

## The Brazilian military reserve officers and the defense of the institutional memory of March 31, 1964

Os oficiais brasileiros da reserva e a defesa da memória institucional do “31 de março de 1964”

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the current debate surrounding the dispute over the official memory of the coup d'état and the corporate-military dictatorship implanted in Brazil in 1964. It is based on the reaction of former political agents of the institution (currently military reserve officers) and private websites and blogs that were created in order to constitute a space of discourse defending the interests of these military and the institutional memories of the coup and the dictatorship. Complementarily, it discusses how the regime's “propaganda” reinforced the construction of this memory through the speeches published in the Army's newsletter, specifically on the commemoration of March 31, and institutional bibliographical production.

**Keywords:** 1964 coup, dictatorship from 1964 to 1985, military memory.

**Resumo:** O artigo tem por objetivo analisar o debate atual envolvendo a disputa pela memória oficial sobre o golpe e a ditadura empresarial-militar implantada no Brasil em 1964. Tomaremos por base a reação dos ex-agentes políticos da instituição (atualmente oficiais militares da reserva), e os sites e blogs privados que foram criados no intuito de constituírem um espaço de discurso de defesa dos interesses desses militares e da memória institucional sobre o golpe e a ditadura. De modo complementar, trabalharemos como a “propaganda” do regime reforçou a construção dessa memória através dos discursos publicados no *Noticiário do Exército*, especificamente, sobre as comemorações do 31 de março, e da produção bibliográfica institucional.

**Palavras-chave:** golpe de 1964, ditadura 1964-1985, memória militar.

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## Introduction

In recent years, memory has been a major issue in discussing the dictatorship. Initially this debate was pursued in the academic environment, but it has gained projection beyond this milieu as a consequence of actions such as the so-called “escrachos” [bashings] denouncing former agents of the State as torturers, mobilizations to change the names of schools, streets and squares that had received the names of icons of the dictatorship, campaigns to change former facilities of the Department of Political and Social Order (Departamento de Ordem Política e Social – DOPS) into centers of memory, and in particular the establishment of the National Truth Commission (Comissão Nacional da Verdade – CNV) and its congeners at a state and municipal level, as well as the pressure to revise the Law of Amnesty, including the punishment of the agents of the State involved in crimes during the dictatorship.

At the same time there is a noticeably increased tension between the groups that defend such actions and the military institutions, especially the reserve officers, around the (re)construction of the memory of the events of March and April 1964, as well as the entire regime until its decline in 1985.

The implementation of the Ministry of Defense in 1999, the election of President Lula and, more recently, of President Dilma Rousseff (a former participant in the armed struggle) gradually intensified the debates involving the memory of this recent period in Brazilian history. While, on the one hand, actions of this government, such as the implementation of the National Truth Commission and the Law of Access to Information (Lei de Acesso à Informação – LAI) generated the opportunity to further the historical critique of the 1964–1985 period, on the other hand, in their tracks, they also aroused old and renewed tensions and disputes regarding the memory of that period. A specific moment in which this “war of memories” became more important occurred in February 2012.

On February 16<sup>th</sup>, the presidents of the Military Clubs published a manifesto in their portal criticizing

the President of the Republic and two Ministers who advocated that the Law of Amnesty be revoked. This reaction received publicity and was debated in various media. After it was removed from the portal, another document appeared, this time published on the site called *A Verdade Sufocada* [The Asphyxiated Truth] and signed by people from the military reserve reaffirming the initial criticism.

Around this specific case,<sup>3</sup> the present article aims at analyzing the current debate involving the dispute for the official memory of the coup and the corporate-military dictatorship<sup>4</sup> implemented in Brazil in 1964. We will focus our discussion on the reaction of the former political agents of the institution (currently military reserve officers) and the private sites and blogs that were established to provide a space for discourse to advocate the interests of these military and the institutional memory of the coup and the dictatorship. Complementarily, we will discuss how the “propaganda” of the regime supported the construction of this memory through the speeches published in the *Noticiário do Exército* [Army Newsletter], specifically on the commemorations of March 31, and the institutional bibliographic production.<sup>5</sup>

## The defense of memory

### *The defense of the institutional memory by the Armed Forces*

The constructions of memory in general are part of a process of dispute over political hegemony.<sup>6</sup> As well written by Fernando Rosas, memory

*is an essential aspect of the struggle for political and ideological hegemony in our societies. In other words, when we summon, when we inscribe Memory in the debates of today, we are not only looking back, that is, we are not taking refuge in the past, we are not escaping to nostalgia, we are necessarily – whatever the more or less assumed meaning of the exercise is –*

<sup>3</sup> This option is methodologically justified by the belief that often it is the particularized, qualitative analyses that show us details, signs revealing a greater phenomenon, which more general analyses are not able to perceive. They make it possible to generalize conclusions and expose connections that numerical data often deny or even hide (Ginzburg).

<sup>4</sup> Currently the term “civilian-military” has been used a lot to define the 1964 coup and the dictatorship that followed it. In order to affirm a collaboration of “society” in building the regime, we believe that from this perspective “society” appears as homogeneous, which is a mystifying view that erases the class-related meaning of the process. This idea of “civilian-military” also includes a corporate perception of the military themselves: the world divided between them (the military) and the “civilians”, who are all those who are not military. In other words, we believe that it is a very generic term that does not define who won and whom the dictatorship served. On the other hand, the definition of the coup and of the regime as entrepreneurial-military – first coined by René Dreifuss (1981) and adopted some time ago by a segment of the field of historiography – focuses on the elements that define the social content of the political regime. As such, it states that what we really had in 1964 and throughout the dictatorship was the collaboration of a part of Brazilian society. In this sense, even when Dreifuss also uses the term civilian-military, he does so in a consistent way, since it refers to a class-related meaning of the coup, emphasizing the participation of the bourgeoisie in the 1964 context and in conducting the dictatorship. The term “entrepreneurial-military” has been gaining acceptance both in academic and non-academic milieus after the National Truth Commission and some state truth commissions adopted this perspective.

<sup>5</sup> The structure of this article is based on the work of Fernando da Silva Rodrigues in the Project called *Faces da redemocratização: os movimentos sociais e suas memórias precedentes e subsequentes à Lei da Anistia, de 1979, no Brasil*, coordinated by Ricardo Pimenta, whose objective is to seek to understand the actions of the trade union movement, students, alternative press and military in the struggle for redemocratization, emphasizing the debates about the Amnesty which was enacted in 1979, besides involving a reflection on the construction of the official memory of the 1964 coup and the dictatorship.

<sup>6</sup> Antonio Gramsci’s concept of “hegemony”, in general lines, can be seen as the consented rule of a social class over the others, in ideological terms – and not only via coercion – especially of the bourgeoisie over the working class in a capitalist society (Gramsci, 1991).

