the US representatives in Brazil. The Americans waged an anti-communist campaign and accused Jango of being a communist, with political and ideological pressure, shaping the coup d'état (Corrêa, 1977; Motta, 2021, p. 53).

⁴ Reception is not just a mere reproduction of the past, because it is impossible to reproduce it, given that circumstances in the present are no longer the same and it depends on the contexts of each period and the understanding of its recipients in contemporary times (Hartog, 2013).

⁵ After the coup was implemented, its leaders sought to control the state's technological power centers, various centers that provide public services. The coup materialized with the overthrow of a government democratically elected by the people, implementing a dictatorship (Prado, 2021, p. 61).

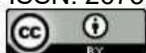




the right to defense on citizens who have been arbitrarily accused, imprisoned and punished. There are studies, such as that by Denise Assis (2020), which defend the thesis that the Dictatorship did not end in 1985. In his view, that year was only the end of the military regime, since the Dictatorship lasted until 1989, when the first president was elected by direct vote. So, from 1985 to 1989, was a period of transition. In Brazil, this transmutation took place slowly via the Electoral College and indirect voting.

With regard to the atrocities that took place during this period, Reina (2019) points out that it is necessary to identify and blame those who contributed to the disappearance, above all, of countless young people (students) and other political disappearances – as happened with the 52-year-old journalist Alexandre von Baumgarten, whose body was found on Macumba beach in Rio de Janeiro shortly after his disappearance (10/13/1982). Baumgarten had gone fishing in the Cagarras Islands with his wife and the boatman, who were never found, not even the boat (Gasparini, 2016, p. 215). This episode, in addition to the practices of exile and other torture punishments carried out at the time, portrays the pain of a family, whose relatives and parents did not have the right to bury their dead.

Another situation that recalls cases of political disappearances from that era concerns the confessions of Cláudio Antônio Guerra, certified as true by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office in 2019, at the request of the Truth Commission. His confessions were about the fate of the 12 bodies of political disappeared during the Dictatorship. These bodies were incinerated in the furnaces of the Cambahyba Plant, in Campos dos Goytacazes (north of Rio de Janeiro), by Guerra himself. His testimony helped elucidate a tiny portion of the dark episodes of the Dictatorship (Assis, 2020). Another case of murder refers to the case of Ramires Maranhão do Valle, a young man from Pernambuco who opposed the Dictatorship and was killed at the age of 23 in Rio de Janeiro, the husband of Maria do Socorro Diógenes, who made public her painful experience of losing her spouse in this way and her own experience in a Recife prison, where she experienced the horrors of torture carried out by the military against herself and a group of fellow activists (Diógenes, 2020).



As for charging those responsible for the crimes of that period, it is worth pointing out that, according to Brazilian law, “[...] it is the duty of public authorities to investigate, prosecute and punish human rights violators [...]”, guaranteeing fair reparation and removing criminals from bodies that ensure the exercise of legality and other positions of authority in the country, as well as revealing the truth to victims, relatives and other members of society (Reina, 2019, p. 9).

Silencing and leading society to forget these actions did not help the citizens of the present time to recognize the events that resulted from this coup and to criticize them. The tragic and violent events of the past need to be studied, debated, clarified and questioned, so that contemporary society is aware of the facts and remembers these events, seeking to combat any possibility of similar situations happening again. Reina points out that “whether for lack of courage, political will or any other reason, the fact is that the country is not making an effort to promote wide-ranging and effective public policies to recover its own memory” (Reina, 2019, p. 10).

In this context, and not infrequently, history teachers are continually faced with denialist cases and arguments in the classroom in relation to the violence and oppression of the so-called “Years of Lead”. It is no coincidence that the subject encompasses sensitive topics, since working with these issues in the classroom raises pre-existing problems in the socio-political game of naturalizing traumatic events that have occurred. Examples include the Holocaust, the Military Dictatorship, the exclusion of cultural diversity – enslavement – among other themes contextualized by the power relations that each society has historically developed with its past. In this way, the mechanisms of silencing and forgetting used to erase memories of a traumatic or violent past cause controversy among students, who often close themselves off to new reflections on the past, even when they are operationalized in the teaching and learning of history. However, “the problem with sensitive topics is that they're not easy to deal with in the classroom – or anywhere, for that matter” (Alberti, 2014, p. 2).

