

HISTÓRIA DA(S) SEXUALIDADE(S) NA AMÉRICA LATINA: SÉCULOS XIX E XX

Moral ineptitude in primary education: The dismissal of homosexual teachers during the Uruguayan civil-military dictatorship (1973-1984)*

Ineptitude moral no ensino primário: a demissão de professores homossexuais durante a ditadura civil-militar do Uruguai (1973-1984)

La ineptitud moral en la educación primaria: la destitución de maestros homosexuales durante la dictadura civil-militar uruguaya (1973-1984)

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ABSTRACT: During the authoritarian period, the Uruguayan educational authorities passed a number of regulations that enabled, within the framework of the fight against communism, the dismissal of teachers accused of being homosexuals. This article analyzes the construction of a state policy with moral content that tried to reinforce social support for the regime, eclipse the traditional division between the public and the private, and expel these teachers from the educational system for considering their sexual identities to be incompatible with the *national reorganization* process and a danger to the integral development of the new generations.

KEYWORDS: primary education; homosexuality; dismissal; moral ineptitude; Uruguayan dictatorship.

RESUMO: Durante o período civil-militar, as autoridades uruguaias da área de educação aprovaram uma série de regras que permitiram, no cenário da luta contra o comunismo, a demissão de professores de ensino primário acusados de serem homossexuais. Este artigo analisa a elaboração de uma política estatal

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com conteúdo moral que buscou reforçar os apoios sociais ao regime, eclipsar a divisão tradicional entre o público e o privado, e expulsar esses professores do sistema educacional por considerar sua identidade sexual incompatível com o chamado processo de reorganização nacional e um perigo para o desenvolvimento integral das novas gerações.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: ensino primário; homossexualidade; demissão; incapacidade moral; ditadura uruguaia.

RESUMEN: *Durante el período cívico-militar las autoridades educativas uruguayas aprobaron una serie de normas que permitieron en el marco de la lucha contra el comunismo la destitución de maestros acusados de ser homosexuales. Este artículo analiza la construcción de una política estatal con contenidos morales que intentó reforzar los apoyos sociales al régimen, eclipsar la tradicional división entre lo público y lo privado y expulsar del sistema educativo a estos maestros por considerar su identidad sexual incompatible con el llamado proceso de reorganización nacional y un peligro para el desarrollo integral de las nuevas generaciones.*

PALABRAS clave: enseñanza primaria; homosexualidad; destitución; ineptitud moral; dictadura uruguaya.

Introduction

«Do you consider yourself a normal person, sexually speaking? Detainee: Yes, sir», (Folder No. 2414/1976, p. 11). This and other questions had to be faced by the head teacher of a small town in Uruguay after he was arrested at night by the police in 1977. Although, in this case, the teacher was able to close the investigation initiated by the Primary Education Department, the usual was the dismissal.

This article seeks to put in dialogue the studies on the recent past with a gender and sexuality perspective and the works on the history of Uruguayan primary education, in order to analyze the dismissal suffered by almost twenty teachers during the civil-military dictatorship (1973-1984) for lack of *moral fitness*, after being accused of being homosexuals. From the total number of those affected by this type of dismissal, this particular group was selected for the analysis because the institution itself during the dictatorship identified them as a different group and a serious problem to be solved.

Over the last few years, a line of academic reflection has been developing that addresses the relationship between state violence, gender and sexuality (D'ANTONIO, 2015; TORO, 2015; OBERTI, 2005) during the Southern Cone dictatorships, which has tried to analyze particularly the situation faced by the homosexual and transvestite population during that period. In Brazil, we can highlight, among others, a series of approaches that confirmed the persecution of transvestites and homosexuals in some of its major cities, as well as their inclusion within the enemy that the military regime sought to combat (QUINALHA, 2021; FREITAS, 2019; COWAN, 2016; GREEN; QUINALHA, 2014;), and something similar happens for Argentina (MILANESIO, 2021; SIMONETTO, 2016; INSAUSTI, 2015; RAPISARDI; MODARELLI, 2001) and Uruguay (SEMPOL, 2019, 2013; GUTIÉRREZ, 2019).