*discussing the civilizational contents, the societal representations, the political and ideological contents that structure the discourses on the world of today and of tomorrow ... (Rosas, 2009, p. 84).*

Accepting that this observation is correct, as well as the fact that there is an ongoing dispute for the construction of a memory of the 1964-1985 period, it would then be correct to say that we live in a context in which political hegemony is being disputed. This strife, however, did not begin in 2012. Therefore, before we take time to look specifically at the debate that took place in that year, we must return to the origin of this process of disputing the constitution of a memory around the coup and the dictatorship.

João Roberto Martins Filho (2003, p. 3-4) says that “the military narrative was constructed as a response to the initial wave of texts from the left”. Thus, he situates the beginning of the phenomenon of a dispute for the memory as the end of the 1970s, at the time when the first works were published with versions of ex-militants in the armed struggle about their experiences during the dictatorship. On the other hand, Daniel Aarão Reis Filho (2004, p. 126-127) dates the beginning of this process as 1964, when the right tried to present the coup as a saving intervention to defend democracy, and the left erased the radical and confrontational aspect of the sectors at the left, victimizing those who were defeated in 1964 and stig-

matizing the military as *gorillas*. Even if we disagree with the conclusion of Aarão Reis Filho regarding the action of the left, we believe that his chronological framework is more precise than that of Martins Filho.

In fact, since the first moments of the dictatorship – and even before the coup – there was an effort to seek a legitimation for taking power and the installation of the new regime. In newspaper editorials, speeches of those involved and/or their supporters, among other means, an attempt was made to construct for the general public the idea that the new situation was the result of an effort that aimed at saving Brazil from the danger of becoming communist. This, however, was not an effort based only on public demonstrations and aimed at the external public. The military were not a cohesive group, as is shown by the great number of military who lost their political rights, many immediately after the coup (Vasconcelos, 2010). Even within the Armed Forces, it was necessary to construct and reaffirm the constitutional memory of the “revolution” and the regime.

Internally, the Brazilian army uses the *Noticiário do Exército* (NE) [Army Newsletter] as the main space to maintain the memory of the events of March 31, 1964. This is a medium to give the members of the Armed Forces a record of the speeches made by the Minister/Commander of the Army and various types of information of interest to the members of the institution.<sup>7</sup> For purpose of analysis, we divided the presence of the speeches on

**Chart 1.** *Noticiários do Exército* – finding of speeches on March 31.

| During the dictatorship |                  | Democratic period |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1965 – Found            |                  | 1986 – Found      | 2000 – Found     |
| 1966 – Found            | 1976 – Found     | 1987 – Found      | 2001 – Found     |
| 1967 – Found            | 1977 – Not found | 1988 – Found      | 2002 – Found     |
| 1968 – Found            | 1978 – Found     | 1989 – Found      | 2003 – No speech |
| 1969 – Found            | 1979 – Found     | 1990 – Found      | 2004 – No speech |
| 1970 – Found            | 1980 – Found     | 1991 – Found      | 2005 – Found     |
| 1971 – Found            | 1981 – Found     | 1992 – Found      | 2006 – Found     |
| 1972 – No speech        | 1982 – Found     | 1993 – Found      | 2007 – No speech |
| 1973 – No speech        | 1983 – Found     | 1994 – Found      | 2008 – No speech |
| 1974 – Found            | 1984 – Found     | 1995 – Found      | 2009 – No speech |
| 1975 – Found            | 1985 – Found     | 1996 – No speech  | 2010 – No speech |
|                         |                  | 1997 – Not found  | 2011 – No speech |
|                         |                  | 1998 – Not found  | 2012 – No speech |
|                         |                  | 1999 – Found      |                  |

Sources: Arquivo Histórico do Exército. Acervo Institucional.

<sup>7</sup> Published daily – except weekends and holidays – the *Noticiário do Exército* is edited by the Centro de Comunicação Social do Exército, the department responsible for disseminating the message and for the institutional publicity. Informative and official, it is different, for example, from the *Revista do Clube Militar*, which is private, and from the *A Defesa Nacional* and *Revista da ESG* magazines, which are technical-professional periodicals that serve the ideological, scientific and professional interests of the Armed Forces. Directed at the in-house public of the Army, the NE has no juridical-administratively legitimacy, i.e. it is not a document, on the contrary of the *Boletim do Exército* and the *Diário Oficial da União*. It is relevant because it is one of the instruments that the Army uses in its attempt to create a political identity among its in-house public. Due to its periodicity and because it is mandatory reading for all members of the Force, we believe that the subliminal ideological message conveyed has a potential to reach a large part of the Force.

the coup in the NE into two moments: the period of the dictatorship (1964-1985) and the democratic period (post-1985) (Chart 1).

Analyzing the chart one finds that the period characterized as a dictatorship was marked by the annual and almost systematic presence of the speeches for the preservation of the institutional memory of the coup, except for the years of 1972 and 1973, for which we did not find any record.<sup>8</sup> This frequency is part of a more general picture of efforts to solidify the institutional memory of the coup.

Until a short while ago, March 31 was officially part of the commemorative dates of Brazilian military institutions, as a way of remembering the “Democratic Revolution” of 1964 and the period under the control of the General-Presidents. Celso Castro had already noted that, from the coup until 1974, the government encouraged these celebrations.

In a dictatorial context, with practically complete absence of individual freedoms, such a reaffirmation might appear unnecessary. However, after the initial “ecstasy” of the victory of 1964 had passed, dissonant voices were soon heard. Already on the commemoration of the second anniversary of the “revolution” there were complaints, such as that of Carlos Lacerda, who, unsatisfied with the established reality, said that there was nothing to praise. Despite these criticisms, the festivities continued in an ascending line until the tenth anniversary, on which a number of activities to commemorate the “revolution” were held (Castro, 2008, p. 131). Slowly, however, this celebration diminished: in 1986, by order of the Minister of the Army, Leônidas Pires Gonçalves, it was limited to the barracks; in 1995 the joint order of the day of the three military ministers ended; and in 2011 it was forbidden even inside the barracks. The NE records confirm this tendency.

In a more detailed analysis, we perceive that over the years there was a continued effort to construct “March 31” as a national movement, a real revolution, in which the breakdown of order – never characterized as a coup in the institutional discourse – appears as the result of a call by the Brazilian people and the military as those who carried out the mission to save Brazil from the communist danger, as denoted by the speech published in the NE in 1979.

