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O que o passado ensina? Lições sobre a memória da ditadura militar em Pernambuco a partir da mídia arcoverdense

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**Resumen:**

The narratives constructed by the Brazilian military dictatorship relied on different spaces and subjects as a way of establishing themselves. In this sense, the Brazilian hegemonic media was directly involved in the practice of military dictatorship. However, the narrative about the dictatorship is still in dispute as to the objectives that were mobilized within certain events, which still need to be problematized. Thus, this study aims to investigate the narrative mobilized by periodicals that circulated between 1964 and 1985 in the city of Arcoverde, in the countryside of Pernambuco, during the dictatorship, in order to understand how the repression relied on the symbolic power of the press for its maintenance. We turn to the critique of the epistemological characteristic of narrative about the past and time in order to consider narration as an examination of linear historical time. The results obtained indicate that the media discourse was organized in favor of the ideological control forged by the dictatorial narrative, whether through the explicit defense of the regime or by subtle agency. The reconstruction of the narrative in question can be considered, even today, a field in dispute, which interferes decisively in the construction of memory and has repercussions in the reproduction of a social imaginary that congregates empty visions about what the military dictatorship meant in Brazil and in Pernambuco. The research, in the end, highlights the need to narrate as a way of reflecting the past as an epistemic and political strategy to value a *minority history*.

**Palabras clave:**

Dictatorship.; Media. Pernambuco. Narrative.

**Resumo:**

As narrativas construídas pela ditadura militar brasileira contaram com diferentes espaços e sujeitos como forma de se firmarem. Nesse sentido, a mídia hegemônica brasileira teve relação direta com o exercício do poder ditatorial militar. No entanto, a narrativa acerca da ditadura segue em disputa quanto aos sentidos que foram mobilizados no interior de determinados acontecimentos, os quais ainda necessitam ser problematizados. Assim, o presente estudo possui o objetivo de investigar a narrativa mobilizada por periódicos que circularam entre os anos de 1964 e 1985 na cidade de Arcoverde, sertão pernambucano, à época da ditadura, visando compreender de que modo a repressão contou com o poder simbólico da imprensa para a sua manutenção. Recorremos à crítica ao caráter epistemológico da narrativa sobre o passado e o tempo, de modo a cogitar o narrar enquanto exame do tempo histórico linear. Os resultados obtidos apontam que o discurso midiático foi organizado em prol do controle ideológico forjado pela narrativa ditatorial, seja por meio da defesa explícita do regime ou por agenciamentos sutis. A reconstrução da narrativa em questão pode ser considerada, ainda hoje, um campo em disputa, que interfere decisivamente para a construção da memória e repercute na reprodução de um imaginário social que congrega visões vazias sobre o significado a ditadura militar no Brasil e em Pernambuco. A pesquisa, ao fim, ressalta a necessidade de narrar como forma de refletir o passado enquanto estratégia epistêmica e política de valorização de uma história menor.

**Palavras-chave:**

Ditadura. Mídia. Pernambuco. Narrativa.

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## 1 Introduction

The return towards narratives about the supposedly peaceful nature of the Brazilian military regime has raised, in public spaces, different media and academic environments, the concern about the arguments that sustain such positions. Thus, the problematization of the serious events surrounding the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985) is of utmost importance today for the consolidation of memory and human rights (EZEQUIEL, 2018).

After all, such a period was marked by extreme violence and censorship to expressions of thoughts that were contrary to the discourse of the organs of repression, and, therefore, several control mechanisms were created to filter and restrict the information that was transmitted to the population (CEVDHC, 2017). On the other hand, different means of communication - especially newspapers, radio and television - contributed to the (false) image of a country that supposedly was in constant economic and social progress, providing a backdrop for the violence instituted against groups opposing the regime.

The press has had, throughout time, a prominent role and a strong impact on the directions and the way of thinking and acting of the Brazilian population. During the military dictatorship, for example, this power was used in an explicit and organized way. The headlines and the journalistic texts have played a leading role from the removal of João Goulart from the presidency to the support and maintenance of the military coup.

Then, the mainstream media played the role of ideological control of the narratives disseminated and destabilizing resistance movements (DANTAS, 2014; BIROLI, 2009). We claim that without the power of the press, certainly the military regime would not have lasted so long. After all, there is no way an exceptional regime could last for 21 years without the support of the press and other institutions that acted on behalf of the regime, or were only oblivious to its existence, but also collaborated to its maintenance (RIDENTI, 2010).

Thus, the omissions that constructed the hegemonic narrative about the Brazilian dictatorship can, today, help in forming the collective memory, so damaged by the amnesty given to people who committed countless atrocities. Memory, in this sense, can be interpreted as a broad set of information and narratives of the past that need to be recovered and preserved in the individual and collective imagination, constituting counter-hegemonic narratives (HALBWACHS, 1990).