In turn, studies on the situation of the educational system during this period have focused on its conflicts with the government of Jorge Pacheco Areco (1967-1972)¹ and on the dictatorship impact on the University of the Republic and on the Secondary Education Council,² but almost no study has paid attention to primary education during this historical period, to the dismissal of teachers for

reasons other than political-partisan ones, to the regulatory changes promoted or the demands and regulatory ideals disseminated by the regime on how the role of teachers should be in the so-called *national reorganization* process.

In the following pages, one seeks to determine the meanings condensed by the *moral fitness* category and its relationship with the ideas of the local conservative right wing influential in the educational field during the dictatorship, the National Security Doctrine (DSN) and the forms of discrimination and persecution faced by homosexuals during the authoritarian period, which generated a turning point in their relationship with the State. Furthermore, one seeks to analyze the ways in which Primary Education authorities viewed during this period the homosexual population working in the system, as well as the strategies used to detect them and confirm their sexual identity and the normative grounds to which they appealed to expel them from the classrooms.

For the analysis, more than 1653 teacher folders, found in the archive of the Primary Education Council, the session minutes of the Primary Education Council (CEP) from 1965 to 1985, press of the time and pedagogical publications were reviewed. Additionally, some interviews were conducted with teachers dismissed for this reason, closely following the guidelines proposed by Alessandro Portelli (2016) for oral history.

The article begins with a brief review of the history of Uruguayan primary education in order to rescue its centrality in the Uruguayan imaginary, to then study the growing role of *morality* in the military educational project and the regulations that it generated for this purpose, to finally analyze the cases of dismissal for this reason and close with some final reflections.

Some background on Uruguayan primary education

During the 20th century, primary education was consolidated and achieved the development of professionalized teachers, training centers and promotion and competitive examination systems for all hierarchies, which made it almost impenetrable to any attempt of political-partisan interference (TRAVERSONI; PIOTTI, 1984, p. 32). In the first half of the 20th century, the primary system achieved national coverage – both urban and rural – and specialized systems, thus reaching a schooling rate of 96.13% (BRALICH, 1987, p. 106). Additionally, as pointed out by Ema Massera, Cristina Contera and Omar Pérez (1990), the school played a key role in the generation of a national consciousness in an alluvial society with a strong immigrant presence. The public school became a central node in the Uruguayan national imaginary, thanks to its potential transformation of privilege into merit and its apparent ability to promote mobility and social equality.

However, in the early 1960s, due to the Cold War, the impact of the Cuban Revolution and the economic crisis, a strong social mobilization was generated, and guerrilla organizations and ultra-right-wing groups emerged. In a growing atmosphere of political polarization and student and teacher strikes, the Pacheco Areco government (1967-1972) began the process of dismissing dozens of teachers. In turn, under the government of Juan María Bordaberry³, on January 4, 1973, the General Education Law (No. 14,101) was passed, which reorganized the primary and secondary education systems and subordinated them to the National Council of Education (CONAE). The objectives of the law were to depoliticize education and to generate tools to defend it from *Marxist infiltration*. «The democratic path of the dictatorship» (RICO, 2005, p. 44) ended with the coup d'état of June 27,

1973, from which intervention in the educational system increased. The diagnosis of the civil-military regime considered it a priority to change the culture, for which reason it assigned to the educational system a strategic role in the fulfillment of that goal. But, since «subversion» had infiltrated all levels of the educational system, taking advantage of the supposed lack of control generated by autonomy and liberalism, it was essential for the dictatorial regime to recover the educational system and remove from it those teachers who challenged the national reorganization project.

