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Past and Present in 2014

Public Disputes over the Memories of the Dictatorship and the Redemocratization in Brazil and Portugal

Passado e presente em 2014

As disputas públicas das memórias da ditadura e da redemocratização no Brasil e em Portugal

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ABSTRACT Despite notable progress in studies on transitional justice, insufficient attention has been directed toward the disputes on the matter that unfold within the press in the different countries that are faced with dictatorial pasts and conflictual political transitions. Similarly, the extensive body of work on democratization processes in Portugal and Brazil shows a remarkable absence of comparative studies contrasting these two cases. This article aims to address these gaps through a comparative analysis of public disputes over memories of the transition that took place in the Portuguese and Brazilian press. We have chosen

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to examine the pivotal year of 2014, a historical moment marked by heightened political crises in both countries, coinciding with the commemoration of the forty-year anniversary of the April Revolution and the fifty-year anniversary of the civil-military coup of 1964. By analysing prominent media outlets during that “hot” year (*Público*, *Diário de Notícias*, and *Expresso* in Portugal; *Folha de São Paulo*, *O Globo*, and *O Estado de São Paulo* in Brazil), we seek to elucidate the role the press played in memory disputes, especially by endorsing certain narratives about the dictatorships and the redemocratization processes in these two countries.

KEYWORDS Memory disputes, mediated memories, Brazil-Portugal

RESUMO Apesar do progresso nos estudos sobre justiça de transição, pouca atenção tem sido dada às disputas que se travam a esse respeito no âmbito da imprensa nos diferentes países que lidam com passados ditatoriais e transições políticas conflituais. Da mesma forma, na abundante literatura sobre os processos de democratização português e brasileiro, é assinalável a ausência de estudos que examinem comparativamente os dois casos. Com este artigo, propomo-nos contribuir para reduzir essas lacunas através de uma análise comparativa das disputas públicas das memórias de transição que tiveram como palco os jornais portugueses e brasileiros. Para proceder a essa abordagem, selecionamos para a análise o ano de 2014, um momento histórico marcado tanto pela exacerbação da crise política nos dois países quanto pela rememoração dos 40 anos da Revolução de Abril e dos 50 anos do golpe civil-militar de 1964. Ao analisarmos os principais títulos da imprensa de Portugal e do Brasil nesse ano “quente” de 2014 (*Público*, *Diário de Notícias* e *Expresso* em Portugal; *Folha de São Paulo*, *O Globo* e *O Estado de São Paulo* no Brasil), buscaremos perceber como a imprensa participou das disputas de memórias, referendando determinadas narrativas sobre as ditaduras e a redemocratização nesses dois países.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE Disputas de memórias, memórias mediadas, Brasil-Portugal

The last few decades have witnessed a significant increase in studies on transitional justice and disputes over the memory of authoritarian pasts. This type of research generally seeks to analyze how countries that experienced dictatorships faced and still face the legacies and reverberations of that period, even after redemocratization (HITE; CESARINI, 2004; VINYES, 2009). In addition to approaches focused on specific national experiences, there has been an increase in the number of works that compare different countries to identify, in various contexts, similarities and differences in transitions between dictatorship and democracy. In this dynamic and fruitful field of studies on transitional justice and memory disputes, we seldom encounter comparative analyses encompassing Portugal. One of the rare exceptions was the inclusion of Portugal in studies on democratization in Southern Europe, in which the issue of political justice was briefly addressed but did not constitute the main focus (PINTO, 2010). As far as Brazil is concerned, despite the advancements in the field of comparative studies in recent years (PINTO; MARTINHO, 2013; PINTO; ARAUJO, 2017), there are still few approaches that analyze transitional justice and public memory disputes from a more transnational perspective.

Three conditioning elements are essential to understanding the measures and strategies of transitional justice and policies on memory employed in Portugal after April 25, 1974. First of all, the duration and nature of the regime (LINZ; STEPAN, 1997, p. 38), given that the Portuguese *Estado Novo* was one of the longest dictatorships at the time it was overthrown. After a moment of military hegemony (1926-1933), the dictatorship was dominated by the figure of Oliveira Salazar, who, in the early 1930s, laid the foundations of the *Estado Novo* and remained in power until 1968. His successor, Marcello Caetano, did not make any significant changes to the essence of the regime, even though his campaign adopted the motto “renewal amidst continuity”. Although we will not discuss whether it was an authoritarian or fascist regime, it is necessary to highlight its repressive character. The political police and political courts were the foundations of Salazarism.

The second element that must be considered is the duration and nature of the Portuguese transition, which, according to António Costa Pinto (2010), was a determining factor that affected the legacy of authoritarianism and superseded and changed its impact on democracy. The Portuguese transition was initiated by a *coup* led by intermediate-ranking officers and appeared to be a break from the past, advocating for a revolution that lasted around 18 months. The revolutionary phase of the transition (1974-1975) was characterized by vigorous mobilization, the military's involvement in politics, and a dire state crisis (REZOLA, 2007). This crisis created an opportunity to react to the past and was the backdrop for most political justice measures.

Finally, it is essential to mention the period of democratic consolidation and its impacts on transitional justice and, above all, policies on memory (PINTO, 2013; LOFF; PIEDADE; SOUTELO, 2015). Once the democratic order was institutionalized (through the constitution of the new regime by direct, free, and universal election of the 1st Constitutional Government and the President of the Republic), Portugal underwent a turbulent democratic consolidation (1976-1982). From the summer of 1976 onwards, political life centered on defining political conditions for stability and development strategies. However, the path to stability was a winding road: facing severe economic and financial difficulties, the years of democratic consolidation were characterized by political instability and the search for different solutions. When the right rose to power – in the form of the governments of the Aliança Democrática [Democratic Alliance] (AD), between 1980 and 1983 –, they accelerated the process that would lead to the constitutional review of 1982, which extinguished the Conselho de Revolução [Revolutionary Council] (CR) and expelled the military from politics.

In Brazil, the process of redemocratization began in the mid-1970s, progressing at a slower pace and with more negotiations than in Portugal, given the absence of a disruptive event like the Revolution of April 25, 1974, to hasten the process. Analysts who have studied the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Brazil have highlighted the gradual and consensual nature of the transition process, which, despite

some ruptures and essential changes, was structurally marked by the Amnesty Law of 1979. In addition to pardoning those who committed serious human rights violations in the name of the Brazilian State during the 1964 military dictatorship, that law imposed a kind of erasure of the past (REIS, 2010; BRITO, 2013; D'ARAUJO, 2013). Furthermore, Brazilian redemocratization was characterized by the defeat of major movements, such as Diretas Já [Direct Elections Now], which could have led into alternative paths and provided new meaning to the transition from dictatorship to democracy in the country. Thus, although the 1988 Constitution enabled concrete mechanisms to achieve and consolidate democracy, the transition undoubtedly contributed to the languid pace at which policies related to transitional justice and the persistence of silences about the past were proposed. This, in turn, hindered a broader debate about the 1964 dictatorship in the public sphere (TELES; SAFATLE, 2010).