Although the dictatorship's organs of repression were strongly active in the country's capitals, similarly, in the city of Arcoverde, in the countryside of Pernambuco, between 1964 and 1982, newspapers circulated carrying in their pages the hygienist and authoritarian tone of the military regime. Even though no organs of repression were installed in Arcoverde, the municipality was introduced into the authoritarian dynamics set up in the state of Pernambuco.

Therefore, this research seeks to problematize the historical narratives constructed by the newspapers that circulated during the military dictatorship, focusing on the events that involved the city of Arcoverde. Since the narrative power of the press operated in the backlands of Pernambuco, in an explicit way, as an organ of dissemination of military repression, acting as an (invisible) front at the time.

The general objective of this research is to identify in the narrative of newspapers that circulated during the military dictatorship (1964-1985) in the city of Arcoverde, Pernambuco, elements for the understanding of the repression that occurred and for the construction of collective memory. In this sense, and based on theoretical discussions about historical memory that intersect the relationship between the media and the military dictatorship, the proposal involves the analysis of the following periodicals: *Jornal do Cinquentenário* (1978), *A Região* (1972-1973) and *Informativo Municipal* (1980-1983); available at the Public Archive of the State of Pernambuco.

Based on the methodological path chosen, we seek to understand the elected context based on the narratives published by periodicals during the military dictatorship in that municipality. Thus, we consider that the representation of the historical-social context present in the periodicals can be understood in its determinations and transformations given by the subjects at the time. This implies, therefore, in the systematic search for the discourses, values, phenomena and aspirations present in the narratives of the periodicals.

To the research findings, we include the idea of discourses as constitutive of stories, meanings, and narrative symbols, linked to different facts and contexts. Therefore, the entire content and form that provide narrative value to the military dictatorship through the mentioned newspapers is observed, resuming the historical perspective of the documentary corpus in question and its effects on the collective memory of the municipality of Arcoverde, of Pernambuco, and of Brazil.

## **2 The relationship of the civil-military dictatorship with the press**

Brazilian historiography is marked by various situations from which revolts, disagreements, and ruptures are evidenced. However, this research chose to focus on a specific period: the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship, because it understands that the historical facts of this period are considered obscure and that even today they continue without proper historical repair. We need to keep in mind the elements that brought us to the present, because, “a memory is a perspective on what has been lived” (FROCHTENGARTEN, 2005, p. 372) as well as a perspective on what we do not want to live.

It is important to note that we will use the terminology 'civil-military' to refer to the dictatorship, in order to consider all the support given to the coup by the mass media, the corporate class and the US White House (O DIA QUE...,2013). Because without the support and maintenance of these three groups, the

regime would not have lasted so long, much less the coup would have been executed, so the regime has military visibility with civilian support (CAMPOS, 2018).

Nowadays, the period of repression has been treated with disdain, being reported in major newspapers with the terminology “*ditabranda*” (soft dictatorship), which was later adopted by extreme right-wing groups, which judge the period based on the number of deaths in comparison to the Southern Cone. For this group, the period in question was essential for the country to achieve full economic development (ESTEVEZ, 2015). However, the repression happened violently, restricting individual and collective freedoms and taking away fundamental rights from the population, while instituting torture inside clandestine state institutions.

Therefore, with the growing opposition to the regime - coming from student, artistic, and intellectual groups - the military intended to strengthen repression to maintain the coup. Thus, with Institutional Act no. 5 of 1968, we have the establishment of State terrorism consolidated in the National Security Doctrine.

In contrast, between 1969 and 1973, Brazil was experiencing the so-called “economic miracle”. This served as a disguise for the internal and international politics about what was happening in the depths of the repressive agencies. The population turned a blind eye to the persecution, since:

Taking advantage of its success in the economic field – and Brazil’s victory in the 1970 World Cup – the military regime encouraged excessive demonstrations of national pride (ufanismo) and promoted the idea of Brazilian *grandeza* (greatness) with slogans [...] in the United States, there was a growing belief that the country was finally ready to exercise greater influence in the international system (BETHELL, 2008, p. 198).

In this way, the media increasingly entered the dictatorial apparatus and collaborated directly or indirectly to the maintenance, support, and effectuation of a State policy focused on institutionalized violence and the repression of civil and cultural movements that had a different perspective from the government's ideology.

The information that appeared in newspapers during the dictatorship dealt not only with economic miracles, but also with secondary messages and information that revealed the civil-military apparatus of power and perpetuation of human rights violations at that time. After all, the newspapers omitted from their pages the rights violations, the censorship suffered by the press itself, and the repressive actions exercised by government agencies (BARBOSA, 2014; PAVÃO, CARDOSO, 2019).

The media acted as a kind of state agent, so as to directly intervene in the political life of the country (DIAS, 2019), through advertising strategies and based on the use of great slogans such as “Brazil: love it or leave it”, based on the premise that love for the homeland was synonymous of subordination to the coup authorities. In this sense:

The media became a powerful ideological instrument in the preparation and later in the support of the military regime. Its contribution to the destabilization of the Goulart government, which besides being accused of ineptitude was pointed out as an agent of communist infiltration in Brazil, was fundamental (DANTAS, 2014, p. 67).