In these moments, the sensitivity of the issue can be seen, given the duality of its demands. This sensitivity is an important stage in the conduct of the process, as it makes



it necessary to listen to the students without curtailing their views and/or opinions, even if they are unreasonable. But it is also essential that teachers act as mediators of knowledge in these situations, pointing out the facts and developments of historical processes in a critical way, but taking due care to avoid dealing with the subject using value-based and/or pejorative arguments.

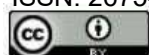
It is necessary to analyze historical perspectives according to the time and events involved in the approaches, to examine social structures and institutions, as well as the power relations of the period studied. It is up to teachers, therefore, to counter spectra of the past, revealing plural and contradictory historical visions (Napolitano, 2021, p. 105-106).

This is an arduous task, but it is possible and necessary, taking into account the construction of students' historical awareness⁶, in order to contribute to their constitution as citizens aware of their rights and duties.

It is important to note that, before the reform of the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs), especially the guidelines established for the state of Goiás (DC-GO/2019), the content related to the “Military Dictatorship” was taught in senior high school (HS) – (the last phase of this stage). This content, after the reform, became part of the objects of knowledge indicated for the beginning of high school⁷, this is a period in which the students are not yet so mature and their process of historical construction is still at a very early stage. This reversal in the phases of delivery of this specific content seems intentional if we take into account that it was designed with the return of the right to power in 2016. Because the less maturity the students have in understanding and critically reflecting on the topics studied, the less they will be able to grasp and understand the subject matter, especially when it comes to topics as broad and complex as this one.

⁶ Historical awareness is developed by understanding the experiences of the past in the present, in order to develop guidelines for the field of expectations for the future and to ensure that similar situations do not occur again (Rüsen, 2007).

⁷ The connections established between the reformulations of the BNCC and the Curricular Guidelines for Basic Education altered the contents and educational stages in which they should be applied. In the case of the Military Dictatorship, before the 2017 Reform, it was taught in the senior year (Paula; Zaluski, 2022, p. 2).



It is therefore up to teachers at all stages to work on the content by drawing parallels between the present and the past, bringing to light the projects and interests of society that are in constant dispute. Thus, the object of knowledge “Dictatorship” requires further explanation, given that a priori the intention of the coup d'état was not to hand over presidential power to the military, but rather to have the social dynamics headed by the elite of the period to drive the coup, which unfolded into the Military Dictatorship.

2 Methodology

Methodologically, we opted to compare sources of educational legislation and historiography on the subject of the research. We have therefore turned to recent works on the subject, which bring new interpretations of it since the establishment of the National Truth Commission, legally instituted by the Brazilian state with the aim of investigating possible human rights violations during the Military Dictatorship from 1964 to 1985. Given that, among the articles of Human Rights, one refers to the right to life and the others are related to the civil and social rights of citizens.

3 From Coup to Dictatorship

The 1964 coup d'état was one of the most violent and terrifying events of repression in Brazilian history. It began with the deposition of João Goulart (on March 31, 1964) from power and was responsible for the inauguration of a military regime that lasted for just over two decades (1964-1985). Although a priori it gave no indication that it would result in the Dictatorship, “it represented the most contemporary expression of Brazil's persistent authoritarianism”, just like the Estado Novo (New State) – 1937-1945 (Fico, 2014, p. 8). So we ask ourselves: How did the coup turn into a Dictatorship?

In response to this question, we return to the events that gave the coup its impetus. With regard to the matter, it is important to consider its initial supporters and take into account that a coup of this magnitude happens gradually and slowly. This situation leads us to understand that, before it materialized, it had already been planned and received

support from various fronts, including civil representatives (the press, businessmen and large farmers), military (state and federal/Armed Forces) and religious (Catholic Church), as well as the United States. We mention some of these fronts of support, such as the Brazilian Press Association (Associação Brasileira de Imprensa – ABI), the Brazilian Bishops' Conference (Conferência dos Bispos do Brasil – CNBB) and the Brazilian Bar Association (Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil – OAB). Institutions that later regretted joining the event due to the reality of the situation, such as the curtailment of freedoms and other dictatorial practices adopted at the time. These bodies became opponents of the imposed regime under penalty of (re)pressure.

Although the supporters of the coup were large in number, it cannot be ignored that João Goulart also had the support of a large part of society. The complexity of the facts reveals that if there were new elections in the year after the coup and if João Goulart were to run again, he would possibly be the candidate elected, since at the time he had more than half of the voting intentions in the capitals surveyed, losing only to Juscelino Kubitschek in Fortaleza and Belo Horizonte.