*When disaster appeared imminent and irretrievable, and the process of deterioration already threatened the very discipline of the Armed Forces, the Brazilian people as a whole, supported by the more representative sectors of the nation, decided to call a stop to that state of affairs (Noticiário do Exército, March 31, 1979).*

In brief, over the years one can see that the purpose of the celebration was to legitimize the seizure of power, the presence of the Armed Forces in politics and the regime itself as guarantor of the security needed for the development of the country, as celebrated by the Doctrine of National Security, of the Superior War School. In speeches like that of 1971, in the political-economic context of strong repression against the armed struggle and the existence of the “Brazilian economic miracle”, that task – which was self-assigned, but presented as conferred by the Brazilian people – is even more transparent:

*In the factories, industries, businesses, in the fields, there is a great effort to produce. The Army is also present, improving itself, and researching, executing or cooperating, to give Brazil the full benefits of its core activity – security (Noticiário do Exército, March 31, 1971).*

In general, therefore, during this period the speeches have the clear purpose of keeping the memory of the winners alive. In this phase “March 31” is a festive date for the Armed Forces – with formations, exhibitions, statements by the President on a national network – which tries to keep up to date in the official press of the military institutions the anniversary of the “Brazilian Democratic Revolution”, as it is characterized internally. These moments, however, reveal moves in the struggle to construct and affirm a memory of the 1964 coup. Even though it was not possible, at that time, to have a public presence of contesting voices, this does not mean that the battle for memory had not yet begun. If at a certain moment a given memory is dominant, this supremacy does not mean erasing other memories, it does not mean that it is the only one. According to Michael Pollak (1989, p. 4-8), at times of crisis the memories that are kept underground come to the surface, generating a dispute among them. This critical period would soon come. Amid the process of “slow, gradual and secure” distension, begun in the mid 1970s, the commemoration of “March 31” began to be less important. On the other hand, the contestation of the political situation grew in volume. This was the occasion that until then unheard voices needed to be heard in public.

Between 1977 and 1979, years in which, respectively, *Em câmera lenta*, a testimony-novel by Renato Tapajós, and *O que é isso, companheiro?*, a best-seller by Fernando Gabeira were published, and 1985, when the results of Project *Brasil nunca mais* [Brazil Never Again] appeared, a number of works were published (memoirs, biographies and autobiographies, written not only by

<sup>8</sup> At this time, we are unable to analyze the reason for this absence. Any conclusion would be reckless and might be merely groundless speculation.

former participants in the armed struggle, but also by journalists) whose narrative structure was the denunciation of tortures suffered during the dictatorship. Therefore, in the final phase of the dictatorship, while the memory of the left about the period became structured and found a public, the official celebrations lost support and drew back. As Eduardo Heleno de Jesus Santos appropriately notes, in the final years of the dictatorship, the Army

*sought to maintain the symbolism of the date in its orders of the day, but reduced its dissemination ... Without popular support, the anniversary of the Revolution would become, from 1983 onwards, by initiative of the Armed Forces themselves, a strictly martial ceremony, and the scenes of March 1964, with thousands of people supporting the intervention, would remain in the past... (Santos, 2012, p. 5).*

During the democratic period – returning to the chart about “Noticiário do Exército” and the finding of speeches made on March 31 – we note the alternation of the presence of speeches in memory of “March 31, 1964”. This is the period in which the celebrations become, year by year, emptier and more limited to the barracks and, in parallel, protests against the regime grow, indicating new movements in the battle of memories.

*The current moment, more than two decades after the historical fact took place, is right for a serene reflection on the results achieved in all fields of national life, specifically in the transition to democracy. It is true that there were diversions and delays. There were, however, many achievements, and they deserve to be remembered (Noticiário do Exército, March 31, 1988).*

It can be seen that in the context of redemocratization there is already an alternation in the characterization of the regime. The defense is maintained, but there is no longer an absolutely positive evaluation. In a time of criticism of the regime, there is an acknowledgment that there were problems during its trajectory, presented as “deviations and delays”, but what prevails is the attempt to reaffirm the supposed “achievements”. This effort indicates that, although the manifestation favorable to the regime remains in the institutional speeches, from the end of the last term of a General-President and the installation of the so-called “New Republic”, according to the reports of the military themselves, those defeated at arms became victorious in the battle for the historical memory (Castro, 2008, p. 133-135).

However, just as the hegemony of the institutional memory up to the mid-1970s did not mean that other memories did not exist, the supremacy of a memory critical of the dictatorship did not completely asphyxiate the version of those who defended the “revolution”. While institutionally these voices lost space, new ways to disseminate this memory began to appear. In this sense, the outstanding books at the time were *Brasil sempre* (1986), by Lieutenant Marco Pollo Giordani, who served in the DOI-Codi, and *Rompendo o silêncio* (1987), by Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, also a former agent of the repression, accused of having committed torture during the dictatorship. But these were still isolated initiatives. The consolidation of similar, informal alternatives as loci to disseminate a favorable memory of the 1964 coup only occurred in the next decade. The changes were more visible at the institutional level. More than the alternation regarding the existence of the speeches, there were changes in the institutional discourse at every further phase of the redemocratization process.

In every phase before and immediately after the 1988 Constitution, up to 2002, we find records of speeches in the NE.<sup>9</sup> However, the abovementioned speech made in 1988 already shows a certain flexibilization in the radical style of writing about the coup. The political and social juncture, marked by the process of legitimation of the transition to democracy with the new Constitution, is reflected in the military discourse, but this does not eliminate the idea of the importance of the seizure of power in 1964 as the driver of Brazilian modernization and the base for democratic transition.

This rhetorical flexibilization was maintained after the swearing in of the first President elected after the period of the dictatorship, in 1989. From then on, arguments more aligned with the new democratic reality began to appear in institutional discourses.

This perception increased during the Fernando Henrique Cardoso Administration, because of his left-wing militancy during the dictatorship. According to Santos (2012, p. 10),

*in 1995, during the Fernando Henrique Cardoso Administration, for the first time no order of the day was published concerning March 31. According to the news from O Globo at the time, the military did not carry out their traditional ritual, out of consideration for President Fernando Henrique. According to the story in the Rio de Janeiro newspaper, high-ranking officers who preferred not to say their name stated that it was logical not to celebrate March 31, since*

<sup>9</sup> Except for 1996, when there was no speech. For 1997 and 1998, also, we cannot say that the speeches occurred because we could not find them.

*the President was a man of the left. A high-ranking officer of the Navy said: "It is obvious that we are not going to commemorate a revolution when our highest leaders of today were, at the time, all from the left", while another, from the Air Force, stated that there were no "reasons to commemorate in a government where all of the players belonged to the opposite team" (O Globo, March 31, 1995, p. 6).*

It should be added that on December 4, 1995 Law n° 9.140 was enacted (Lei dos Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos [Law of Political Dead and Missing]), which created the Special Commission on the Dead and Missing (Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos – CEMDP), showing that the State acknowledged the responsibilities of public agents for acts of repression during the dictatorship, including abductions, torture, arrests and murder. Furthermore, it allowed the families of the missing to ask for death certificates and receive compensation (Brasil, 1995).