Following the country's redemocratization, initiatives related to transitional justice and the most important policies on memory were promoted by the governments led by Presidents who, in the past, had varying degrees of participation in the resistance to the 1964 military dictatorship. Law nº 9.140 was instituted in 1995,¹ and Law nº 10.559 in 2002,² both during the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, from the Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira [Brazilian Social Democracy Party] (PSDB). These laws created the Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos [Special Commission on Political Deaths and Disappearances] (CEMPD) and the Comissão de Anistia [Amnesty Commission]. During the mandates of Lula and Dilma Rousseff, both from the Partido dos Trabalhadores [Workers' Party] (PT), there were other

1 BRAZIL. Lei nº 9.140, de 4 de dezembro de 1995. Reconhece como mortas pessoas desaparecidas em razão de participação, ou acusação de participação, em atividades políticas, no período de 2 de setembro de 1961 a 15 de agosto de 1979, e dá outras providências. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l9140.htm. Access on: 9 July 2023.

2 BRAZIL. Lei nº 10.559, de 13 de novembro de 2002. Regulamenta o art. 8º do Ato das Disposições Constitucionais Transitórias e dá outras providências. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/2002/l10559.htm. Access on: 9 July 2023.

important actions focused on the creation in 2011 and implementation in 2012 of the Comissão Nacional da Verdade [National Truth Commission] (CNV). These government initiatives and the struggles over memory, truth, and justice led by various civil society organizations and movements were of the utmost importance. However, in 2018, Jair Bolsonaro – from the Partido Social Liberal [Social Liberal Party] (PSL) –, a candidate who openly supported and felt nostalgic for the experience of the 1964 dictatorship, was elected President, highlighting how a significant portion of Brazilian society remained favorable or indifferent to that past.

In the realm of transitional justice and memory disputes research, although comparative analyses between Portugal and Brazil have become more common in recent years, some related areas still require further studies. In particular, little attention has been paid to prior and ongoing public disputes over memories of the authoritarian pasts of the two countries in different media. Although several authors have highlighted the importance of this field of study (ZELIZER, 1998; ZELIZER; ALLAN, 2002; CANNADINE, 2004), there is a clear need to deepen the analysis of how media-generated memories of the past circulate and become the object of controversies between different subjects, both individual and collective, in the public sphere. As emphasized by Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt (2012), individual and collective memories are based on representations of the past that involve selections, rearrangements, rewritings, and simplifications, as well as unintentional or deliberate inclusions and exclusions. In this sense, the media play a fundamental role in forming and perpetuating these memories, promoting narratives that result in “memory frames”³ (POLLAK, 1989) about authoritarian pasts and redemocratization processes.

If the press always plays a major role in building narratives and representations of the past, it becomes even more relevant in critical political situations marked by escalating social tensions between different groups. Political disputes over the present provide a new context for igniting conflicts surrounding representations of the past and thus

3 Freely translated: “enquadramentos de memória”.

become the stage for fierce confrontations in the public sphere. When different social forces are more contentious, memories about particular pasts become “hot”, as described by Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt (2012, p. 8). These controversies grow even more tense when disputes in the public sphere surrounding the past coincide with the remembrance of important dates. It is during these moments that the media assume an even more significant role in “framing” the past by filtering and selecting certain narratives about dictatorial historical periods.

Assuming that the media have a central role in memory disputes surrounding the past and that such role becomes more relevant in critical political situations, this article will analyze how the press in Portugal and Brazil intervened in the controversies around memories of the authoritarian past of these countries. The year 2014 was chosen for this comparative analysis because it was a historical moment marked by growing political and economic crises in both countries. It also coincides with the 40th anniversary of the Revolution of April 25, 1974, in Portugal, and the 50th anniversary of the 1964 civil-military coup in Brazil.

In Portugal, our analysis included the following newspapers: *Público*, a renowned daily that focuses on independent and quality journalism; *Diário de Notícias*, founded in 1864, which adopts a more informative approach; and the weekly *Expresso*, inspired by high-quality English newspapers such as *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer*. When relevant, the research also included articles from *Correio da Manhã*, a widely circulated and sensationalist newspaper. For Brazil, our analysis was based on the following newspapers: *Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Globo*, and *O Estado de São Paulo*. According to the Instituto Verificador de Comunicação [Communication Verification Institute] (IVC), these three periodicals have a wide print circulation and a significant number of digital subscribers, making them influential in the Brazilian public debate.⁴ The search and selection of news articles focused on those that

4 IVC muda cálculo para assinaturas; Folha é líder em circulação. In: *Folha de São Paulo*, 24 Aug. 2023. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mercado/2023/08/ivc-muda-calculo->

addressed the highlighted topics, with particular attention to editorials, opinion articles, and political news and reports.

By examining newspapers from Portugal and Brazil during the “hot” year of 2014, we will seek to understand how the mainstream press played a part in memory disputes surrounding authoritarian pasts, endorsing and legitimizing certain narratives about dictatorships and redemocratization processes in the two countries considered here.

PORTUGAL, 2014: WEAPONIZING HISTORY IN A POLITICAL STRUGGLE

In Portugal, the 40th-anniversary celebrations of April 25 took place in a challenging context, after almost three years of support from an external funding program. The resignation of the socialist José Sócrates,⁵ following the implementation of a package of austerity measures aimed at controlling the financial crisis, led to an early call for legislative elections in the summer of 2011. The government sworn in on June 21, 2011,⁶ under the leadership of the social democrat Passos Coelho, received a complicated legacy from the previous rulers: a country that, on the verge of financial bankruptcy, had just asked for a financial bailout worth 78 billion euros from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Commission (EC), and the European Central Bank (ECB) (a group that is often referred to as the troika).⁷

para-assinaturas-folha-e-lider-em-circulacao.shtml. Access on: 9 July 2023.

5 Prime Minister of the 17th and 18th Constitutional Governments (2005-2011).

6 19th Constitutional Government of Portugal (June 21, 2011-October 30, 2015), which rose to power based on a government agreement between the Partido Social Democrata [Social Democratic Party] and the Centro Democrático Social – Partido Popular [Social Democratic Center – Popular Party].

7 The Partido Socialista [Socialist Party] (founded in April 1973) and the Partido Social Democrata (May 1974) have dominated the Portuguese political system since the constitutionalization of its democracy in 1976. Except for a brief period of presidential initiative governments (1978-1979), the two parties have alternated in power and in the presidential role, either alone or through coalitions, such as the Aliança Democrática [Democratic Alliance] (1980-1983), and have even ruled together as the Bloco Central [Central Block] (1983-1985).

This financial support program included specific budgetary targets and an array of very restrictive measures,⁸ which the government adopted obstinately, even under the accusation of imposing sacrifices that exceeded the agreement.⁹ The lack of internal consensus and the worsening of the recession at the end of 2012 led to new, highly unpopular measures. The Finance Minister of the time, Vitor Gaspar, announced a “huge tax increase”,¹⁰ which dominated the media for weeks.

To this day, Pedro Passos Coelho’s first government is associated with austerity, a considerable increase in unemployment and emigration rates,¹¹ and intense social and political turmoil. According to *Diário de Notícias*, between the government taking office in June 2011 and September 2014, there was a strike every five days.¹² In 2012 alone,

8 On the subject, see, for instance, Pereira (2019, p. 127-128). See also: CRONOLOGIA da crise. In: *Centro de Estudos Sociais da Universidade de Coimbra*. Available at: <https://www.ces.uc.pt/observatorios/crisalt/cronologia.php?d=3>. Access on: 9 July 2023.