The fact that the 1964 coup was a historical event made of “flesh and blood” can be observed, as it energizes individuals who have divergent pasts and models for doing and acting in politics. They are subjects who:

[...] love, hate, have doubts and fears. Here, events full of tension, such as the Central do Brasil Rally (Comício da Central do Brasil) of March 13, 1964, coexist with everyday news. These include the fire at the Gran Circus in 1961 and Brazil's victory in the 1962 World Cup, when the country also won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival with the film *O pagador de promessas* (*The Promise Payer*) (Motta, 2023, p. 9).

The political situation at the time can also be seen in the words of those interviewed in São Paulo, as around 55% considered the political proposals announced by Jango at the Central Rally to be relevant to the people. In mid-1963, João Goulart had around 66% approval from the people of São Paulo. Supporters of the coup, such as Colonel Jarbas Passarinho (Costa e Silva's minister), defended the thesis that Jango intended to carry out



a coup in an attempt to remain in power with the support of the left, making his government “communist”. This was the defense they used to legitimize the 1964 coup d'état, sponsoring the idea that this was the “redemptive revolution” or a “preventive counter-coup” (Fico, 2014, p. 10).

In the run-up to the coup, Jango's announced proposal for land reform had more than 70% support in some capitals and 72% of the Brazilian population supported it. Therefore, the overthrow of Jango was not a mere event that only had the support of politicians, but it was the joining of civil forces that gave rise to the magnitude of the coup, since, in addition to governors and parliamentarians, several Brazilian civil leaders, as well as the US ruler, played active roles and were also responsible for the conspiracy and the outbreak of the coup that began the Dictatorship, an event that annihilated democracy in the country for 21 years and suppressed the forces opposed to its interests.

However, the events that took place after the coup were entirely the responsibility of the military. The many civilians who supported the coup were immediately removed by the military itself, which did not want to share power with the civilians. A large part of society also supported the Military Dictatorship, especially at its peak, due to the economic boost caused by the military's government strategies, which gave rise to the so-called “Economic Miracle” (1968-1973). A miracle for a select few and a misfortune for the majority of workers, whose salaries were frozen, and blacks, who were also disadvantaged during this regime, given that this miracle did not reach them. The same Jarbas Passarinho, who defended and motivated the coup, also contributed to the creation of political and marketing strategies to legitimize the event in society.

As minister of the military junta in the government of Artur Costa e Silva (1967-1969), then Emílio Garrastazu Médici (1969-1974) and also João Figueiredo (1979-1985), at the first opportunity, they showed their dictatorial instincts by approving AI-5 (1968), under the slogan “scruples of conscience be damned”. Decreed in December 1968, during the government of Artur Costa e Silva, it was the most violent of the 16 Institutional Acts. AI-5 was enacted to intimidate society through fear and was characterized as an effective tool against opponents of the Dictatorship (Schwarcz;



Starling, 2015, p. 455). AI-5 reinforced the openness given to government security forces, intensifying repression and persecution of those who supported democracy and tended to “resist” the Dictatorship (Serbin, 2001, p. 22). It restricted rights such as Habeas Corpus in cases of politically motivated crimes; it decreed the closure of the National Congress and the Legislative Assemblies of the States. Through the Act, countless politicians and magistrates lost their political rights; it censored the press, music, theater, cinema and television; decreed a curfew; made it illegal to hold political meetings without prior authorization from the police; legitimized the immediate decrees issued by the presidency; guaranteed the president the power to remove from public office any civil servant accused of subversion or non-cooperation with the regime (Napolitano, 2024).

As this would be a way of putting an end to the social dynamic that preceded the coup, which reached the high point of the Brazilian workers' struggles in the middle of the 20th century, beyond the promise of land reform announced by Jango in the run-up to the election. Therefore, the military did not want to run the risk of instituting new elections and having João Goulart re-elected as a result.

With the overthrow of João Goulart as a result of the 1964 coup d'état, the presidency became vacant and was subsequently taken over by the then president of the Chamber of Deputies, Ranieri Mazzili, who remained in office until the military announced indirect elections. Thus, the first military man to occupy the presidency after the coup was Marshal Humberto de Alencar Castello Branco (1964-1967); then Artur Costa e Silva (1967-1969); then Emílio Médici (1969-1974); Ernesto Geisel (1974-1979); and, finally, João Figueiredo (1979-1985).