Then, in 2009, the online Project "Memórias Reveladas" [Revealed Memories] was started. It was also known as the Center of References for the Political Struggles in Brazil (1964-1985) (Centro de Referências para as Lutas Políticas no Brasil [1964-1985]), supervised by the National Archives and aimed at giving the public information about the political history of Brazil. Finally, the Law of Access to Information of November 18, 2011 (Brasil, 2011a) was enacted, regulating the constitutional right of citizens to have access to information, and the National Truth Commission (Brasil, 2011b), sanctioned by President Dilma Rousseff on the same date and officially installed on May 16, 2012, aiming to investigate human rights violations by agents of the State in Brazil between 1946 and 1988.

It is in this context that the defense of the memory of the regime more emphatically migrated from the institutional to the informal sphere and began to be led by military from the reserve. Initially in a more discrete manner, by holding small celebrations in which "March 31" was remembered, as in the case, for instance, of the mass held in 1989 at the Church of Santa Cruz dos Militares, with the presence of high-ranking officers who were already in the reserve, including General João Batista Figueiredo, former President of Brazil (Santos, 2012, p. 7). At other moments, in an explicitly political manner, as when military of the reserve who were members of the Navy Club – unsatisfied with the non-publication of the order of the day concerning "March 31" in 1995,

and alleging that the nation and younger people in the Armed Forces needed to be informed about the real reasons for the outbreak and about the purposes of the movement – presented a motion suggesting that the entity should publish a message commemorating the date in the Club bulletin (Santos, 2012, p. 10). In addition to these collective initiatives, there were other, individual initiatives, such as books: the second by Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, *A verdade sufocada* (2006), and *BACABA – Memórias de um guerreiro de selva da Guerrilha do Araguaia* (2007) and *BACABA II – Toda a verdade sobre a Guerrilha do Araguaia e a Revolução de 1964* (2011), by Lieutenant José Vargas Jimenez, who, when he was still a second sergeant in the Army, was involved in the repression of the Araguaia guerrilla war.

These actions did not mean that the institution stopped defending the regime. Suffice it to remember that in 1999 one of the last acts of the Minister of the Army, General Gleuber Vieira, before this Ministry was replaced by the Ministry of Defense, was to approve the Oral History of the Army Project about March 31, 1964. Because of this initiative 250 people were interviewed, both civilians and military, and, consequently, in 2003 the Army Library (Bibliex – Biblioteca do Exército) published a 15-volume collection.

The collection *1964 – 31 de Março: o movimento revolucionário e a sua história* was coordinated by Reserve General Aricildes de Moraes Motta and shows, on the back cover of all volumes, passages from editorials and newspaper stories of *O Globo*,<sup>10</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo*, *Estado de S. Paulo* and *Correio da Manhã* praising the movement and the regime, supporting the claim – always present in the military discourses – that the press gave full support to the Armed Forces in 1964.

The objective of the Army, when it decided to carry out this project, was to keep the memory of the institution alive, claiming that in 1964 a "democratic revolution" occurred in the country, not a coup d'état that implanted a dictatorship. The central idea of the testimonies is the defense of the thesis that the military freed the country from communism and brought peace and prosperity to a nation that was embroiled in economic, political and social chaos. The launch of this collection was the last great official movement to defend the coup and the dictatorship. Concretely, a change in the locus of institutional defense of the coup and the dictatorship is currently becoming established: the officers on active duty and the media and official ceremonies of dissemination/celebration are leaving the scene, and the military of the

<sup>10</sup> Recently *O Globo* published an editorial with an attempt at a "mea culpa" for its support to the coup and the dictatorship, admitting that this option was a mistake. This action is an example showing that the (re)construction of memory is not limited to the military (O Globo, 2013)

reserve and private spaces such as military clubs, sites and blogs are coming in. Even if it is no longer hegemonic, the institutional memory of the coup and the dictatorship is refusing to go underground.

## The defense of the institutional memory by the military in the reserve

There is a logic to the choice of private spaces to discuss Army policy, especially by the reserve officers: these spaces, theoretically, are not subject to stringent institutional repression, because of the legal codes, such as the Disciplinary Rules of the Army, which deal particularly with this segment. Although paragraph 1 of article 40 gives the Army Commander the competence to apply all and any disciplinary punishment, to which the active and non-active military are subject (Brasil, 2002), these punishments are usually less traumatic than those that affect the military who are in a situation of active duty, because, since they are non-active (retired), the possible administrative punishments which these military may suffer are not the loss of rank, detriment to their career nor financial reduction. Therefore, these spaces allow a critical freedom that was of interest to the defenders of institutional memory in the new political reality.

### The Military Club

A first example of space to maintain institutional memory and political debates is the Military Club, which can be defined as

*a civil association with headquarters and legal domicile in the city of Rio de Janeiro, founded on June 26, 1887. Its main objective is to "create greater ties of union and solidarity among the officers of the armed forces", "then the interests of the members and struggle for measures that will protect their rights", and to "encourage civic and patriotic manifestations and take an interest in matters that hurt or may hurt the national and military honor" (Lamarão, 2001, p. 1383-1389).*

The Military Club is the only military association that has Navy, Army and Air Force officers. The active, reserve and retired officers can be accepted as full members. The association has a monthly publication, the *Revista do Clube Militar* magazine.

From 1940 to 1960 the Military Club was an important place for political discussion, not only regarding strictly military issues, but also more generally, as in the

case of the intense debate on how explorations for oil should be structured. However, after a broad reformulation of the aspects related to political activism which followed the debates involving nationalists and conservatives in 1940-1960, and the defense of the regime instituted in 1964, the Military Club lost its political importance, and it maintained this characteristic in the period after the 1988 constitution. However, the need for political debate and a freer manifestation outside the Army transformed it again into a space to propose and discuss political options. Obviously, the Military Club did not regain its previous importance. Its political significance today is nothing like it was until the 1960s. This reality, however, does not invalidate the claim that there is an internal attempt to recover, even if only in part, the prestige of the past and to present itself as the vector for the defense of a particular memory about 1964.

Signs of the insertion of the Military Club into this "battle of memories" can be noticed already in 1996, when General Hélio Ibiapina became president of this body. During his term there was an intensification of the efforts to reaffirm the institutional memory of the coup. For this purpose the *Revista do Clube Militar* began to emphasize "March 31" and the regime. At the same time encouragement was given to creating groups among the reserve officers aimed at obtaining the support of society to the cause of the "revolution", and the criticism of human rights entities in their struggle to obtain indemnification for citizens who suffered the action of the State during the dictatorship (Santos, 2012, p. 10-11). This position continued and, in 1999, the Military Club prepared a booklet with speeches of officers aiming to keep the military memory of "March 31" alive and disseminate it. This objective appears again in a *Revista do Clube Militar* editorial signed by General Hélio Ibiapina, in 2001. From this editorial we extracted the following fragment:

*Today almost all the military on active service have only heard talk about what happened on March 31, 1964. Military and civilians, in the reserve or active, and millions of young people suffer, nowadays, a tremendous and effective campaign of false stories and distorted information, lies launched constantly and in all directions, seeking to modify History. It is, therefore, essential to tell and repeat to exhaustion what happened and why it happened in those days (cited by Santos, 2012, p. 13).*

With increasingly insignificant official celebrations, the Military Club became possibly the main locus for the dissemination of the institutional memory about the 1964 coup. In this sense, on February 16, 2012 the

portal of that entity published a manifesto to the nation that ultimately produced tensions between the military reservists and the federal government.