9 Measures imposed during the early stages of the program included the introduction of an extraordinary tax on Christmas bonuses (50%); a freeze on public servants’ wages; hikes in the prices of transport tickets and passes; increases in taxes on natural gas and electricity (the VAT rose from 5 to 23%); cuts in pensions exceeding 1,500 euros; cost reductions in the health sector and public companies. In 2012, additional measures were implemented, such tax increases; further reductions in holiday and Christmas bonuses (for both the public and private sectors) and in pensions above 1,000 euros; rising healthcare fees; substantial cuts to unemployment protections; restrictions on benefits related to illnesses and unemployment; extensions of working hours; elimination of overtime payment for public servants; and the removal of four holidays. CRONOLOGIA da crise. In: *Centro de Estudos Sociais da Universidade de Coimbra*.

10 Cited by: FONSECA, Sofia. Gaspar anunciou “enorme aumento de impostos”. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 3 out. 2012. Available at: <https://www.dn.pt/economia/gaspar-anunciou-enorme-aumento-de-impostos-2807425.html>. Access on: 9 July 2023.

11 For example, the unemployment rate rose from 13% to 16.5% in 2012, reaching 17% in 2013. For further data, see: TAXA de desemprego: Total e por sexo (%). In: *Pordata: Estatísticas sobre Portugal e Europa*. Available at: [https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Taxa+de+desemprego+total+e+por+sexo+\(percentagem\)-550](https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Taxa+de+desemprego+total+e+por+sexo+(percentagem)-550). About emigration, see: EMIGRANTES por mil habitantes. In: *Pordata: Estatísticas sobre Portugal e Europa*. Available at: <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Emigrantes+por+mil+habitantes-832>. Both pages were accessed on: 9 July 2023.

12 DESDE 2011 Portugal tem uma greve a cada cinco dias. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 24 Oct. 2014, p. 1.

there were 127 strikes, involving a total of 92 thousand workers, some of which were repressed with police violence.¹³ Protests accompanied this wave of strikes. The most popular one was organized by the Que se lixe a Troika [To Hell with the Troika] movement,¹⁴ on September 15, drawing over a million participants.

This wave persisted in 2013, with a total of 119 strikes and multiple protests (ACCORNERO; CHICK, 2015). The signature chant of the military operations of April 25, 1974, *Grândola Vila Morena*,¹⁵ served as a symbol of discontent with government actions and austerity. On February 15, during a parliamentary debate, the Prime Minister was interrupted by dozens of people singing Zeca Afonso's song from the galleries. According to a statement sent by the Que se lixe a Troika movement to newsrooms around the country, this symbolic song of the April 25 Revolution was chosen for its capacity to "bring back to the place where legislation was made for everyone" the feeling that "another path" was "necessary".¹⁶ Less than a month later, on March 2, *Grândola Vila Morena* was sung at demonstrations in dozens of cities nationwide to protest against austerity measures. The same occurred on October 26.¹⁷

The April 22, 2014, headline of *Diário de Notícias* described the overall sentiment surrounding the 40 years of democracy: "Dissatisfaction

13 This was the case, for example, of the second general strike of November 14, 2012.

14 A platform that brought together the two Portuguese trade union confederations and other unions, student organizations, various citizens' movements, local organizations, and authorities, as well as representatives of all left-wing parties (Partido Socialista, Partido Comunista [Communist Party], and Bloco de Esquerda [Left Block]).

15 AFONSO, José. *Grândola, Vila Morena*. In: *Cantigas do Maio*. Porto: Orfeu, 1971, track 5, 5 min 30 s.

16 HENRIQUES, João Pedro. "Que se lixe a Troika" interrompe debate. *Jornal de Negócios*, Lisbon, 15 Feb. 2013, p. 8. Freely translated: "para transportar de volta ao local onde se legisla para todos"; "necessário outro caminho".

17 LUSA; MOURATO, Paula. Mais de cem pessoas concentradas no Rossio, em Lisboa. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 26 Oct. 2013. Available at: <https://www.dn.pt/portugal/mais-de-cem-pessoas-concentradas-no-rossio-em-lisboa-3499085.html>. Access on: 9 July 2023.

prevails”.¹⁸ “The situation we live in is too unbearable”, director and playwright Jorge Silva Melo had declared days before during an interview with the same newspaper, after enthusiastically recalling the fall of the dictatorship and the Revolution years.¹⁹ The economic crisis and, above all, the tense climate that permeated Portuguese society inevitably impacted the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the April 25 Revolution.

Social and political tension was evident, as demonstrated by the widely reported absence of Associação 25 de Abril – an organization established by the April Captains to preserve their memory and values – from the traditional solemn session of the Assembly of the Republic. This absence was not unprecedented. Since 2010, the April Captains had not been present at Parliament ceremonies. In 2011, they did not attend due to the fall of Sócrates’ government and the dissolution of the Assembly. In the following two years, they were absent because the Associação refused to participate in the official ceremonies, since it considered the Passos Coelho government a “political cycle” that stood “against April 25, its ideals, and its values”.²⁰ In both cases, the former President of the Republic and historic socialist leader Mário Soares expressed his solidarity with the decision of the Associação 25 de Abril.

These prior absences could have diminished the newsworthiness of the Associação’s position in 2014, had it not been for their involvement in a tumultuous dispute with the President of the Assembly of the Republic. Faced with the demand from the Associação 25 de Abril to

18 J. P. H.. Insatisfação é o sentimento dominante. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 22 abr. 2014. Available at: <https://www.dn.pt/politica/insatisfacao-e-o-sentimento-dominante-3823267.html>. Acesso em: 9 jul. 2023. The article discusses the results of a survey conducted by *Diário de Notícias* in collaboration with the Catholic University, newspaper *Jornal de Notícias*, radio station Antena 1, and television chain RTP.

19 CRUZ, Bárbara. A situação em que vivemos é demasiado insuportável. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 5 Apr. 2014, p. 10.

20 Information broadcast by the radio station TSE, 25 Apr. 2012; LUSA. Soares não vai ao 25 de Abril porque Governo não merece. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 24 Apr. 2013. Available at: <https://www.dn.pt/politica/soares-nao-vai-ao-25-de-abril-porque-governo-nao-merece-3184130.html>. Access on: 9 July. 2023. Freely translated: “ciclo político”; “contra o 25 de Abril, os seus ideias e os seus valores”.

speak at the formal parliamentary session, Assunção Esteves not only denied this request but also commented: “It’s their problem”.²¹ The case sparked fervent discussions for about two weeks, with voices both supporting and criticizing Assunção Esteves and the April Captains.

Among those who most openly condemned the Captains was the conservative columnist Pereira Coutinho, who described their actions as childish while also denouncing how frail Portuguese democracy had become: “Responding to military tantrums amounts to democratic childishness”.²² Others, like the deputy director of *Diário de Notícias*, Nuno Saraiva, criticized the Captains by arguing that “the gratitude we owe to these men does not allow them to act as rulers of the country or the regime, nor as guardians of democracy”.²³ Teresa de Sousa, a renowned *Público* journalist, concurred, adding that “40 years after the Revolution and when the world has already turned around several times”, there was no need to “bow down to the April Captains to deserve our right to freedom”.²⁴

This dispute reignited a central element of the revolutionary process of 1974-1975: the conflict between revolutionary and electoral legitimacy. With the boldness that always guided his public interventions, right-wing intellectual Vasco Pulido Valente took a stand in the dispute, denying the lawfulness of the Captains’ claim in an article where he also harshly criticized the 1974-1975 Revolution. He argued that “revolutionary legitimacy does not exist”, highlighting how, after overthrowing the dictatorship, the Captains “created a new illegitimacy” and used “the

21 NÃO É “deles” nem está resolvido. *Público*, Lisbon, 11 Apr. 2014, p. 45. Freely translated: “O problema é deles”.

22 COUTINHO, João Pereira. Birras. *Correio da Manhã*, Lisbon, 11 Apr. 2014, p. 48. Freely translated: “Responder a birras de militares é menoridade democrática”.