However, this is not the only aspect of the media during the dictatorship. Censorship reached even the media that attempted to expose the truth of the facts and the dirt that occurred inside the semi-clandestine organs, but sometimes the bail of these denunciations was the life of a journalist, as happened to Herzog (CNV, 2014). In this context, the press was on a kind of tightrope: it searched for balance in order not to suffer censorship and as a way to keep Brazilians informed about certain news (which suited the regime). After all,

We cannot forget that, besides the police violence by the state, a political and ideological control exercised by the owners of the big newspapers was developed, generating the collaborationism of some press professionals in support of the coup, which contributed a lot to the installation of a permanent climate of persecution and threats in the editorial offices of the main local newspapers (CEMVDHC, 2017, p. 251).

Therefore, this research does not intend to assume a generalist approach to the behavior of the press during the military regime. The particularities that the media, as a whole, suffered for opposing the regime are highlighted. However, the research articulates a regionalist approach in order to understand how the discursive positioning of periodicals from the city of Arcoverde occurred, through the analysis of the information media that circulated in the city at the time of the civil-military regime.

### **3 The historical-media narrative about the military period**

The press has always played a notorious role in society. It has directly influenced the formation of opinions, political decisions, and the control of consumption through mass advertisements and propaganda. In World War II, Hitler used the main media of the time - radios and newspapers - to manipulate German opinion about the events and to sustain his regime in power (FORNER; SILVA, 2017; SILVA, CARDOSO, 2021).

In this way, the different means of communication have always been present throughout history ready to take control over the game of history, in favor or against others. After all, the creation of the Guttemberg press is a historical landmark in the field of communication and in the writing history itself. From this event on there is a greater instrumentalization of historical documents, giving greater importance to what is recorded in written form instead of orally (SANTOS, 2012).

Over the decades, the press innovated and gained speed in disseminating information. In parallel, experiences were increasingly restricted to individuality. Walter Benjamin (1994) portrays that after World

War I, soldiers returned in silence, there was nothing to be said for the atrocities they experienced. The same paradigm marked the second world war. The concentration camps left the world astonished at the violence, no one could imagine the representation of the worst level of inhuman experience.

In World War II, the role of the media was fundamental to sustain the regime, just as they were indispensable to bring it down. Although it is constantly referred to a certain individuality, memory is a characteristic that is also present in a given social group, involving testimonies, dialogues, events, and individual memories of the subjects that belong to that particular group (CATROGA, 2001). Remembering the past is, therefore, an expanded identity experience, whether in a social or intersubjective context of disputed narratives.

Halbwachs (1990), when problematizing the theme of collective memory, elucidates the importance of the germ of remembrance in the context of a social group as a way to keep alive the significance of the past. After all, if an individual cannot find meaning between his identity and historical events, mechanisms of political rapprochement are needed in order to build a “consistent mass of memories” (HALBWACHS, 1990, p. 28).

Similarly, Walter Benjamin (1987), having experienced the genesis of the problems of the 20th century, notes that the past has become an endless series of catastrophic defeats covered up by the ideal of an “automatic, continuous, infinite progress founded on quantitative accumulation, the development of the productive forces, and the growth of domination over nature.” (LÖWY, 2002, p. 205).

Moreover, memory is not only about storing events that will lead humanity to progress. Memory does not belong to the past, but to the present, in which we handle it, revisit and conceive narratives, symbols and alternative places that will represent and define history, a moment or an event that does not belong only to the winners.

Otherwise, the reconstruction of the narrative can be considered an object of dispute, since whoever held the power of the press obtained not only the power of information, but also of the construction of (incomplete and myopic) memory about the events (LE GOFF, 1990). In this way, the contribution of the press in the formation of collective memory has repercussions, in the Brazilian context, in the representation of a social imaginary that sustains various empty visions about what in fact the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship was (VIEIRA; NEVES, 2015; SILVA, CARDOSO, 2021).

The edge of history is found between the lines of the narratives, in what has been left out and what permeates the space of the unsaid, so that “if language implies silence, this, in turn, is the unsaid seen from within language. It is not nothingness, it is not the void without history. It is the signifying silence” (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 23). In this sense, the discourse present in the repressive media is the (maximum) expression of what can be raised about the mentioned period and facts, as well as what cannot be published, after all:

What the press almost in its entirety proclaimed was that the country did not stop growing, that a phase of transformation was underway, and that Brazil was entering new times. While this was happening and people were sure that the era of the miracle had arrived, thousands of young people died in the armed combat, while many others disappeared (BARBOSA, 2014, p. 19).