Signed by the presidents of the three military officer clubs, the high point of the text is a criticism against President Dilma Rousseff and an accusation against Ministers Maria do Rosário, of the Office of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic, and Eleonora Menicucci, of the Special Office of Policies for Women in Brazil, because of statements that supposedly proved that they were in the service of what was labeled as “sectarian minorities” prepared to reopen the wounds of the past:

### *Manifesto of the Military Clubs*

...

*Right at the beginning of her term, the Military Clubs transcribed the message that the then candidate sent to the military on active duty and in the reserve, to the Armed Forces pensioners and to members of the Clubs. In the message the candidate made several commitments. When they transcribed it, the Clubs were giving her a vote of confidence, expecting that she would keep them.*

*As she completes her first year in office, slowly one sees the President departing from the premises that she herself stipulated. It seems that the concern to govern for one part of the population is much greater than the wish to meet the interests of all Brazilians.*

*Specifically, last week, and for three consecutive days, there were examples of the abovementioned statement. On Wednesday, February 8, the Minister of the Office of Human Rights gave an interview ... in which once again she asserted the possibility that the parties that considered themselves offended by facts that had occurred during the military governments could file suits in court, seeking to establish the criminal responsibility of the agents of repression, similarly to what is happening in neighboring countries. Once again this officer of the Republic placed her opinion above the recent decision of the Federal Supreme Court, which had been urged to opine on the validity of the Law of Amnesty. And the President did not speak publicly to contradict her subordinate.*

*Two days later Mrs. Eleonora Menicucci was sworn in as Minister of the Office of Policies for Women. In her speech the Minister, in the presence of the President, leveled exacerbated criticism at the military governments and ... emphasized the fact that she had fought*

*for democracy [sic], at the same time as she rendered homage to the comrades who had fallen in the fray. The audience, including Madam President, applauded her speech. Now, we all know that the group to which Mrs. Eleonora belonged conducted its actions aiming at the forceful implementation of a dictatorship and never intended for it to be a democracy.*

*Finally, to complete the week, the Workers' Party, to which the President belongs, celebrated its 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary. On the occasion the Political Resolutions taken by the Party were publicized. The item that says that PT will make an effort with society to bring back our memory of the struggle for democracy [sic] during the military dictatorship was highlighted. It can be said that the assertion is a fallacy, since when the Party was founded the government had already promoted the political opening, including the possibility of founding other political parties, thus ending the two-party system. The Military Clubs express their concern at the manifestations of the President's assistants, to which she, as the nation's top mandatar, does not respond by publicly expressing her disagreement with the position they and the party to which she is affiliated have taken, and await with positive expectation the attitude that will be taken by the President of all Brazilians and not of sectarian minorities or political parties ... (Cabral, 2012).*

The publication of the manifesto had repercussions in the newspapers and on the internet, and heated up the debates on the coup, the dictatorship and the current political process. A few days later it was excluded from the portal. The justification of this action, in a laconic note – also soon taken off the site – was given by the presidents of the Military Clubs, who limited themselves to stating that they disavowed the document of the 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>11</sup> However, the criticisms contained in the document were appropriated by groups constituted especially by reserve military people who prepared another document and disseminated it through sites and blogs belonging to the military and relatives of the military with conservative profiles.

### *The sites and blogs*

Once the Special Commission on the Dead and Missing had been established in the mid-1990s, there was an intensification of the clamor for the punishment of the agents of the State responsible for abductions, torture and

<sup>11</sup> Officially, the government did not issue any determination to withdraw the manifesto. Journalists ascribed this order to the Commander of the Army, General Enzo Perri (see O Globo, 2012). However, as we shall see further on, the groups of military people who took up the defense of the note content accused the Minister of Defense, Celso Amorim, of having pressured the commanders of the three Armed Forces to have the document removed from the site.



deaths during the dictatorship. Fearing that this pressure would become a revision of the Law of Amnesty, military people, mostly in the reserve, organized themselves in groups to defend those accused of these crimes. These initiatives prospered and generated sites and blogs that have become new loci to preserve the institutional memory and have contributed to feeding tensions between the defenders and the critics of this memory.<sup>12</sup> One of these sites is *Grupo Terrorismo Nunca Mais (Ternuma)* (Grupo Terrorismo Nunca Mais, [s.d.]a).

With its headquarters in Rio de Janeiro, *Ternuma* states that it “intends to show the history of terrorist action practiced by bad Brazilians”. On September 10, 2012, 14 years after the group was established, the site had already reached the mark of more than 2 million hits. Today there are close to 3 million.<sup>13</sup> Currently the president of the group is a reserve brigadier, Valmir Fonseca Azevedo Pereira, and one of the main debates recorded on the site was a campaign of solidarity to retired Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, labeled as a “scapegoat” whom the National Truth Commission is trying to bring to trial (Ribeiro, 2011).

The structure of the site prioritizes topics such as “Revanchism”, “Infliction of Punishment”, “The Chest of Truth”, “Articles”, “Historical Truths”, “Counterpoint”, “To Think About”, “Memorial” and “Library”. A cursory reading finds the ideological direction of the group and the intention of keeping a particular version about the coup and the dictatorship alive:

*Gathered on July 25, 1998, 32 years after the horrendous explosions in Recife, a handful of civilian and military democrats, not accepting the omission of the legal authorities and indignant at the effrontery of the revanchist left, organized the group “TERRORISM NEVER AGAIN (Terrorismo Nunca Mais – TER- NUMA)” to bring back the real history of the 1964 Revolution and once again oppose all those who still insist on defending the communist frames of reference, misrepresenting themselves as democratic (Grupo Terrorismo Nunca mais, [s.d.]b).*

In view of this declared objective, it makes complete sense that the site re-published the “Manifesto of

the Military Clubs” and later posted articles supporting the manifesto and rejoicing in the finding of the “power of agglutination and diffusion of the internet, considering the number of citizens, both military and civilian, who placed and continue to place their names on the list of support to the messages” (see Chagas, s.d.).

Another important site in this process of preservation of the military memory about the 1964 coup is that of the *Inconfidência Group*.<sup>14</sup> Founded in 1994, in Belo Horizonte, its goal, defined on the main page, is to combat communism and corruption, strengthen the Armed Forces and defend life, family and values of society.