4 The intentional erasure of evidence and memories: human rights violations and the corrosion of democracy in Brazil

In the other Latin American countries where the Dictatorship took place, such as Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, there has been and still is an extensive program of studies, elucidation and dissemination of the historical facts imbued with violent, repressive, anti-democratic actions, among many other phenotypes typical of the acts of the military

during the Dictatorship, brought about by the processes of Latin redemocratization. According to Reinhart Koselleck (2006), the present reconstructs the past through the problematizations raised, but it is also in the present that we re-signify the past (field of experience). In this way, each present conceives its own way of dealing with the past in the guise of memories, traces or permanence. It occurs as a kind of current past, because it is a temporality in which events have been incorporated and, even in the present time, are capable of being remembered and (re)updated.

With regard to the silencing/deletion of facts that occurred during the Years of Lead, Reina (2019), in the project “Journalism of Rediscovery”, sought to uncover events that were silenced by the military during the Dictatorship. To this end, he interviewed leaders of the Armed Forces commands in 2018, who, like their predecessors who served in the five dictatorial mandates (1964-1985), continued the jargon used previously (“Nothing to declare”), in the incessant attempt to silence and conceal the facts impregnated with terrorist practices, as has been the case since the past (with the military denying any pronouncement on these facts).

This expression – “Nothing to declare” – is the basis for the construction of a rhetoric of denial created by the military commanders during the dictatorial regime and widely absorbed by this class and by civilian authorities committed to the Dictatorship to cover up actions of repression, espionage, censorship, torture, kidnapping of babies, children and adolescents, atrocities that took place inside and outside the army barracks (Fico, 2014, p. 84).

Of the 19 cases of kidnapping, 11 took place in Araguaia between 1972 and 1974, under the governments of Médici and Geisel. This corresponded to the most intense phase of repression against the resistance fighters. Other cases of this nature also occurred in Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, Paraná and Pernambuco; and another five children from the Marãiwatsédé indigenous tribe in Mato Grosso were taken into military captivity and the entire tribe was transferred from their lands⁸.

⁸ The transfer of this tribe from their lands allowed the concentration of Brazilian land in the hands of international groups, in addition to the construction of the Transamazon highway in 1969, whose second stage of construction (1970) culminated in a serious economic crisis in Brazil, causing internal indebtedness (Reina, 2019, p. 187).



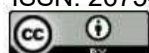
The subsequent adoptions of these children, when they were taken to orphanages, took place irregularly.

Of the 19 kidnappings identified by Reina, a few cases stand out here. Among them is Antônio José da Silva – Antoninho – arrested in 1974 for hanging out with the resistance fighters and being close to Oswaldão (leader of the Araguaia resistance fighters). A priori, he was taken to a barracks in Rio de Janeiro. His whereabouts, a posteriori, are unknown (Reina, 2019, p. 28).

Another case concerns a kidnap victim shortly after birth, whose name has not been released, the daughter of a political activist who was active in Paraná at the time. She made available various documents, such as her birth certificate, orphanage documents, DNA tests and letters, which prove her origins and misappropriation by kidnapping in the late 1960s. She currently lives in São Paulo. Soon after the kidnapping, the baby was taken to Curitiba and entrusted to a religious institution. A couple then adopted her clandestinely. The man was an army general who had worked in the country and who was internationally in favor of the dictatorial regime. Her birth certificate was fraudulent. This victim got to know her biological mother, although she has no contact with her and is currently still looking for her biological father (Reina, 2019, p. 28-29).

Also kidnapped, Iracema de Carvalho Araújo was arrested in Recife in May 1964 with her mother, Lúcia Emília de Carvalho Araújo (a teacher affiliated to the Brazilian Communist Party [Partido Comunista Brasileiro – PCB]). Her house was raided by plainclothes civil and military police officers. Both – mother and daughter – were hooded, with (extremely fetid) burlap sacks made of stiff raffia to cover their heads⁹, they were put in a car that was driven around the city, where the torture began, the sack that covered their heads hurt their faces, the soldiers threatened them with death and beatings. After some time going around the city, they arrived at Aurora Street, in the center of Recife, where the Political and Social Order Police Station (Delegacia de Ordem Política e Social – Dops) was located. They were immediately taken to the back of the building. Iracema,