This is the starting point for the composition of the collective memory about the dictatorial period. The saying “what is not seen, is not remembered” exemplifies the problem in question. If news of the crimes that the Brazilian state was committing against its own population did not circulate throughout the country, who would remember them? Who would dare to attack the security authorities in the context of that time? And, if these same authorities conceived the return to democracy, who would denounce them, after all they never left power?

In the face of these issues, fear silenced the reverberation of the denunciations, just as it silenced the struggle movements that went to the streets to resist for freedom. The Institutional Act 5 ended with what remained of political freedom for the population. And if the marginalized population no longer had it, after the institutional act they no longer knew what freedom of expression and the right to information was, since the media were censored.

What is left of history? In Benjamin's perspective, its crumbles. The micro narratives, whispering in every corner, vexed and discredited. The shout of the victors drowns out the whisper of the vanquished. We must put the spotlight on these events. We must listen, reflect, and tell every story lost and left behind by time and by the historian who only has an ear for winning stories (BENJAMIN, 1987).

#### 4 Results, discussions and notes

The research corpus consists of the newspapers *A Região* (1972-1973), *Jornal do Cinquentenário* (1978), and *Informativo Municipal* (1980-1983), all published during the dictatorial period. The newspaper *A Região* had a monthly publication and dealt with the most diverse subjects that permeated the city of Arcoverde and the neighboring regions. The *Jornal do Cinquentenário*, on the other hand, was a commemorative edition of the 50 years of political emancipation of the municipality of Arcoverde, bringing in its pages the memories and the reasons for celebration of the 50th anniversary.

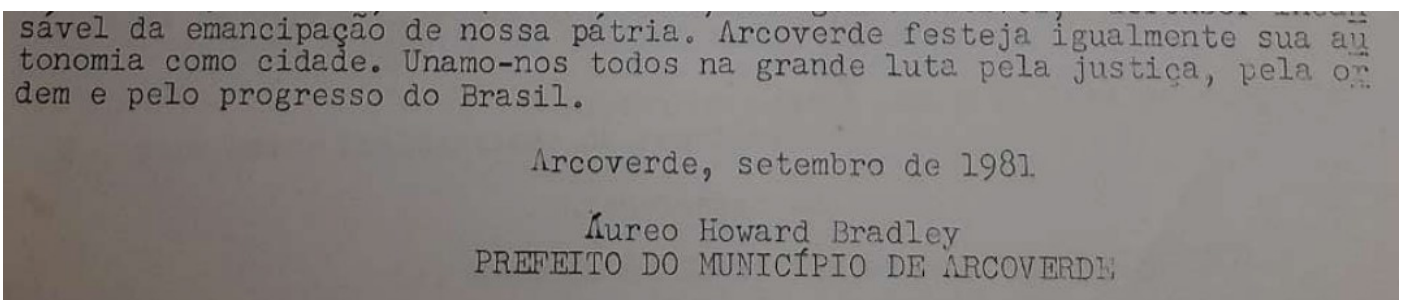
The *Informativo Municipal* was “an instrument used by the Federal Government and organized by SUDENE [...] to spread in the cities of the interior of the Northeast the Ideology of Great Brazil” (AMORIM, 2011, p. 3). Therefore, on its cover, it was called 'Official Publicity of Arcoverde's City Hall', and, moreover, had a monthly publication, lasting between 1973 and 1983, ceasing to be published after the end of the dictatorial regime.

Arcoverde did not stop participating in the regime. Although it did not have clandestine organs, the

municipality joined other subversive means used by the Brazilian state to impose the regime's mass ideology, one of these being the means of communication. The existence of the *Informativo Municipal* is evidenced as proof of the municipality's alignment with dictatorial ideology.

It is noteworthy that each issue of the *Informativo* begins with a text by the mayor Áureo Bradley, known as “commander”, for having received the medal and the diploma of military order. In his numerous texts, the militarized nature of his discourse is observed, to the point of reproducing phrases of effect from the Federal Government, as shown in image 1:

**Image 1** - Informativo Municipal (1981)<sup>1</sup>



Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco, 2021.

The sentiment of “union for the progress of the nation,” unfortunately, was empty. The union, in this case, existed for the equals, not for the others, after all, the others were hanged to death in police stations, expelled from the country, resorting to exile, and had their bodies violated, buried and mixed with animal bones, an ideology that endures until the present. In a subtle way, in the media, the others were treated like this:

**Image 2** - Informativo Municipal (1980)<sup>2</sup>

Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco, 2021.

The virtue of opposition, in politics, is central. Criticism, the debate of ideas and the plurality of viewpoints are fundamental to governance and the exercise of citizenship. Escapes from these virtues, or at least threats and attempts of silencing - as shown in image 2 - cause the end of political freedom itself, and the establishment of violence as a synonym for law and order, as occurred between 1964 and 1985 in Brazil.