23 SARAIVA, Nuno. Uma polémica triste. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 12 Apr. 2014, p. 6. Freely translated: “a dívida de gratidão que temos para com estes homens não faz deles donos da pátria ou do regime, nem tampouco tutores da democracia”.

24 SOUSA, Teresa de. O 25 de Abril e os seus capitães. *Público*, Lisbon, 13 Apr. 2014, p. 52. Freely translated: “40 anos depois da Revolução e quando o mundo já deu várias voltas”; “nos curvar aos Capitães de Abril, para merecermos o nosso direito à liberdade”.

putative ‘values’ of the ‘revolution’” to “justify any kind of arbitrariness or violence”.²⁵

Assunção Esteves faced criticism for responding to the April military in a way deemed “unworthy of the institution she represents”²⁶ and for forgetting “the gratitude owed” to those who fought to “restore freedom to the Portuguese”.²⁷ “Their problem?”, asked essayist Carlos Fiolhais, quickly followed by his own answer: “It is, above all, our problem, while Assunção Esteves is in São Bento”.²⁸

The press eagerly followed the case, reporting on the Partido Socialista’s request for a parliamentary conference to analyze the Captains’ claims;²⁹ the inability of parliamentary leaders and Assunção Esteves to reach a consensus during a meeting;³⁰ and the failure of the her meeting with the Associação 25 de Abril. That was a missed opportunity to celebrate such a symbolic date for the Carnation Revolution and Portuguese democracy, further fueling the dispute between “a right that jealously protects its own space” and “a left that encourages discontent”.³¹ The celebrations were marred because “celebrating April without the military is like going to a wedding with no bride”.³²

25 VALENTE, Vasco Pulido. Legitimidades. *Público*, Lisbon, 18 Apr. 2014, p. 52. Freely translated: “a legitimidade revolucionária não existe”; “criaram uma nova ilegitimidade”; “os putativos ‘valores’ da ‘revolução’”; “justificar qualquer espécie de arbítrio ou de violência”.

26 FIGURA do dia – Assunção Esteves. *Correio da Manhã*, Lisbon, 11 Apr. 2014, p. 2. Freely translated: “não é digna da instituição que representa”.

27 MARCELINO, João. O problema é nosso. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 12 Apr. 2014, p. 7. Freely translated: “a dívida de gratidão”; “devolver a liberdade aos portugueses”.

28 FIOLHAIS, Carlos. Problema nosso. *Público*, Lisbon, 17 Apr. 2014, p. 47. Freely translated: “Problema deles?”; “É, sobretudo, um problema nosso, enquanto Assunção Esteves estiver em São Bento”.

29 RODRIGUES, Sofia. PS pede conferência de líderes sobre pretensão dos capitães de Abril. *Público*, Lisbon, 12 Apr. 2014, p. 6.

30 FREIRE, Manuel Carlos. “Relação Inquebrantável” entre AR e capitães de Abril. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 17 Apr. 2014, p. 10.

31 MARCELINO, João. O problema é nosso. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 12 Apr. 2014, p. 7. Freely translated: “uma direita que guarda ciosamente o seu espaço”; “uma esquerda que estimula o descontentamento”.

32 SILVA, Carvalho da. E se a troika tiver razão. *Público*, Lisbon, 13 Apr. 2014, p. 21. Freely

News coverage of April 25, 2014, gave particular emphasis to a ceremony organized by Associação 25 de Abril in Largo do Carmo to honor Salgueiro Maia,³³ but also reported on the various autonomous demonstrations “against the Government and the Troika”, which convened “carrying carnations and posters”.³⁴ The press additionally highlighted the high turnout for the parade on Avenida da Liberdade, making it clear that “revolt and joy took to the streets in Lisbon”.³⁵ On top of drawing an unprecedented number of participants, the celebrations were both a party and a protest that revived one of the most iconic slogans of 1974: “The united people will never be defeated”. According to the press, the “people on the street challenged the Government”,³⁶ expressing “emotion and revolt” and calling for a “new revolution”.³⁷ In short, “thousands celebrated April against Passos”,³⁸ protesting the government, the President, and “the situation”.³⁹

Little attention was devoted to the ceremonies held by the Assembly of the Republic or other government initiatives, which were considered *bafientas*.⁴⁰ This situation was criticized in *Público* by Manuel

translated: “comemorar Abril sem os militares é quase como ir a um casamento sem a noiva”.

33 Fernando José Salgueiro Maia (1944-1992) was the captain of the Portuguese Army who commanded the column of the Escola Prática de Cavalaria [Cavalry Training School] (Santarém), which played a prominent role in the military operations of April 25, 1974. On the subject, see: MILITARES vão falar no Largo do Carmo nas comemorações dos 40 anos do 25 de Abril. *Público*, Lisbon, 18 Apr. 2014, p. 9.

34 PENA, Paulo. No Carmo, quarenta anos depois. *Público*, Lisbon, 25 Apr. 2014, p. 18-19. Freely translated: “contra o Governo e a Troika”; “com cravos e cartazes”.

35 LOPES, Maria João. A revolta e a alegria saíram à rua em Lisboa. *Público*, Lisbon, 26 Apr. 2014, p. 6.

36 CATARINO, Manuel. Povo na Rua. *Correio da Manhã*, Lisbon, 26 Apr. 2014, p. 24. Freely translated: “O povo unido jamais será vencido”; “Povo na rua desafiou o Governo”.

37 LOPES, Maria João. A revolta e a alegria saíram à rua em Lisboa. *Público*, Lisbon, 26 Apr. 2014, p. 6. Freely translated: “emoção e revolta”; “nova revolução”.

38 MAIA, Ana; LIMA, Carlos Rodrigues; HENRIQUES, João Pedro. Muitos mil a celebrar abril contra Passos. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 26 Apr. 2014, p. 2.

39 LOPES, Maria João. A revolta e a alegria saíram à rua em Lisboa. *Público*, Lisbon, 26 Apr. 2014, p. 6. Freely translated: “a situação”.

40 Literally “bad breath”, i.e., “nasty”.

Carvalho, who denounced the celebration of “two April 25s”: one for “parliamentarism and representative democracy” and one for “grass-roots movements and popular democracy”.⁴¹ However, for most media outlets, the government had lost the battle for the streets, a clear testament to how remembering April 25, 1974, was “instrumental for the current struggles”.⁴²

Despite some attempts to separate the two realities (crisis/celebrations) – such as a *Diário de Notícias* editorial, *O 25 de Abril vale mais do que o jogo político* [April 25 is Worth More than the Political Game]⁴³ –, the commemorations were held hostage by the moment and revealed the deep dissatisfaction of Portuguese society with government policies: “Yesterday’s April 25 was not the one from 1974, but the one from 2014 made in the name of the one from 1974”.⁴⁴

In this context, it is easy to understand how the editorial strategy adopted by the newspapers under analysis turned out to be inappropriate. It rested on the idea that, despite the crisis, the country had made enormous progress since 1974. However, the perspective adopted by the leading newspapers to commemorate the 40th anniversary of April 25 was out of sync with the pulse of the country at the time. One of the main initiatives developed by the Impresa group⁴⁵ was the *Mural da*

41 CARVALHO, Manuel. O 25 de Abril entre as trincheiras. *Público*, Lisbon, 27 Apr. 2014, p. 23. Freely translated: “dois 25 de Abril”; “parlamentarismo e da democracia representativa”; “basismo e da democracia popular”.