⁹ Iracema's experiences can be found in the files of her case No. 2004.01.48590, instituted by the Amnesty Commission of the Ministry of Justice (Reina, 2019, p.197-198).



with her head still wrapped in a burlap sack, was placed in a tank of water, where there were stripped copper wires to shock her. At that moment, she was no longer next to her mother (Mila), but she could hear her cries of pain resounding from afar. Iracema says that soon afterwards, even from a distance, she could see, through the shabby weave of the makeshift hood, a man pulling out her mother's finger nails with a pair of pliers, panic and dread invading her body at the scenes she was witnessing (Reina, 2019, p. 29-30).

The police undressed her, but her face was still covered with a hood. The girl received shocks to all parts of her body, including her vagina. At one point, her head was uncovered when Dr. Osmar entered the room where she was, frightened, shaking completely from the fear and the shocks. Osmar ordered the police to stop the torture, as Iracema was only a girl. He ordered her to be taken away, and that's when the agents of repression stopped torturing her. They immediately took her back to the car and drove around the city again. Some time later, late at night, she was abandoned in Derby square in Recife, feeling a mixture of fear and relief and still bleeding, curling up in a corner of the square until dawn (Reina, 2019, 198-201).

She then managed to get to her home in Vila Tamandaré. At first, she received help from a couple who then sent her to another couple, who took her to Rio de Janeiro. Her first identity card was only issued in São Paulo when the victim was 19 years old. Today, she is married and has four children. She lives between São Paulo and Pernambuco and abhors the events she and her mother were subjected to by the military forces of the Dictatorship. In the police station's records, under registration number 17, there is only the arrest of Lúcia Emília and nothing about Iracema, whose mother was accused of carrying out subversive activities, given the opening of criminal proceedings against her, although her case was registered in Minas Gerais and not in Pernambuco, under registration number P36014-MG, in which there are front and profile photos of her (Reina, 2019, 198-201).

Another kidnapped man, José de Ribamar – Zé Ribamar – was arrested on November 7, 1973 by the army, together with his friend Zé Wilson. He was held captive at the Bacaba military base, on the edge of the Transamazon highway, and was later taken

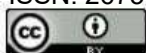


to the Belém do Pará barracks, where he was forced to serve the military. The victim has not been found, although residents of the Araguaia region report that he is alive and that he also lives in the surrounding area. José Wilson de Brito Feitosa – Zé Wilson – (Ribamar's friend), arrested in Araguaia on the same date as his friend, November 7, 1973, was also taken to the Bacaba military base and suffered the same fate as Zé Ribamar, but like his friend, he has not been found (Reina, 2019, p. 30-31).

Juracy Bezerra de Oliveira, son of Maria Bezerra de Oliveira and Raimundo Mourão Lira, aged around 8, was taken by Army lieutenant Antônio Essílio Azevedo Costa, who mistook him for Oswaldão's son, in São Geraldo, in the 1972s. He was taken to Fortaleza, where the official registered him as his son. Juracy lives on an island in the Araguaia River, where he returned in search of his biological mother when he was just over 20 years old. He also provided documents produced by the Army in Fortaleza at the time. His sister, Miracy Bezerra de Oliveira, was also kidnapped in 1973 by Army sergeant João Lima Filho, who took her to Natal, in Rio Grande do Norte. After some time, Juracy and his mother went to the city of Natal, looked for the Army and information about his sister and the officer who took her, but they were unsuccessful in their efforts (Reina, 2019, p. 32-33).

José Vieira, son of Luiz Vieira, a farmer killed by the military in the Araguaia war, was arrested with fighter Piauí – leader of detachment A, in São Domingos in Araguaia, in January 1974. A priori, he was taken to the army barracks in Belém do Pará and then assigned to a barracks in the Araguaia region. They forged his military document and he served in the military as if he were 19 at the time (his age was also altered so that he could serve in the army, and his correct age is unknown). He currently lives in Anapu, Pará. He gave a statement about the kidnapping and provided the army with fraudulent identification documents for him. He told the story of five other rural children who were kidnapped with him when they were teenagers (Reina, 2019, p. 30-31).

In addition, regarding the kidnapping of babies, children and adolescents, psychoanalyst Gilou Garcia Reynosso points out that the aim of the military in carrying out these actions was to “make disappear, erase, deny even death itself”, erasing the existence



and death of these human beings. It would be the same as “killing death” (Rodriguez; Berlink, 1988).