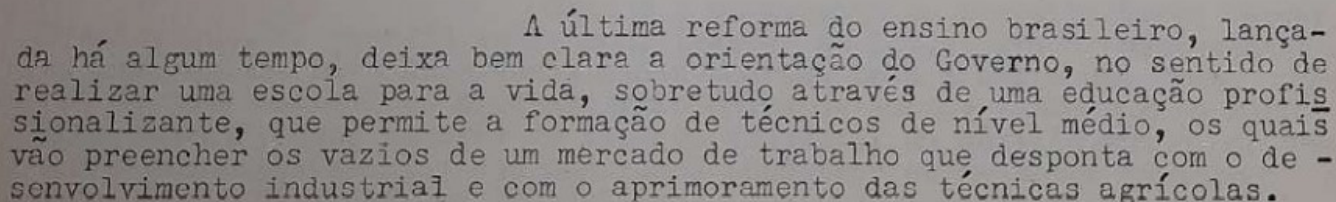
<sup>1</sup> In English: Arcoverde also celebrates its autonomy as a city. Let us all unite in the great struggle for justice, for order, for the progress of Brazil.

<sup>2</sup> In English: Some people carry unfounded criticism, when they do not seek to twist the reality of the facts, glimpsing in everything only chaos and disorder. Others cling to tiny flaws and insignificant details, hammering our ears with the same negative chant.



The defense of liberal ideals, surrounded by state repression, was instituted in the most diverse ways, especially in the speeches disseminated by the media, in order to achieve the potential reach of this instrument. However, it was not the only one. In another edition of the *Informativo Municipal*, we observe, through the news, two aspects: the first is, again, the praise of the Federal Government and its achievements and, the second is the way education was promoted, in a technicist and apolitical way:

**Image 3** - Informativo Municipal (1980)<sup>3</sup>



A última reforma do ensino brasileiro, lançada há algum tempo, deixa bem clara a orientação do Governo, no sentido de realizar uma escola para a vida, sobretudo através de uma educação profissionalizante, que permite a formação de técnicos de nível médio, os quais vão preencher os vazios de um mercado de trabalho que desponta com o desenvolvimento industrial e com o aprimoramento das técnicas agrícolas.

Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco (2021)

Education for life, certainly, includes aspects far from a technical formation, because:

As a consequence of a historically hegemonic and technicist system, we have an equally robotized and disproportionately politicized society. The techniques that deny dialogical dimensions [...] reflect, therefore, in the way individuals observe society and the reality around them (BENTO; SILVA; CARDOSO, 2021, in press).

Therefore, the growing anti-democratic social movements often associated with neofacism, have their genesis in the educational background of the past generation, which formed subjects with shallow thoughts based on the logic of the capitalist system. In a simplistic way, such a system discards or includes subjects through profit and leaves aside categories that are not related to capital, such as human rights.

It is worth mentioning that three years before the military coup (1961), the *Arcoverde Jornal*, considered to be more “left-winged”, brought up pertinent and current reflections on the capitalist system, resembling the reflection raised above:

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<sup>3</sup> In English: The last reform of Brazilian education, launched some time ago, makes clear the orientation of the Government to carry out a school for life, mainly through a vocational education, which allows the training of high school technicians, which will fill the gaps of a labour market that emerges with industrial development and the improvement of agricultural techniques.

Image 4 - Arcoverde Jornal (1961)<sup>4</sup>

tudo —, o panorama é o mesmo. Cada um que queira explorar, ao máximo, o suor, o trabalho, as fôrças do outro, em troca de um mínimo — quanto mais mínimo melhor —, tudo em benefício de sua fortuna, de seu “eu”, que quanto mais crescem mais precisam de crescer. É a ambição, é o egoísmo, é o desprezo ao próximo, é a desvalorização do esforço alheio. Cada patrão que queira aumentar seu patrimônio, fazer crescer suas reservas, multiplicar seu capital, ampliar sua casa comercial ou seu parque industrial ou seu seja lá o que fôr, juntar seus tostões, enriquecer enfim, às custas do sacrifício, das energias, em suma, da miséria, de seus pobres empregados. Que são os peixinhos, bem pequeninhos, daquela caricatura, que não têm a quem engolir e são engolidos por todos.

Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco (2021)

Although the periodical is not part of the proposed time frame, it is important to mention it for historical reasons. When working with the past, we have to consider the portrait not only of what is convenient to be shown by the historian. In this way, the study of the repressive past must question, even the genealogy of democratic ideas. Therefore, it is mentioned that democracy, before the establishment of the Brazilian military dictatorship, had apparently firm roots, but they were not able to sustain themselves, mainly in view of the cold war and the international politics of the time.