Like *Ternuma*, the purpose of the *Inconfidência Group* is to challenge communism ideologically, urging the military to attack a movement that, according to the site articulators, wants to transform Brazil into a new Cuba (Grupo Inconfidência, s.d.).

Besides the webpage, the group produces a printed newspaper under the same name which aims at bringing the “truth of the facts” to the surface. In its articles it expresses the general political aims of the organization and defends a particular version of the events of the past and the present. In special issues of the periodical, both in those strictly connected to the regime, such as “March 31, 1964” and “The Black Book of Terrorism in Brazil”, and in those on different topics, such as “The Communist Conspiracy of 1935”, “The Communization of Education in Brazil”, “Duke of Caxias”, and “Brazil and World War II”, there are stereotypes aiming to reinforce a particular memorialistic construction of the events of March/April 1964, the dictatorial period and the Brazilian political process in general. Expressions such as “civic-military movement of March 31, 1964” and “Brazilian Democratic Revolution” are commonly found as a name for the 1964 coup, as well as – without great theoretical-methodological rigor – statements that the Brazilian left was preparing a coup d’état or that Brazil was (and still is) in a process of communization (Grupo Inconfidência, s.d.).

A third site that deserves mention is *A Verdade Sufocada* [The Asphyxiated Truth] (*A Verdade Sufocada*, s.d.).<sup>15</sup> However, in this case it is necessary to take the analysis a bit further, since at the beginning of 2012, after the “Manifesto of the Military Clubs” was taken off, it

<sup>12</sup> Given their recent use in research in the field of history, there is not yet an established methodological definition for the use of blogs and sites as sources. For this reason, we based our work on the method presented by Laurence Bardin (1977) to analyze contents and used it as an instrument for analysis. Based on this model we attempted to separate the messages into units of records. Since the topic of research relates to the memory constructed around the 1964 coup, the units of records considered are the “axis-topics” around which the portals organized their speeches. As such the basic themes refer to the coup and the dictatorship (“revolution” in the terms presented). Around them one finds subtopics such as communism, terrorism and others.

<sup>13</sup> Even though the number of hits can be manipulated and not every visitor is a supporter of the theses published, *Ternuma*, also because of the criticisms it receives, can be considered one of the main vehicles for the dissemination of the institutional memory about the coup and the dictatorship. Its Facebook page, created in April 2012, i.e. at the height of the political issue discussed by the present article, has currently been “liked” by more than 3 thousand people. A search for the term “Ternuma” in Google brings almost 50,000 results. These data, we believe, justify its selection as an object of research.

<sup>14</sup> The site of the *Inconfidência Group* does not present a count of the number of hits.

<sup>15</sup> There are other sites and blogs with the same profile. We chose to limit ourselves to these three because we consider them more representative.

became the main space for the military in the reserve to present their opinions, continuing the debate begun by the Military Club.

On its main page, as in the other sites analyzed, one sees the purpose of participating in the political debate with a more radical argument. From the word go, it is possible to observe the publicity for the launch of the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the book *A verdade sufocada*, by Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra.

Like the others, the site *A Verdade Sufocada* is structured to become a place for political debate and for the maintenance of an institutional memory. This option is proved by a brief survey of the topics present in the part called “Notícias” [News]: FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia], MST [Movement of the Landless Rural Workers], Foreign Policy, Domestic Policy, Elections, Corruption, Armed Forces and Counterrevolution of 1964. On the other hand, in the area that goes under the name “Special” we find the following indexes: Revealed Memories, Project ORVIL, It Is Worthwhile Rereading, Did You Know?, Indemnities, Revanchism, Truth Commission, Armed Struggles, Amnesty, Forum of São Paulo, and Indoctrination. As to its reach, on September 25, 2012 the site had already had more than 9 million hits. Currently it has surpassed 20 millions, which proves the interest aroused by the polemical debates of the group.<sup>16</sup>

As previously mentioned, in February 2012 a manifesto of the Military Clubs was published, criticizing the President of Brazil and two Ministers. After it was removed from the Military Club portal, the negative evaluations present in the document were appropriated by the *A Verdade Sufocada* group, which chose to launch another manifesto, on February 28, called “Warning to the Nation – Let them come, here they shall not pass”, defending the position expressed by the presidents of the Military Clubs:

***Warning to the Nation***

***“LET THEM COME, HERE THEY SHALL NOT PASS”***

*This is a warning to the Brazilian Nation, signed by men whose existence was marked by serving their country, guided by the oath they took for it, if necessary to give their own life. These are men who represent the Army of past generations, and they are responsible for the foundations which are the base of the present Army. As one voice we reaffirm the validity of the content of the Manifesto published on the site of the Military*

*Club ... and removed from it ... by order of the Minister of Defense, whom we do not acknowledge as having any kind of authority or legitimacy to do so.*

*The Military Club is a civil association, not subordinated to anyone except to its Board of Directors, elected by its members and with one hundred and twenty years of glorious existence, with years of struggle, determination, achievements, victories and effective participation in relevant cases of our country's history. The founding of the Club, in itself, was a major historical fact, which produced significant marks on the national context, and was an action undertaken by determined men, generated among the socio-political and military episodes that marked the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Over time it participated in major events, such as the Abolition of Slavery, the Proclamation of the Republic, the issue of oil and the Counterrevolution of 1964 ....*

*The Military Club is not intimidated, and will continue to remain attentive and vigilant, advocating an ethical behavior by our public men, ... defending the dignity of the military, now wounded and restricted by very low salaries and budget cuts, the latter preventing us from having Armed Forces up to the needs of External Security and the political strategic profile that our country already has. Armed Forces which, in a recent survey, proved that they are the most trusted institution of the Brazilian People (survey by the Law School of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation of São Paulo). The Military Club certainly embodies our values, our ideals, and one of its aims is to always defend the higher interests of the country.*

*Thus, this was the main purpose of the abovementioned manifesto, which sees in the approval of the “Truth Commission” an irresponsible act of explicit revanchism and an affront to the Law of Amnesty with the unacceptable consent of the current government (Figueiredo et al., 2012).*

Besides considering the creation of the Truth Commission as revanchist and an attack on the Law of Amnesty, what stands out here is the criticism of the interference of the government in the Military Club site and the vetoing of the text published there, which was critical of the government.

Tensions increased when the Minister of Defense, Celso Amorim, decided, in a conversation with the three military commanders, that the one hundred reserve

<sup>16</sup> Just as in the case of *Ternuma*, we emphasize that the number of hits presented is subject to manipulation. However, we believe that a large part of those who browsed on its page were motivated by the arousal of old and new political tensions promoted by the speeches. The almost 3,000 signatures supporting the manifesto, about which we shall talk at the right time, corroborate this hypothesis. However, there is also no doubt that a part of these hits is from researchers with varied objectives.

officers who initially signed the manifesto would be punished for indiscipline by their respective forces. As a consequence of this first clash with the Minister of Defense, the military in the reserve reacted and the support of the manifesto against the government increased. As in the past, civilians also signed the text.