42 PEREIRA, José Pacheco. O que cheirou a bafio no 25 de Abril. *Público*, Lisbon, 26 Apr. 2014, p. 42. Freely translated: “instrumental para as lutas do presente”.

43 O 25 de Abril vale mais do que o jogo político. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 26 Apr. 2014, p. 6.

44 PEREIRA, José Pacheco. O que cheirou a bafio no 25 de Abril. *Público*, Lisbon, 26 Apr. 2014, p. 42. Freely translated: “O 25 de Abril que se viveu no dia de ontem não foi o de 1974, mas o de 2014 feito em nome do de 1974”.

45 Media group that owns the main Portuguese weekly newspaper, *Expresso*, TV channels SIC and SIC Notícias, and, among others, the newsmagazine *Visão*. The group was deeply involved in multiple commemorative activities, including a mural painted by GonçaloMAR, completed on April 7, on Rua 1º de Maio in Lisbon; the international conference *25 de abril, 40 anos depois* [April 25, 40 years later]; the collecting of testimonies about freedom from 40 personalities (SIC Notícias); a special edition of the magazine *Visão*; two special magazines, published alongside the weekly *Expresso*, titled *25 de Abril: 40 anos* [April 25: 40 years]; and

Liberdade [Freedom Mural], a series of multiplatform reports showcasing people who “recount different ways of being free”, revealing that “freedom comes in several faces, struggles, reasons, and expressions”.⁴⁶

The newspaper *Público* collected the testimony of public figures and ordinary citizens, spanning different generations, fields of training, and political affiliations.⁴⁷ They were asked to identify breaking points in the 40 years of democracy and reflect on “how a democratic country was built”.⁴⁸ The outcomes in areas such as health, education, and the political system were seen as largely positive, on a similar note to the publication’s editorials. This editorial line did not prevent *Público* from giving voice to columnists and thinkers who were critical of April 25 and the Revolution, including João Carlos Espada⁴⁹ and Pulido Valente.⁵⁰

Diário de Notícias followed a similar approach, celebrating April by portraying the country’s evolution over 40 years. On March 15, they released the first installment of the daily series *Onde é que estava no 25 de Abril?* [Where Were You on April 25?],⁵¹ which would comprise 40 interviews with Portuguese personalities representing different generations, domains of action, and political sides. A quote from the socialist João Cravinho encapsulated the thoughts of many who were heard by

an issue of *Revista Expresso* exclusively about April 25.

46 OITO histórias que vão mexer consigo. *Revista Expresso*, Lisbon, 5 Apr. 2014, p. 12. Freely translated: “contam várias formas de se ser livre”; “a liberdade tem vários rostos, lutas, razões e maneiras de se manifestar”.

47 These personalities included Alexandre Quintanilha, André Gonçalves Pereira, Henrique Granadeiro, Irene Pimentel, João Constâncio, João Taborda da Gama, João Luís Barreto Guimarães, Maria de Fátima Bonifácio, Maria de Lurdes Rodrigues, Maria Manuel Leitão Marques, Nick Racich, Pedro Magalhães, and Rui Pena Pires.

48 RIBEIRO, Anabela Mota. Foi muito bonita a festa, pá. *Público*, Lisbon, 25 Apr. 2014, p. 2. Freely translated: “como se fez um país democrático”.

49 See, for instance: ESPADA, João Carlos. O Governo é dono das pessoas ou as pessoas são donas do Governo? *Público*, Lisbon, 21 Apr. 2014, p. 45.

50 Among others, see: VALENTE, Vasco Pulido. A poeira. *Público*, Lisbon, 20 Apr. 2014, p. 56.

51 The title pays homage to chronicler Baptista-Bastos (1934-2017), who was known for his series of interviews with personalities about April 25, broadcast from 1996 to 1998 on SIC.

the newspaper: “The Portugal of today is immensely better than that of the 70s”.⁵²

Overall, only *Correio da Manhã* adopted a different strategy: a series of reports titled *A minha Guerra* [My War], in which former Colonial War combatants were given a voice. This approach was somewhat isolated, given that most historical pieces published around the 40th anniversary of April 25 focused on the overthrow of the dictatorship and the preceding days, as evident in *Público*’s infographics *As linhas da liberdade* [The freedom lines].⁵³ Topics that had had major success in the media in the first decades of democratic Portugal, such as dictatorship, anti-fascism, the repressive apparatus, and colonialism (LOFF; PIEDADE; SOUTELO, 2015), were rarely addressed.

Similarly, historical features paid little attention to the revolutionary process of 1974-1975.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, opinion columns from different periodicals clearly reveal tensions between the history and the memory surrounding April.⁵⁵ According to right-wing commentators,

52 CRUZ, Bárbara, O Portugal de hoje é imensamente melhor que o da década de 70. *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 18 Apr. 2014, p. 10.

53 GOMES; Adelino. As linhas da Liberdade. *Público*, Lisbon, 25 Apr. 2014, p. 22-23. The work was the responsibility of Adelino Gomes, one of the journalists connected to Salgueiro Maia’s column.

54 News articles in *Público* about the “Wallraff case” (CARVALHO, Manuel. O dia em que Spínola pediu ajuda à secreta brasileira para invadir Portugal. *Público*, Lisbon, 27 Apr. 2014, p. 14-19) or the Movimento das Forças Armadas [Assemblies of the Armed Forces Movement] (MFA) of 1975 (RIBEIRO, Nuno. Assembleias do MFA: Contradições e rupturas a caminho da democracia. *Público*, Lisbon, 28 Apr. 2014, p. 8-10) are rare exceptions in this domain.

55 See, for instance: ESPADA, João Carlos. Liberdade é liberdade, ponto final. *Público*, Lisbon, 28 Apr. 2014, p. 45; CABRITA, Eduardo. Abril para todos. *Correio da Manhã*, Lisbon, 30 Apr. 2014, p. 2; VALENTE, Vasco Pulido. A lógica das coisas. *Público*, Lisbon, 27 Apr. 2014, p. 56; TAVARES, Miguel Sousa. É talvez melhor lembrar do que celebrar. *Expresso*, Lisbon, 12 Apr. 2014, p. 11.

“some leftists are disillusioned with the result of ‘their’ April 25”⁵⁶ and show a bad conscience about the decolonization process,⁵⁷ resisting to “leave their infantile phase, so they can finally acknowledge the full democratic legitimacy of those with whom they do not agree”.⁵⁸ Historian Manuel Loff⁵⁹ took a different stance, suggesting that the central issue at stake was the memory policies developed in the past decade, namely the historical whitewashing of the memory of the dictatorship by the conservative right.

Paradoxically, an opinion survey published amidst these celebrations demonstrated that “the Portuguese are proud of this date [April 25] and think that the *Estado Novo* was highly detrimental”.⁶⁰ According to the survey, April 25 had become “a date for everyone, a source of pride for the overwhelming majority of Portuguese people, carrying a legacy of the social state that they do not want to let go of and that they feel is in danger”.⁶¹

BRAZIL, 2014: REVISITING THE PAST OF A COUNTRY IN CRISIS

2014 was a politically turbulent year in Brazil, marked by intense disputes and social tensions. The front pages of major Brazilian newspapers in the first weeks of March depicted a country in turmoil, shaken by an

56 COUTINHO, João Pereira. Contra a reação. *Correio da Manhã*, Lisbon, 25 Apr. 2014, p. 48. Freely translated: “alguma esquerda está desiludida com o resultado do ‘seu’ 25 de Abril”.