In a brief analysis of the newspaper *A Região*, published in November 1972, the year General Emílio Médici was president, the newspaper published an Editor's Column, which took advantage of the space to politically situate the newspaper, through the narrative present in image 5:

<sup>4</sup> In English: Each one who wants to exploit to the maximum, the sweat, the work, the forces of the other, in exchange for a minimum - the more minimal the better -, all for the benefit of his fortune, of his "I", that the more they grow the more they need to grow. It is ambition, selfishness, contempt for others, and devaluation of others' efforts. Every employer who wants to increase his patrimony, to increase his reserves, to multiply his capital, to enlarge his commercial house or his industrial park or whatever, to gather his pennies, to enrich finally at the expense of the sacrifice, of the energies, in short, of misery, of their poor workers. Which are the little fishies, very tiny, that caricature, that have no one to swallow and are swallowed by everyone.

**Image 5 - A Região (1972)<sup>5</sup>**

seus mais variados aspectos.

— A Região, afinal, faz questão de acrescentar que não é um jornal de grupo isolado, a serviço de interesse de cores políticas. Ele vai dar conta de tudo, sem compromissos partidários, mas com o compromisso sagrado de contar a verdade, a notícia que constroa e nunca demolir ninguém, como veículo de força que é

Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco, 2020.

The coincidence is that, in the following pages, there is a space dedicated to the new mayor of the city, who emphasizes its complete alignment with the federal government. Therefore, not to take a political position meant, at that time, to be in favor of the anti-democratic regime.

**Image 6 - A Região (1972)<sup>6</sup>**

tudo —, o panorama é o mesmo. Cada um que queira explorar, ao máximo, o suor, o trabalho, as forças do outro, em troca de um mínimo — quanto mais mínimo melhor —, tudo em benefício de sua fortuna, de seu “eu”, que quanto mais crescem mais precisam de crescer. É a ambição, é o egoísmo, é o desprezo ao próximo, é a desvalorização do esforço alheio. Cada patrão que queira aumentar seu patrimônio, fazer crescer suas reservas, multiplicar seu capital, ampliar sua casa comercial ou seu parque industrial ou seu seja lá o que fôr, juntar seus tostões, enriquecer enfim, às custas do sacrifício, das energias, em suma, da miséria, de seus pobres empregados. Que são os peixinhos, bem pequeninhos, daquela caricatura, que não têm a quem engolir e são engolidos por todos.

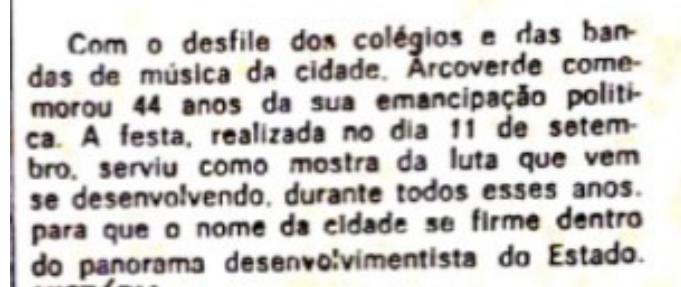
Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> In English: The Region, after all, wants to add that it is not an isolated group newspaper, serving the interest of political colors. He will give an account of everything, without party commitments, but with the sacred commitment to tell the truth, the news that builds and never demolishes anyone, as a vehicle of strength that is.

<sup>6</sup> In English: In line with the orientation of the Federal Government that set priority targets for Brazil, I believe that I should emphasize the supply sector with the construction of a model market on land already acquired by the municipality.

In addition to the explicit alignment with the dictatorship, one can also observe the diffusion of progressive ideas linked to the economic plan of the time. On its cover, the newspaper alludes to seven new items: three deal with economics and two with events in the city. Flipping through its pages, the words that are reiterated in all its texts stand out: 'development' and 'investment'. The ufanistic idea of a 'great Brazil' also permeated the city of Arcoverde.

Image 7 - A Região (1972)<sup>7</sup>



Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco, 2020.

Image 7 expresses part of the objectives that outlined the city at the time. This was one of the examples of the discourse raised about the need to supposedly develop Arcoverde so that it could be compared to the capital. The narrative promoted was that the key to the city's development laid in the (military) economy, praised from cover to cover in all the analyzed periodicals.

Thus, society considered the economy as a unique development pattern, and politics, culture, social and other areas were supplanted in favor of an ultimate goal, the economic one. Important agendas that permeated these areas were left aside, causing certain local issues to be devalued to the expense of the economy. It was based on this logic that the Brazilian State persecuted those who pursued political freedom, often arguing that they undermined the stability of the country.

It happens that, in thirteen pages, there are sixteen advertisements, several articles that refer to the economy, development and issues that were of interest only to the bourgeois economic class of the city. The newspaper was therefore, in a way, a publication of the Arcoverde's elite, because it dealt with issues that concerned only this social group.

The *Jornal do Cinquentenário* was distributed in 1978 by Arcoverde's City Hall, with the intention of celebrating the 50 years of political emancipation of the municipality. Its pages were used to remember the past of Arcoverde and to enlarge the perspectives for the future of the region. In general, the document pays tribute to renowned public figures in the city, many of whom were linked to the city's commercial/economic circles.