With daily updates, as we can see in Chart 2, the number of supporters gradually grew from the initial 100 signatures until 2,963 on June 9, 2012.

The first observations clearly show the rapidly increasing support process caused by the political debate.

Between the first days of March and the last update on June 9, it grew constantly. However, it is particularly clear that certain supporters were removed, contrasting with the central aim of winning over new sympathizers to the position defended by these military.

On March 6, the person responsible for the site, Maria Joseita Brilhante Ustra, informed on the page that the manifesto coordinators had requested that the names of the privates who had joined be removed and that she was awaiting the justifications for this request. On the same day, a new note was published, under the title “Re-

**Chart 2.** Update of March 3, 2012.

| <b>Update of March 3</b>                  |       |  |     |                                 |       |
|---|-------|--|-----|---------------------------------|-------|
| Generals                                  | 61    | High Court Justices (Court of Justice, Rio de Janeiro [TJ/RJ]) | 01  | Colonels                        | 258   |
| Lieutenant Colonels                       | 55    | Majors   | 11  | Captains                        | 17    |
| Lieutenants                               | 20    | Sublieutenants   | 15  | Sergeants                       | 15    |
| Corporals                                 | 02    | Private  | 01  | Civilians                       | 191   |
| Total                                     | 647   |  |     |                                 |       |
| <b>Update of March 4</b>                  |       |  |     |                                 |       |
| Generals                                  | 77    | High Court Justice TJ/RJ                                       | 01  | Colonels                        | 338   |
| Lieutenant-Colonels                       | 67    | Majors   | 13  | Captains                        | 29    |
| Lieutenants                               | 36    | Sublieutenants   | 23  | Sergeants                       | 21    |
| Corporals/Private                         | 05    | Civilians  | 289 |                                 |       |
| Total                                     | 906   |  |     |                                 |       |
| <b>Update of March 5</b>                  |       |  |     |                                 |       |
| Generals                                  | 81    | High Court Justice TJ/RJ                                       | 01  | Colonels                        | 384   |
| Lieutenant-Colonels                       | 92    | Majors   | 22  | Captains                        | 44    |
| Lieutenants                               | 56    | Civilians  | 332 |                                 |       |
| Total                                     | 1.012 |  |     |                                 |       |
| <b>Update of March 10</b>                 |       |  |     |                                 |       |
| Generals                                  | 98    | High Court Justice TJ/RJ                                       | 01  | Colonels                        | 559   |
| Lieutenant-Colonels                       | 132   | Majors   | 26  | Captains                        | 69    |
| Lieutenants                               | 102   | Civilians  | 645 |                                 |       |
| Total                                     | 1.634 |  |     |                                 |       |
| <b>Update of June 9</b>                   |       |  |     |                                 |       |
| Generals                                  | 130   | High Court Justice TJ/RJ                                       | 01  | Colonels and Commodore          | 877   |
| Lieutenant-Colonels and Commanders (Navy) | 232   | Majors and Lieutenant Commanders (Navy)                        | 48  | Captains and Lieutenants (Navy) | 115   |
| Lieutenants                               | 154   | Midshipmen   | 07  | Civilians                       | 1.399 |
| Total                                     | 2.963 |  |     |                                 |       |

removal of names and non-acceptance of supporters – Note of the coordinators of ‘Alerta Brasil’ [Warning Brazil]”. In the communiqué the person responsible justifies her action as an attempt to not increase tensions, now between officers and privates, which might result in further internal division among these military.

The discourse tries to provide a legal reason for removing the names, alleging that the act is based strictly on the law and that, although they were grateful for the solidarity and union demonstrated, they would not include in the list of supporters the names of officers and privates on active service. Likewise, they would not record the support of reserve and retired privates, in order to avoid negative exploitation, since this was an issue that had arisen within the Military Club, whose members are all officers (A Verdade Sufocada, 2012).

It is also interesting to note that almost half the people who gave their support were civilians, while the other half consisted of military from the reserve of the three forces: Army, Navy and Air Force. This set of supporters, added to the number of supporters whose names were removed, leads to asking questions about the degree of social insertion of the theses advocated by this group.

As regards the memories of 1964 and the regime, Celso Castro classifies the military as three generations: the first is composed by those who remained over from the regime and whose career had its high point during that period. In other words, these are reserve officers who, in general, defend the idea that they acted as democrats to save Brazil from the communist danger, and they feel wronged and resentful about the stigma on the Armed Forces since the amnesty; they try to bring back the “truth of facts”, emphasizing the support that they received in 1964, and deny or hide the repression that occurred during the dictatorship. They meet basically at the Military Club and, in small right-wing groups, promote regular public celebrations of the “revolution”, but, according to Castro, this generation, due to the age of its members, will soon disappear.

The second is made up of the heads of the military who reached the apex of their careers after the transition. Most of them are already in the reserve; they defend the actions of the military during the regime, but are more tolerant of criticism regarding military action during the years of the dictatorship, avoid public mention of the regime and say that they would prefer it if this page of history were turned by means of a historical amnesty for “both sides”.

The third generation is based on the younger officers, who are still on active duty and distant from the regime both as a professional group and in emotional terms. They are from military families, which causes so-

ciological isolation among officers, and they suffer from the loss of prestige and the stigma on the military since the transition (Castro, 2008, p. 140-141).

According to this classification, we can include the military involved in the debate of 2012 in the first generation. Since this group is about to disappear because of age, it would be logical to suppose that the tensions it provokes would soon be lost in time. However, will their ideas consequently also disappear? Do not the great support of the manifesto of solidarity to the Military Club – which was only not greater because the names of officers and privates on active duty were not recorded – and the great number of hits on the sites suggest that this viewpoint still enjoys a strong internal and external support?

In this case it can be said that there is a memory of the 1964-1985 period which, although less celebrated, refuses to descend definitively to the “cellars” of history. Therefore, the possibility that new clashes will arise in the near future cannot be ruled out.

There is another warning that must be given and which also has a significant value in the “war of memories”: although the criticism by these reserve officers is sharp, it cannot be considered as representing all the officers who are not on active duty. At the same time as there are high-ranking military officers who, through celebrations and manifestos, defend the right to the institutional memory regarding the “Democratic Revolution” of 1964 and criticize the implementation of the Truth Commission and the revision of the Law of Amnesty, another group of military officers who lost their political rights after the 1964 coup defend a contrary position.

## The reaction of the military in the reserve who lost their political rights

As already mentioned, the supremacy of a given memory does not mean that there are no other voices. Generally these “forbidden” memories survive stored away in informal communication structures (families, associations etc.). The military who struggled against the coup and the dictatorship used precisely associations that gather people who lost their political rights due to the dictatorship as a means of preserving not only their memories but also their struggle.