With regard to the denial by generals and the entire Army command that terrorist acts – repression, torture (with air-conditioned cells with extremely high temperatures for the confinement of political prisoners, or with sound systems to expose the noises and screams of the captives, these martyrdoms required constant installation of equipment and adaptation of spaces, etc.) – cannot be legitimate, because there was no way that torture or death could have taken place inside the barracks without their commanders knowing about it.

Reina (2019) has dedicated much time to more in-depth investigations into the motivations behind the crimes committed by the military in the service of the dictatorial regime, such as the case of the 19 kidnapped babies, children and adolescents and the deaths of the Araguaia fighters, as well as other disappeared politicians who opposed the Dictatorship. Reina discovered that, from a military point of view, crimes of this nature followed/follow the principle of logic established by the military in times of war, whose central objective is to maintain power and defeat enemies. Thus, it is worth noting that, of all the dictatorial governments, only Ernesto Geisel partially admitted, in his biographical work, to the state's terrorist strategy in combating those who opposed the regime: “I think torture is necessary in certain cases to obtain confessions... there was a lot of cooperation from the business community and state governments” (Reina, 2019, p. 13 *apud* Gaspari, 2016). Bearing in mind that the OBAN – Bandeirante Organization¹⁰ was operating in São Paulo, it was the work of the business community in these parts. In a statement reproduced from a conversation between Geisel and 4th Army General Dale Coutinho, there is talk of executing those who remained opposed to the regime. In the excerpt, the general says:

– “Business has improved a lot... between you and me, when we started killing”.

Geisel answered:

¹⁰ The organization was created in 1969 (it is believed by the Brazilian military regime) to investigate and dismantle revolutionary communist groups that existed in the country at the time.

– “Oh Coutinho, this business of killing is barbaric, but it has to be... You know that now they've caught this leader and liquidated him, I don't know what his name is” (Reina, 2019, p. 13).

Both were referring to Oswaldão, who was a strong leader among the Araguaia fighters. He was killed in an army action involving around 200 soldiers, just a few days before the conversation between the two generals. On that occasion, the military was instructed to exterminate the leader's entire family. They then killed his consort and kidnapped four children, including two of them by mistake, as both were not the daughters of the fighter. It is strange that, although Oswaldo's extermination was recorded in the documentary sources of the Military Dictatorship, his son's death was erased/silenced/forgiven from them, so that it would be forgotten and would not become subject to remembrance. All that remained was for him to disappear without explanation, succumbing to the human world.

Like Oswaldo's son, another 18 children are estimated to have been kidnapped and misappropriated (19 in all). These cases have become state secrets of Brazil's dictators. What is not said (dealt with) falls by the wayside. According to Paul Ricoeur, forgetfulness is a threat to memory (representation of the past), reminiscence (remnants of the past in the present) and anamnesis (recollection or systematic analysis of past events). In this sense, it prevents memory from being left as a legacy for history. So:

The past is, so to speak, present in the image as a sign of its absence, but it is an absence that is no longer there, but is considered to have been there. This “having been” is what memory strives to find again. She claims fidelity to this “having been”. The thesis is that the shift from writing to recession and re-appropriation does not remove this enigma (Ricoeur, 2008, p. 1).

When it comes to past events based on crimes committed, such as the actions of the military in the Military Dictatorship that violated human rights, we should perform the duty of memory, reconstructing the historical past through memory instituted by history itself and often wounded by itself. In this case, the military's intentional lack of documentary records was aimed at making it impossible to reconstruct the facts and blame them for the genocidal actions carried



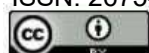
out during the Military Dictatorship. In this way, the events were/are part of an intentional strategy to lead society to ignore and/or forget this dark past. The crime of child kidnapping also occurred in other Latin American countries¹¹ that experienced times of Military Dictatorship.

Another crime committed by the military, which was kept quiet (in an attempt to erase it) for years and was only discovered decades later, concerns the kidnapping and disappearance of five children of Marãiwatsédé indigenous people in 1966 (with the consent of military personnel from the Brazilian Air Force [Força Aérea Brasileira – FAB] and the Army), whose lands – located in the north of Mato Grosso (Suiá Missu village, between the Xingu and Araguaia rivers) – they refused to hand over to the military and land grabbers, which were later acquired by businessmen from São Paulo, whether it was because of their rich mineral deposits or their love of their land and nature. At that time, the military government opened the doors to land in the Amazon to foreign companies. Much of Brazil's land came to belong to foreign groups. According to data from the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária – INCRA), the military government went from being “nationalists” (at least in their speeches) to being sellouts (Reina, 2019, p. 177-183).