57 AMARAL, Luciano. 25 de Abril e África. *Correio da Manhã*, Lisbon, 28 Apr. 2014, p. 2.

58 TAVARES, João Miguel. Virtudes e defeitos de Abril (2). *Público*, Lisbon, 24 Apr. 2014, p. 48. Freely translated: “sair da sua fase infantil, para que possam enfim reconhecer total legitimidade democrática àqueles com quem não concordam”.

59 LOFF, Manuel. A memória da ditadura. *Público*, Lisbon, 17 Apr. 2014, p. 45.

60 MEIRELES, Luísa. 25 de Abril, 40 anos – Como os portugueses veem o Estado Novo. *Expresso*, Lisbon, 5 Apr. 2014, p. 20-21. Freely translated: “os portugueses têm orgulho nessa data [25 de Abril] e pensam que o Estado Novo foi muito negativo”.

61 MEIRELES, Luisa. Democracia e Estado Social, as grandes vitórias. *Expresso*, Lisbon, 12 Apr. 2014, p. 24. Freely translated: “uma data de todos, um motivo de orgulho para a esmagadora maioria dos portugueses, com um legado do Estado social de que não querem abdicar e que sentem em perigo”.

economic and political crisis that continued to escalate after protests had taken the streets of several Brazilian cities in June of the previous year.⁶² The situation grew even more dire after news related to Operação Lava Jato [Operation Car Wash] started to surface. This operation, launched in March 2014, involved a series of investigations to combat corruption, targeting businesspeople and politicians in various regions of the country. As Brazil prepared to host the World Cup, which would be held in June 2014, then-President Dilma Rousseff, of the Partido dos Trabalhadores, was moving towards the fourth and final year of her first term, working to establish the political alliances necessary for her re-election in October of that year, in an election that was bound to be highly contentious.⁶³

Amid the tensions of March 2014 – marked by the 50th anniversary of the 1964 civil-military coup – public debate in the press concerning the military dictatorship began to gain prominence and visibility. This was the final year of the Comissão Nacional da Verdade, established three years earlier during President Dilma Rousseff's term. The CNV's mission was to investigate serious human rights violations that occurred between September 1946 and October 1988, with a particular focus on the initial years of the military dictatorship that was established with the 1964 coup.⁶⁴ Throughout 2014, the CNV hastened its proceedings to publish the final report, which would effectively come to light in

62 In June 2013, a series of street demonstrations started spreading from São Paulo to several cities in Brazil. Initially rooted in progressive demands and led by the Movimento Passe Livre [Free Transportation Pass Movement] (MPL), the protests took on different views and further exacerbated the country's political crisis throughout 2014. About the demonstrations of June 2013, see, among others: Singer (2013); Alonso (2017); Nobre (2020).

63 In October 2014, Dilma Rousseff was re-elected President of Brazil, after a close call in the elections against candidate Aécio Neves, from the Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira, who later contested the poll results. For a discussion of this political crisis, see, among others: Singer (2018); Nobre (2020).

64 Established on May 16, 2012, during the term of President Dilma Rousseff, the CNV was created under Law nº 12.528/2011. In December 2013, the mandate of the CNV was extended until December 2014. For a discussion on the CNV, see, among others: Bauer (2017); Perlatto (2021); Schneider (2019); Teles; Quinalha (2020).

December of that year. The CNV played a pivotal role in inspiring various initiatives by civil society, as well as municipal and state governments, which sought to promote actions and debates about the 1964 coup and the subsequent dictatorship in Brazil.⁶⁵ However, the CNV and its work also generated strong reactions from various segments of society, especially the Armed Forces, which criticized the work and conclusions that resulted from its three years of activities.⁶⁶

In early March 2014, against the backdrop of the coup's remembrance, conflicts surrounding the memories of the 1964 dictatorship became more prominent and occupied several pages of the press. Reports and news articles shed light on controversies involving different segments of society, including relatives of the deceased and missing, human rights activists, politicians, intellectuals, representatives of state bodies and civil society, and the Armed Forces. For instance, newspapers published pieces covering street protests organized by groups both in favor of and against the 1964 coup, a testament to how disputes over the past were beginning to take new forms in that context.⁶⁷ The press

65 After the CNV was created, several state and municipal truth commissions were implemented throughout the country, driven and organized by civil society, governments, and municipal and state legislatures, configuring a type of experience that the researcher Cristina Buarque de Hollanda (2018) called “commissionism”. Furthermore, the work of the CNV led to several important initiatives in the following years, such as specialist seminars on the topic, special issues in academic journals, and books on the civil-military coup of 1964 and the subsequent dictatorship.

66 The reaction of parts of the Armed Forces to the CNV was heightened by the distrust that President Dilma Rousseff – who had been part of the armed resistance to the military regime – could use the Commission to promote “vindictive” actions against the military. An example of the resistance of the Armed Forces to the CNV can be found in an interview with General Eduardo Villas-Boas in which he confirms that the creation of the Commission was fundamental to consolidate the dissatisfaction of several parts of the Armed Forces with the PT government (CASTRO, 2021).

67 For example, on March 23, 2014, *Folha de S. Paulo* published a report on two protests that would happen that day in the capital of São Paulo: on one side, an anti-communist group organized a reenactment of the *Marcha da Família com Deus pela Liberdade* [Family and God March for Freedom]; on the other, one action organized by the *Marcha Antigolpista Ditadura Nunca Mais* [Anti-coup March Dictatorship Never Again] (MANIFESTANTES contra e a favor da ditadura militar marcham em SP. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 23 Mar. 2014, p. A14).

also highlighted the debates within the Brazilian Parliament regarding the memories of the 1964 coup, especially how some congressmen, such as Jair Bolsonaro – at the time Federal Deputy for the Partido Progressista [Progressive Party] (PP) –, attacked the CNV and critical interpretations about that period.⁶⁸ Some news articles also drew attention to the reluctance of the Armed Forces to open archives containing information about the repression and to collaborate with the CNV investigations. In addition to hosting events with experts to discuss 1964 and its consequences⁶⁹ and spreading information about the military regime,⁷⁰ newspapers published several interviews and research articles seeking to elevate the debate and understanding of that period.

As March 31, 2014 (a milestone for critical remembrance of the 50th anniversary of the 1964 civil-military coup) approached, discussions about the military dictatorship gained even more prominence in the press. On the eve of the anniversary, newspapers published numerous reports, including special issues dedicated to the period, featuring

68 On April 2, 2014, *Folha de S. Paulo* published a report on the turmoil surrounding a solemn session marking the 50th anniversary of the civil-military coup in the Chamber of Deputies. The disturbance was caused by Congressman Jair Bolsonaro, who unveiled a banner with the words: “Congratulations to the military – March 31, 1964. Thanks to you, Brazil is not Cuba” (DEPUTADO elogia golpe e tumultua sessão na Câmara sobre ditadura. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 2 Apr. 2014, p. A8). Freely translated: “Parabéns militares – 31 de março de 1964. Graças a vocês o Brasil não é Cuba”.