<sup>7</sup> In English: With the parade of colleges and music bands of the city, Arcoverde celebrated 44 years of its political emancipation. The party, held on September 11, served as a show of the struggle that has been developing, during all these years, so that the name of the city is firm within the developmental panorama of the State.



In this sense, compared to the newspaper *A Região* (1972), one notices that both became spaces dedicated to populist discourses, empty and filled with economic-progressive ideals and, again, the overvaluation of commerce and industry as pillars of the entire development of the municipality.

Among tributes and targets, there is one space that stands out, the text “*Arcoverde social*”. This is the only item in the newspaper that deals with socio-cultural aspects of the city. The concerns raised in it are noteworthy, the first of which is:

Image 8 - Jornal do Cinquentenário<sup>8</sup>

des festas de clubes. Essas mudanças, talvez sejam explicadas, pela revolução que a moda sofreu nos últimos anos, naturalmente forçada por uma maior participação da mulher em atividades mais diversificadas que naqueles anos eram mais exclusivas dos homens. E Arcoverde, como não poderia deixar de ser, também sofreu essas influências ou transformações sócio-econômicas. Mas, mesmo assim, podemos dizer que aquelas meninas-moças de ontem, são, hoje, jovens damas que fazem Arcoverde ser considerada uma das cidades mais elegantes do Estado.

Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco, 2020.

Likewise, the concern for the most vulnerable groups is portrayed in a way that causes strangeness:

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<sup>8</sup> In English: These changes may be explained by the revolution that fashion has undergone in recent years, naturally forced by a greater participation of women in more diversified activities that in those years were more exclusive of men. And Arcoverde, as it could not fail to be, also suffered these influences or socioeconomic transformations. But even so, we can say that those young girls of yesterday are, today, young ladies who make Arcoverde be considered one of the most elegant cities in the state.

Image 9 - Jornal do Cinquentenário<sup>9</sup>

No campo filantrópico, existe a atuação dos tradicionais clubes de serviços, o Rotary Club e Lions Club, além da Loja Maçônica Barão do Rio Branco, reunindo como sócios homens das mais diversificadas atuações profissionais, atuam e agem em diversas áreas comunitárias, impedindo, muitas vezes, uma maior marginalização das camadas menos privilegiadas. O Rotary e o Lions promovem reuniões semanais e quando acontecem as reuniões festivas, com presenças de convidados especiais, e do mundo feminino, pode-se participar de reuniões estritamente sociais, com as mulheres primando pelo bem vestir, exatamente por ser nas reu-

Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco, 2020.

The praise to bourgeois clubs for preventing, according to the author, “the less privileged groups” from being marginalized is highlighted. That is, there is no state obligation towards the population, but only certain determinism towards certain people who were part of a less privileged class and, thanks to some philanthropic groups that were not completely excluded, incorporated by the political elite of the time. In this same sense, in another periodical, the chronicler mentions the same ideas:

Image 10 - Informativo Municipal (1983)<sup>10</sup>

Como cronista social, devo me prender naturalmente ao social e neste setor ele esteve sempre presente. Os clubes sociais sempre puderam contar com a sua participação, ora concedendo verbas para melhoramentos em suas sedes sociais, ora contribuindo com sua ajuda em promoções outras que viessem a divulgar o nome de Arcoverde. Com sua participação também contou a crônica social. Os concursos de misses, que mesmo criticados ou tachados de superados têm a sua força promocional, contaram sempre com seu apoio decisivo. Bem como quaisquer eventos que tivessem o mérito de elevar o conceito da nossa sociedade.

Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco

<sup>9</sup> In English: In the philanthropic field, there is the performance of the traditional service clubs, the Rotary Club and Lions Club, in addition to the Masonic Lodge Baron of Rio Branco, bringing together as partners men of the most diverse professional performances, act and act in various community areas, often preventing further marginalization of the less privileged layers. Rotary and Lions hold weekly meetings, and when festive meetings are held, attended by special guests, and from the female world, strictly social meetings can be held, with women at the forefront of good dress.

<sup>10</sup> In English: As a social chronicler, I must naturally stick to the social and in this sector he was always present. The social clubs have always been able to count on their participation, sometimes granting funds for improvements in their social headquarters, sometimes contributing with their help in other promotions that came to publicize the name of Arcoverde. The Muses contest, which even criticized or labeled as super-powered, always had their decisive support. As well as any events that had the merit of elevating the concept of our society.