Between 1972 and 1976, in Pará, the number of foreign companies in the state rose from 21 to 463, the equivalent of one million three hundred thousand hectares of Brazilian land being handed over to foreigners by companies such as John Davis (created in 1970 – global organization), United Steel Corporation (founded in 1901 in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania), Nixford (a computer and derivatives company headquartered in Germany), King's Ranch (a private company founded by Captain Richard King in Texas), as well as international banks, insurance companies, contractors and car manufacturers.

In addition to this example of surrender, Daniel Ludwig, an American multimillionaire, was granted possession of one and a half million hectares of land in the north of Pará, including mineral reserves. Almost five decades after the event, in 2018, the

¹¹ For example, the Years of Lead in Argentina, a period in which the military exterminated around 300,000 militants and kidnapped or disappeared more than 500 children of leaders opposed to the regime (Reina, 2019, p. 14).





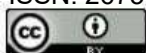
so-called “rebels” of the Xavantes Marãiwatsédé tribe were still demanding their rights in the face of the atrocities committed by the military, who claimed to be “patriots” and who took their children away from their families and disappeared with them (Reina, 2019, p.15).

5 Fighting denialist discourses is necessary: in defense of democracy and human rights

We emphasize the importance of encouraging ongoing debates and studies by students and research professors on human rights, focusing on sets of knowledge that enable and favor the prevention of crimes of violence, repression, social, ethnic and religious discrimination, as well as attacks on democracy and those that harm human rights and Brazil's 1988 Federal Constitution. In this sense, it is necessary and urgent to promote public actions that make it possible to raise awareness of the causes and motivations that generate crimes of this nature and their consequences. Analyses of documentary sources, such as music, historiographies, journalistic documents, among others, on this subject, need to be debated and disseminated with the aim of fostering critical and reflective thinking on the ways in which the negationist discourses surrounding these terrorist, repressive and anti-democratic practices circulate. We must take into account the topicality of the issue, considering the wave of negativity that has swept the country in recent decades with the proliferation of the ideologies of numerous right-wing groups in the Americas and in European countries. We emphasize the need to remember and learn from the genocidal actions of the military during the Dictatorship in Brazil and in other Latin American countries.

Furthermore, it is necessary to alert society to the imminent dangers, since a large part of it has been shrouded in blindness due to a lack of knowledge. It is necessary to educate so that, through epistemological knowledge of the humanities, students are able to develop historical awareness based on critical and reflective thinking about the events of the past, establishing parallels with the present. The lesson needs to be thought about, criticized, disseminated and, above all, learned through educational action.

In this way, we have an intense challenge, that of working with the history of the present time, with reference to the past. We cannot ignore the uses and abuses of power



that occurred during the Military Dictatorship, so we need to use technological means to combat fake news, extremist speeches against religious, partisan and ethnic differences and anti-racist actions that violate human rights and the Brazilian Constitution (1988).

We can't ignore the fact that many Brazilian artists suffered direct repression during the Dictatorship for their resistance and for trying to spread anti-authoritarian values, albeit "on the quiet". Intellectuals who were part of social movements and fought for democracy in the country were also persecuted and had to go into exile in another country, as was the case with Paulo Freire. Although these were difficult times for the arts and culture, it was a creative and socially prestigious period due to the growth of the market. The production and consumption market, in times of censorship and repression, drove the expansion of the cultural market focused on the propagation of entertainment products, on television and in Brazilian popular music.

The artists most respected by intellectuals and critics were in exile because of the Military Dictatorship. For example, Chico Buarque (who enjoyed a phase of significant popularity during this period and was spared from going to prison), Geraldo Vandré (in a 1995 interview, Vandré recounted that, after the AI-5 was decreed, he fled the clutches of dictatorial repression and managed to leave the country, settling in Paris until 1970. When he returned to Brazil after his brief imprisonment, the artist pretended to be "dead" and got out his character, going on to work as a discreet lawyer), Augusto Boal and José Celso Martinez (after 1973), Gilberto Gil¹², Caetano Veloso was even arrested for three months and, in July 1969, was asked to leave the country, going into exile in London for three years. Repression affected all ideological and aesthetic expressions in the late 1960s, the communists linked to the national-popular camp, those linked to the armed struggle and the avant-garde tropicalists.