69 In March 2014, newspaper *O Globo* sponsored a discussion between historian Carlos Fico, former Deputy Plínio de Arruda Sampaio, and Camilo Tavares, director of the documentary *O dia que durou 21 anos* [*The Day That Lasted 21 Years*], while *Folha* organized a debate with retired general Luiz Eduardo Rocha Paiva, Mariluce Moura, a former Ação Popular activist, and historian Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta. See: REPRESSÃO militar usava luta armada como justificativa para se manter, diz especialista. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 31 Mar. 2014. Available at: <https://oglobo.globo.com/politica/repressao-militar-usava-luta-armada-como-justificativa-para-se-manter-diz-especialista-12038867>; MENDONÇA, Ricardo. Em debate na Folha, expositores discordam sobre sentidos da ditadura. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 25 Mar. 2014. Disponível em: <https://m.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2014/03/1430554-em-debate-na-folha-expositores-discordam-sobre-sentidos-da-ditadura.shtml?cmpid=menutopo>. Both pages were accessed on: 9 July 2023.

70 An example is the website organized by the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* about the 1964 dictatorship. Available at: <http://folha.com/golpe64>. Access on: 9 July 2023.

timelines and major events, and addressing various topics, such as repression and human rights violations during the military governments. These materials were explicitly designed to foster a critical retrospective view of the period and included feature pieces about those years, as well as articles and interviews with experts, discussing issues such as the reasons behind the civil-military coup of 1964, the characteristics of the regime, and various actions that stood against it, especially the armed struggle. In addition to these special issues, some newspapers published specific editorials on the eve of the event – such as *Folha's 1964*⁷¹ – which included reflections on the role the press played in 1964 by openly supporting the coup that led to the removal of then-president João Goulart, from the Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro [Brazilian Labor Party] (PTB).

It should be noted that, although press coverage of the 50th anniversary of the 1964 civil-military coup predominantly carried a critical tone towards the event and the dictatorship, the newspapers also served as a major platform for supporters of the military regime to express their opinions on the event. Figures such as Carlos Chagas – spokesman for President Artur da Costa e Silva –, Célio Borja – President of the Chamber of Deputies during Ernesto Geisel's term – and Leônidas Pires Gonçalves – general and Minister of the Army during José Sarney's term – had open access to various media outlets, contributing interviews and articles where they articulated viewpoints such as “it wasn't quite like as people say today”,⁷² “the regime of 64 was not a dictatorship”⁷³ and “The 1964 revolution was absolutely democratic”.⁷⁴ In addition, *Folha de S. Paulo*, in the *Tendências e Debates* [Trends and Debates] section, allowed political figures who openly defended 1964 to present their

71 1964. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 30 Mar. 2014, p. A2.

72 CHAGAS, Carlos. Não foi bem assim como dizem hoje. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 28 Mar. 2014, p. A3.

73 MELLO FRANCO, Bernardo. Entrevista – Célio Borja: Regime de 1964 não foi uma ditadura. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 25 Mar. 2014, p. A7.

74 FERRAZ, Lucas. Entrevista – Leônidas Pires Gonçalves: Os militares nunca foram intrusos na história brasileira. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 28 Mar. 2014, p. A11.

ideas, such as the then Deputy Jair Bolsonaro, who, in an article titled *Censura escancarada* [Open censorship], advocated in favor of the civil-military coup of 1964.⁷⁵

In addition to reflecting on the past of 1964 in view of the 50th anniversary of the coup, press coverage throughout 2014 also paid attention to current events, which had a direct connection to the period of military rule. Thus, headlines dedicated to the dictatorship mainly addressed the findings of the CNV and state and municipal truth commissions. An emblematic case was that of Federal Deputy Rubens Paiva, who was arrested by the dictatorship's repressive forces in 1971, transferred to the Destacamento de Operações e Informações do Centro de Operações e Defesa Interna [Department of Operations and Information of the Operations and Home Protection Center] (DOI-Codi), and later went missing. On March 16, 2014, *O Globo* ran a cover story on a retired colonel who revealed what had happened to Rubens Paiva's corpse.⁷⁶ In the same month, in a testimony to the CNV, retired colonel Paulo Malhões confirmed part of the statements in the interview, although he said Rubens Paiva's corpse and other people murdered by the repression forces were handled differently.⁷⁷ In the following months, the press covered the developments and investigations related to Rubens Paiva's murder,

75 BOLSONARO, Jair. *Censura escancarada*. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 3 Apr. 2014, p. A3. Interestingly, the *Tendências/Debates* section on the topic of *A ditadura militar em debate* [The military dictatorship in debate] brought Jair Bolsonaro's article on one side and, on the other, a text by historian Marcos Napolitano, as if they were two equivalent perspectives on the subject. See NAPOLITANO, Marcos. *Rememorar 1964*. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 3 Apr. 2014, p. A3.

76 CHICO, Otavio. O corpo que "saiu" para o oceano. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 16 Mar. 2014, p. 3.

77 Retired colonel Paulo Malhões, who had served as the coordinator of the Centro de Informações do Exército [Army Information Center] (CIE) in Rio de Janeiro, gave one of the most widely covered testimonies to the CNV. His revelations concerning the treatment of the victims' bodies at the clandestine torture center in Petrópolis, the so-called Casa da Morte [House of Death], attracted significant media attention. Malhões was found dead in his home in April 2014, a month after testifying to the Comissão da Verdade. See MELLO FRANCO, Bernardo. Coronel admite ter matado na ditadura. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 26 Mar. 2014, p. A10.

leading to an increase in the number of complaints sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office against the military personnel involved in the case.

In 2014, the imminent release of the CNV's final report sparked a broader debate in the press regarding the possibilities of revising the 1979 Amnesty Law.⁷⁸ Even though it lacked the legal power to revise the law in order to punish those who committed severe human rights violations during the 1964 dictatorship – and even though President Dilma Rousseff herself had openly rejected that possibility – there was a discussion in the press about whether or not the CNV should include a recommendation to revise the law in its final report. Besides publishing reports addressing this topic,⁷⁹ the three main newspapers in Brazil took a critical stance in their editorials regarding any potential revision of the Amnesty Law by the Commission, which they saw as “vindicative”, in contrast to what they interpreted as a successful “agreed” and “negotiated” transition from dictatorship to democracy. For example, in an editorial published on September 29, 2014, *Folha* highlighted that “The main merit of the Amnesty Law, passed in 1979, was that it allowed the country to pursue democracy in an atmosphere free from the resentment that weighed on both parties of the conflict”.⁸⁰ After the

78 BRAZIL. Lei nº 6.683, de 28 de agosto de 1979. Concede anistia e dá outras providências. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l6683.htm. Access on: 9 July 2023.

79 The newspapers highlighted debates regarding the possibility of punishing general Newton Cruz, who served as the head of the Serviço Nacional de Informações [National Information Service] (SNI) at the time of the Riocentro attack: “The general states he cannot be punished for the Riocentro case. Newton Cruz, head of the SNI in 1981, claims he is protected under the Amnesty Law. The prosecutor's office says that pardon does not apply to this case and wants the military man to be convicted as a co-author of the attack” (MELLO FRANCO, Bernardo; MARTINS, Marco Antônio. General diz que não pode ser punido pelo caso Riocentro. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 15 Mar. 2014, p. 1-2). Furthermore, several pieces published by newspapers *Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Globo*, and *O Estado de São Paulo* throughout 2014 reported on the actions of the Public Prosecutor's Office to challenge the Amnesty Law in an attempt to prosecute military personnel. They also covered clashes between different social groups surrounding the issue.