Still, in order to make up the social imaginary about assistencialism in the city of Arcoverde, we have the following position in the *Informativo Municipal*:

**Image 11** – Informativo Municipal (1983)<sup>11</sup>

Agora mesmo, nos últimos dias de atuação, dona Ivany resolveu que mais alguma coisa precisava fazer em termos de ajuda às camadas mais humildes de bairros distantes. Percorreu cada um deles visitando centenas de casas e distribuindo uma senha, que deu direito a um pacote de mantimentos. Foi necessário agir desta maneira, porque seria impraticável voltar novamente de residência em residência. Sabendo que vários idosos não poderiam deslocar-se até a Secretaria de Assistência Social, a senha permitiria que qualquer pessoa da família recolhesse o presente. Tendo sido feita uma coleta de preços no comércio local, houve possibilidade de “espichar” o dinheiro e adquirir uma quantidade maior de provisões. Pois bem, mais de quinhentas “feiras” foram preparadas, contendo feijão, farinha, açúcar, fubá, macarrão, soja, charque, bolacha, leite em pó, maizena, doce e sabão. Tudo distribuído às vésperas do Natal. Sabemos perfeitamente que há necessidade de medidas profundas e de caráter definitivo, não transitório. Entretanto, na ausência destas soluções, é muitíssimo importante que se mostre a tantos deserdados da sorte que eles são lembrados, sobretudo no momento da confraternização natalina.

Source: Public Archive of Pernambuco, 2021.

The extract above refers to the mayor of Arcoverde who, at that moment, was delivering an account of his mandate that had come to an end and used this space to mention the assistance role promoted by his wife during his administration. It is observed, above all, the dissemination of a paternalistic policy originated in the Vargas government, whose role of the first lady was focused only on occasional assistance, which reinforced the sexist stereotype that the woman has the role of caring and, linked to the belief that small deeds to the poorest should be reported and contribute to the process of “fetishization of rights and benefits.” (IAMAMOTO; CARVALHO, 2011, p. 256).

In other words, they were periodicals that followed the ideology of a small part of the population, but that, even so, imposed on the masses to adopt moral and civic behavior, in the name of a sense of progress anchored, solely, in the local economy and so, in this way, the city of Arcoverde could adapt to the standards imposed by the Federal Government and that, in its essence, to provide the National Security Doctrine, the hygienist mentality and the hierarchical and ordered public spaces.

<sup>11</sup> In English: Just now, in the last days of acting, Dona Ivany decided that something else needed to be done in terms of helping the most humble layers of distant neighborhoods. He went through each of them visiting hundreds of houses and distributing a password, which earned him a package of groceries. It was necessary to act in this way, because it would be impractical to return again from residence to residence. Knowing that several elderly people could not travel to the Secretariat of Social Assistance, the password would allow anyone in the family to collect the gift. Having been made a collection of prices in the local trade, there was a possibility of “sneezing” the money and acquiring a larger amount of provisions. Well, more than five hundred “fairs” were prepared, containing beans, flour, sugar, cornmeal, pasta, soy, charque, crackers, milk powder, mayo, sweet and soap. Everything is distributed on the eve of Christmas. We know perfectly well that there is a need for deep and definitive measures, not transitory. However, in the absence of these solutions it is extremely important to show the many disinherited of luck that they are remembered, especially at the time of the Christmas celebration.

After the end of the regime, there was no transitional justice that could question, in Brazil, the micro narratives disseminated by the most diverse media. No press leader asked for forgiveness for complying with or omitting the institutional violence of the dictatorship. On the contrary, in 2010, as previously mentioned, the *Estado de S. Paulo* brought up the term “ditabranda”, that is, a dictatorship considered soft, in its writings, as a way to relate to the international context of regimes of exception.

In summary, in addition to all the violence, persecution, censorship, and torture suffered by groups opposed to the dictatorship, there is the perpetuation, through memory, of the mitigation of dictatorial violence. The memory of those who disappeared and continue without any reparation by the Brazilian State, and by the civil and international institutions that funded and idealized the military regime, is systematically denied.

## 5 Concluding remarks

In general, the research aimed to raise questions that are part of the historical, public, political, and social spheres of the country, in order to understand some conflicts and opinions in dispute (narrative) about the Brazilian military dictatorship. In order to highlight the contemporary relevance and importance of the theme, we problematize this issue in order to academically promote historical-democratic values, re-established, above all, with the 1988 Constitution, considered a civic constitution.

Beyond the issues raised, we believe that the memory and neglect of the Brazilian population reveal that the History of Brazil is narrated from the perspective of the elites (economic, political, male and white). Therefore, the fragile Brazilian political history must be revised sensitively and critically. In other words, as Walter Benjamin states, we must contribute to put together the pieces of history and recover the historical past, stone by stone, especially by questioning the historical power relations.

Furthermore, this study reveals that the media was, and still is, disseminators of information that give rise to the (re)production of historical patterns of violence, oppression, and erasure of political struggles for rights. During the civil-military dictatorship, in the city of Arcoverde, it was no different. The problem in focus permeates narratives in the press of that city that, when amplified, were also disseminated in other states and cities of the country. The catalog of historical sources, such as newspapers, reveals how the population, in the past and today, has its historical memory distorted by hegemonic discourses. What remains, always, is the critical revisitation of the events of Brazil's recent history and its re-signification, in order to embrace subaltern narratives and to learn from the past.



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