In 1970, the group Secos e Molhados released a (musical) album that summed up their cultural projection in opposition to the Years of Lead, a mechanism responsible for

¹² The song performed by Chico Buarque and Gilberto Gil is noteworthy: "Take this chalice away from me, Father"; for being a manifesto against censorship and repression. The words "cálice" ("chalice") and "cale-se" ("be silent") directly alluded to censorship, and "wine redolent of blood" referred to the cellars of torture (Napolitano, 2024, p. 182).



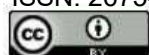
developing spectators, readers and listeners who sought a libertarian consciousness in times of shadows, meeting the demands of elementary school and university students, middle class intellectuals and members of social movements.

The song “Eu deveria estar contente porque eu consegui comprar um Corcel 73” (I should be happy because I managed to buy a Corcel 73), by Raul Seixas, among other songs that sharply criticized the regime, was the protagonist of the desire of countless young middle-class workers of that period, who dreamed “only” of buying a car of that model and year, in order to take advantage of the so-called economic “miracle”. Songs like these and so many others that are more popular and well-known can be included in history classes, as well as in other subjects, as sources of analysis, reflection and study, encouraging the development of critical-reflective thinking among students in the classroom and beyond, outside the walls of schools and universities.

6 Conclusions

Six decades after the coup, the issue is still relevant today. The concern to debate and publicize the events of this dark past that took place during the Military Dictatorship has become a continuum among intellectuals and teachers, whose objectives are to demystify the distorted narratives imbued with negationism about the Dictatorship and (color)related themes. One of the theses defended on the subject refers to those of Rodrigo Patto de Sá Motta, in which the professor points out that if, at the end of the regime, the rulers who took office at the time of the country's redemocratization had charged the state and those responsible for their unscrupulous acts that harmed human rights, such as the right to life, freedom of expression, etc., they would possibly have avoided the collective episodes that have recently occurred in Brazil, which have put Brazilian democracy at risk.

The transition from the Military Dictatorship to redemocratization should also have been a milestone for calls for investigations and punishments for crimes against democracy, which would have gained momentum and consistency, making it impossible for the military to return to the Brazilian public scene, as has happened in recent years. The





complexity of the political scenario in 1985 and in the years that followed, marked by the resistance incorporated within the country's government structures, as well as the Brazilian political culture, underlined the tendencies towards conciliation at the end of the Dictatorship. In recent years, the rise of the right wing and the interests of the business class and conservatives have added to the reasons already listed for preventing progress in investigations into crimes of this nature and the return of the military to the Brazilian political scene.

Education needs to be one of a nation's biggest projects. Society needs to understand that “People don't need guns. The people need letters” (Kilomba, 2020, p. 12). Education drives students to unveil the world, the farces and arbitrariness practiced in times of totalitarianism and fascism, the Dictatorship needs to be studied seriously, seeking to understand its trajectory and unveiling facts that have not yet been revealed. It is only through the processes involved in education that it is possible to build citizens who are aware of their rights and duties and who are co-participants in society.

Therefore, in order to understand how dictatorships operate, it is necessary for teachers and intellectuals to disseminate their research on the subject, create research projects and spaces for debate that involve community participation, encouraging discussions and seeking to understand the causes and motivations behind the accommodation of totalitarian, fascist regimes in power. This will make it possible to minimally understand how these events occur, as well as their damage to society and the strengthening of studies on Human Rights (as participation of the people), the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 – created to defend and guarantee individual and social rights to citizens, such as the right to life, housing, health, freedom of expression, the right to come and go, among others that in times of totalitarian regimes are annihilated.

The education of students, both in the initial grades and in the stage involving high school, needs to include in its teaching and learning programs subjects that encourage the study of legal documents such as Human Rights, the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 and subjects such as history, geography, philosophy and sociology, which deal with themes such as Military Dictatorship, the Holocaust, Racial Discrimination, etc. Content that is the





subject of sensitive topics because it shakes human feelings, especially of those who were/are victims, directly or indirectly, of crimes that are involved in these topics.

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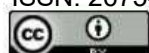
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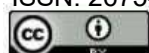
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