80 PRIMEIRO passo. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 29 Sept. 2014, p. A2. Freely translated: “O principal mérito da Lei da Anistia, promulgada em 1979, foi o de permitir que o processo de democratização do país se desse num clima desanuviado dos ressentimentos que pesavam sobre ambas as partes em conflito”.

publication of the final report, the newspaper reiterated its support for “unrestricted amnesty” as “one of the pillars of Brazilian democracy”.⁸¹

The newspaper *O Globo* also published some editorials on the topic, highlighting the importance of the “limits of the National Truth Commission” – which was called to perform its work “without judicial purposes” – and asserting that there would be no place for “any apologies from the military” regarding the past. The daily thus grounded its defense of the Amnesty Law on the perception that it had been approved “reciprocally in 1979” after “successful negotiation between generals and the opposition at that time”.⁸² The newspaper stood against the CNV, arguing that it would be beyond the Commission’s purview to vindictively recommend a revision of the Amnesty Law. Such an action would fail to acknowledge the importance of the “political pacts that led us to democracy”.⁸³ *O Globo* viewed any move in that direction as “unfortunate”, “opportunistic”, and a “dangerous exaggeration”, on top of going against a law that “believes in conciliation, and not in confrontation, much less so in violence or radical vindictiveness”.⁸⁴ On the other hand, *O Estado de São Paulo* criticized the “spirit that moved the Truth Commission” for contradicting the “spirit of that law” from 1979, which was aimed at “leaving them [the crimes committed during the military dictatorship] in the past, in history, so that the transition

81 PÁGINA virada. *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 12 Dec. 2014, p. A2. Freely translated: “anistia irrestrita”; “um dos pilares sobre os quais se apoia a democracia brasileira”.

82 LIMITES da Comissão da Verdade. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 25 Sept. 2014, p. 2; UMA VISÃO unilateral da Lei da Anistia. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 Dec. 2014, p. 2. Freely translated: “limites da Comissão Nacional da Verdade”; “sem fins judiciais”; “qualquer pedido de desculpas dos militares”; “forma recíproca em 1979”; “bem-sucedida negociação entre generais e a oposição, àquela época”.

83 COMISSÃO extrapola ao pedir limitação da Lei da Anistia. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 11 Dec. 2014, p. 18. Freely translated: “pactos políticos que nos levaram à democracia”.

84 AMPLA e irrestrita. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 15 Dec. 2014, p. 18. Freely translated: “lamentável”; “oportunista”; “perigosa extrapolação”; “apostou na conciliação, e não no confronto, muito menos na violência ou em radicalismos revanchistas”.

from the military regime to democracy happened as agreed, avoiding a vindictiveness that would render the reconciliation unfeasible”.⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

Societies that have suffered under authoritarian governments in the past must now deal with public controversies regarding the meaning of these experiences. Regardless of how countries conducted their processes of transitional justice, this past lingers, casting a long shadow over political disputes after redemocratization. Collective memories of later generations concerning these historical periods seldom reach consensus, union, or cohesion. Instead, they are crisscrossed by narrative conflicts, involving different segments of society in struggles over what should be publicly remembered, what should be forgotten and how these public processes regarding memory should unfold (JELIN, 2017). Over the years, some disputes on memory might be appeased, but the controversies never disappear entirely. They are set in perpetual motion as individuals and groups seek to challenge the representations and meanings often deemed consensual.

At certain times, conflicts may resurface more intensely, especially in critical political situations, when present-day disputes are intertwined with clashes from the past. In these contexts, disputes on memory become more explicit and are employed by different groups to guide political actions in the present (ROS, 2012). When such periods align with “ephemerides” that recall sensitive dates from the past, these disputes become even more open, and the controversies are more intensely projected onto the public sphere. Especially in moments such as “round” anniversaries of major historical events, print and digital media play a key role in public debates surrounding memories, given

85 O TRABALHO de uma Comissão. *Estado de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 11 Dec. 2014, p. A3. Freely translated: “espírito que moveu a Comissão da Verdade”; “espírito daquela lei”; “deixá-los no passado, no âmbito da história, para que a transição do regime militar para a democracia se desse de forma pactuada, evitando o revanchismo que inviabilizaria a reconciliação”.

their ability to produce and spread certain narratives about the past in the public sphere. These representations put forth by different media are far from neutral; they are “framed” by choices that assign meanings to the past, directly influencing the political debates of the present time.

Throughout this article, based on a comparative analysis between Portugal and Brazil, we delved into how the press engaged with public disputes over memories of the authoritarian past and the democratization process in the “hot” year of 2014. This year was marked both by the reemergence of political and economic crises in both countries and memories surrounding the 40th anniversary of the Revolution of April 25, 1974, in Portugal; and the 50th anniversary of the 1964 civil-military coup in Brazil. An examination of news articles, editorials, and special issues published throughout 2014 by the highest-circulating newspapers in Portugal and Brazil – *Público*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Expresso*, *Folha de São Paulo*, *O Globo*, and *O Estado de São Paulo* – confirms that the press played an important role in shaping certain representations of the authoritarian years and the redemocratization of these two countries, thus legitimizing and reinforcing some memories about the dictatorial periods. While there is no unified discourse, it can be stated that, in general, these newspapers created narrative “framings” of the authoritarian pasts that were critical of the experiences of the dictatorships, but also supportive of a negotiated transition anchored in an idea of “reconciliation” with the past.

Even though four decades have passed since the Portuguese Revolution of 1974-1975, granting it the status of a historical event, and surveys have indicated that the Portuguese had reconciled with their past, the press coverage of the 40 years of the April 25 Revolution unveiled the political potency of that period and the divisive memories that continue to surround it. While the government emphasized the progress enabled by 40 years of democracy, left-wing intellectuals found ample space in the media to denounce how much the values and achievements of April were at risk. The press used this commemoration as a pretext to report on ongoing political and social struggles and struggles over the politics of memory, thereby revealing the challenges to a balanced

debate regarding the transition to democracy. Likewise, the focus was predominantly on conflict-ridden cases and situations, to the detriment of a commitment to in-depth journalism.

In the case of Brazil, although newspapers offered critical coverage of the 1964 civil-military coup and the military dictatorship throughout 2014, they also provided important platforms for advocates of the military regime to express themselves and explain their support of the dictatorship. While the idea of giving voice to the “other side” may seem like a commitment to pluralistic journalism, it remains subject to criticism. Such an approach can end up suggesting that these divergent perspectives on the past hold equal legitimacy, even though those defending the 1964 coup knowingly based their arguments in denialist narratives about that period. Furthermore, regarding the debate on the revision of the 1979 Amnesty Law, prompted by recommendations of the final report of the Comissão Nacional da Verdade published in 2014, newspapers, on the whole, directly opposed any changes in the law, labeling movements in that direction as “vindictive”. In this regard, they endorsed the importance of the “pacts” that occurred during the country’s redemocratization process, thereby strongly contributing to legitimizing a narrative of “reconciliation” with the past.

In democratic countries, print and digital media play a key role in providing reliable information to the population and contributing to public debate around relevant issues. However, there is still need for a broader reflection on how the press constructs and spreads narratives about the past, particularly in countries with a history of authoritarian regimes. This discussion should be deemed urgent under any circumstances, but especially so in the present-day political landscape, marked by the rise of far-right groups that endorse a nostalgic view of authoritarian experiences and seek to occupy new spaces to disseminate their denialist narratives about past authoritarian experiences.

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