Until the mid 1970s, like other groups that opposed the regime, these men found it difficult to struggle more effectively for their ideas and rights. But, in the context of the distension, with less repression, and as they were unsatisfied with the final version of the Law of Amnesty, the military who had lost their rights found strength and

support to protest. Since then they have organized many actions to denounce this law as insufficient and to try to broaden its scope.

But, besides being unsatisfied with the Law of Amnesty, they are also interested in participating in the battle for public memory and in the political debate in general. This intention is revealed in initiatives such as the project announced by Professor Ivan Cavalcanti Proença (2004, p. 163-165), an Army captain in 1964, who lost his political rights and is a member of the Democratic and Nationalist Association of the Military (*Associação Democrática e Nacionalista dos Militares – ADNAM*). This project, in response to the series of books published by the Army Library, aims at publishing the memoirs of the military punished by the regime. Besides actions such as this one, which by nature are more laborious and slow, there is an effort for everyday participation in politics, such as the intervention in the aforementioned debate of 2012, when the officers who lost their political rights decided to write an answer to the military who criticized President Dilma, two ministers and the implementation of the Truth Commission and revision of the Law of Amnesty.

#### *To the Brazilians*

*As Retired Officers, members of the Military Clubs, we are forced to disagree from the petition signed by several Reserve Officers in support of the recent Manifesto of Presidents of the Clubs, which was removed from the Military Club site after they were ordered to do so by the Force Commanders, who, in an exemplary and balanced attitude, recommended that they do so. This document contained references to President Dilma Rousseff, for not having censored her Ministers “who made exacerbated criticisms of the military governments”. Now, this document signed by these Officers (of the Reserve and Retired), and also by Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, former head of DOI-Codi, the repression apparatus of the Dictatorship in São Paulo, who is being accused by Justice of torturing political prisoners (a crime that he denies), refers in a challenging manner to the Minister of Defense, Celso Amorim, “in whom they do not acknowledge any kind of authority or legitimacy to do so”, which in our opinion, besides being disrespectful behavior and unacceptable in military life, is, beyond any doubt, an act of insubordination, a “break with discipline and hierarchy”. ...*

*Hence we wish, to re-establish a truth, that the Presidents of the Military Clubs and some of these gentlemen stubbornly will not recognize, that the true democratic regime is the one we are living in, and not that of the “military governments” that would never have allowed*

*such “differences of opinion, belief and political orientation” (Moreira and Santa Rosa, 2012).*

Drafted by Commodores Luiz Carlos de Souza Moreira and Fernando de Santa Rosa, two high-ranking officers of the Brazilian Navy Reserve, members of Military Clubs, the letter “The Military in Defense of Democracy” reveals that the differences among the military that existed before 1964 still exist. In the text, the officers who lost their political rights in September 1964 due to the fact that they held positions as political appointees in agencies led by officers who were against the overthrow of President João Goulart, besides calling the manifesto written by their colleagues foolish, express their regret that in the past military personnel of the Armed Forces practiced torture and other crimes. One of the signatories of this document, which shows different opinions among the military in the reserve, was Brigadier Rui Moreira Lima, a veteran World War II pilot, who also lost his political rights after the 1964 coup and died in 2013.

The issue of age is a problem for this group, as well as for the first generation of the military who defend the institutional memory of 1964. This is because many of their members are quite old and consequently they are losing important members who acted as catalysts, as in the brigadier’s case, causing fear that the associations in which they are gathered will disappear and with them many of their struggles and memories. Besides, this group has to overcome obstacles imposed by the collective memory constructed on the dictatorship, since it resulted in a complete victimization of the civilians and a negative attitude toward the military class. This created a dichotomy: on the one hand the civilians – right, democratic and good; on the other the military – wrong, authoritarian and evil. This view contributed to concealing the existence of a political-ideological conflict prior to 1964, in which there were civilians and military on both sides. The advantage of this group compared to the contemporary generation that defends the coup is that their struggles are of a magnitude that goes beyond the defense of a corporate memory. Their interests are more plural and tend to be consonant with the efforts of associations that defend human rights, in particular of those who suffered State repression during the 21 years the dictatorship lasted. Therefore, even if this group disappears, their positions in the battles for memory and politics tend to continue.

## Conclusion

It is very likely that battles about the issue of the memory of 1964 will continue. As long as the National Truth Commission exists, the debate will remain and,

depending on the consequence of its work – especially as regards pressure to revise the Law of Amnesty – may become even more tense. The military in the reserve who participated in the State repression apparatus fear that this will result in punishment. In response and preventatively, they strengthen the defense of a memory that enhances the value of the coup and the dictatorship and show no signs of retreating in their intention to reveal what they consider “the historical truth” about the period, including, among other elements, the major participation of civilians. However, what is at stake is much more than the validation of a given memory as being true.

The construction of memory is a complex process. Among other characteristics, it is collective, selective and constituted in the permanent interaction between past and present. In the case of the coup and the dictatorship, the “official” memory defined them as exclusively military, thus stigmatizing the entire class – which affects both the military who defended the coup and the regime, and those who were against them and suffered for their choice. This definition needs to be revised, and the participation of agents of the State in political repression must also be constantly reaffirmed, but we cannot limit ourselves to the issue of “war” between opposing memories and to the compensation of the people affected, nor can we simply attest to the existence of the support and interests of “society”.

It is not enough to retrieve and attest to the existence of a given memory; it is necessary to consider the constituent aspects of its construction and relate it to the context in which it was produced and the one to which it refers. It is essential to analyze the characteristics of the political dispute regarding the constitution of the public memory. In other words, it is necessary to qualify this dispute and the civil participation and to understand the political logic that sustained the repression.

When we do this, we will be able to relate memory and history and identify those who really benefited from the memorialistic construction about 1964 which became preponderant: whether all of society, especially the left, as Aarão Reis Filho emphasizes,<sup>17</sup> or the civilian masters of the dictatorship – politicians and entrepreneurs who supported the regime and remained at the center of the circle of power after its decline. More importantly, we will be able to understand why, if the institutional memory of 1964 was defeated in the “war of memories”, the political-economic project behind the coup and the regime – including the repression – not only prevailed but also became hegemonic.

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<sup>17</sup> In recent years, Daniel Aarão Reis Filho has often produced texts in which he tries to prove the thesis that not only civilians, but “Brazilian society” for a long time supported the dictatorial regime and that after this period ended, attempting to rid themselves of a nuisance, they constructed a selective and convenient memory that defined the period as a *military dictatorship* (Reis Filho, 2012). Although his arguments were widely accepted, they have also been criticized in the academic world (Melo, 2012, p. 39-53).

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- Submitted on January 13, 2014  
Accepted on August 13, 2014

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