In line with this centrality, a first key step was taken in 1974: the appointment of new authorities in the CONAE, where Colonel Julio R. Soto was appointed Vice President, and in the CEP, Bautista Etcheverry (who had held his position since early 1973) was retained and two new people were appointed: Gualberto Troisi (a member of the ultra-right-wing group Juventud Uruguaya de Pie [JUP]) and Virginia Oribe. Moreover, on August 10, 1974, the Executive Power enacted Law No. 14,248, which made it mandatory for all public officials to have a «certificate of democratic faith», which implied the dismissal of hundreds of teachers, with the consequent worsening of the process that had already been taking place before the coup.⁴ Furthermore, all technical positions within Primary Education (inspections and directorates) became positions of *particular trust*, which violated the competitive examination system and the appointments became subject to the discretionary decisions of the de facto authority.

Two years after the coup, the regime decided to go a step further and completely align education with its political objectives: thus, on February 4, 1975, the CONAE intervened, defining the existence of a director (civilian) and a deputy director (military) in the CEP (just like in the rest of the educational councils) and creating the Education Supervision Commission, whose purpose was to guide and control the whole educational system. From that moment on, CONAE's political function (which almost completely eclipsed the technical one) was reinforced and a new wave of indictments and dismissals took place. It was also during this year and in 1980 that most of the dismissals for *moral* reasons took place.

Local moral policies during the global Cold War

In Uruguay, during the 1960s and early 1970s, under the protection of little police repression against homosexuals, there was a progressive consolidation of a semi-clandestine circuit of dating and sociability in downtown Montevideo (bathrooms in bars, restaurants and businesses) and on one of the city's most important beaches. Walking along the city's main avenue in search of matches and the existence of several dating bars and movie theaters enabled the formation of new networks of sociability and the development of common patterns. During this period, group hangouts in natural spaces also became frequent, as well as parties, some very private and others more public, in which there was a growing atmosphere of *sexual liberation* and where the mix between heterosexuals and homosexuals was welcomed.

But, during the Cold War, the U.S. security policy identified homosexuals with one of its internal *enemies*, the so-called «lavender scare» (SHIBUSAWA, 2012), coordinated anticommunism and homophobia and this relationship spread throughout the West by means of enforcement of the demands imposed by this power to its allies. In Uruguay, in turn, homophobia was also widespread in both the left- (SEMPOL, 2018/2019) and right-wing camps, and there had been some peaks of police persecution in the 1920s. The emergence of spaces of sociability among homosexuals in the 1960s made them

more visible and the local press began to publish complaints that revealed the concern generated by these changes in sexuality and gender relations. Campaigns and discourses that can be interpreted as a form of moral panic (COHEN, 2002) that called for the maintenance of traditional heteronormative logics. In this regard, the JUP, as Gabriel Bucheli (2019, p. 217) points out, can be understood as a reaction to the «disrespectful materialism» and «distortion of customs» of young people, among whom «licentiousness was set up as a moral principle». With an «anti-modern» vision, the JUP used ultra-traditionalist Catholic approaches to propose an alternative youth model, in which «the dignity of man, the mission of the family, the health of the community and the values of the homeland» were supported» (BUCHELI, 2019, p. 218). This organization perpetrated several attacks on teachers and schools, and one of its representatives became a CEP member in 1974. Similarly, Marcos Rey (2021, p. 81) analyzes how anti-communism in the late 1960s blamed «Marxist subversion» for corrupting the family and women, and defined young people as «morally unstable subjects» and potential victims of local communism. In his analysis, Rey demonstrates how anti-communist iconography sought to restore patriotism and the binary division of gender and traditional sexual identities in order to reinforce hierarchy and social order.

These conservative right-wing discourses converged during the authoritarian period in education. This is visible in the regime's coordination between the DSN and neo-Thomist, Hispanist and fundamentalist ideas at the educational level (CAMPODÓNICO; MASSERA; SALA, 1991). These values supported a *natural order* in which *good* and *evil* confronted each other, and anything that challenged them was considered foreign and a threat to the family, the pillar of society. Thus, in Uruguay, *subversion* came to mean any type of activity or attitude «aimed at undermining the military, economic, psychological, moral or political strength of a regime» (*El Soldado*, No. 80, December 1981, p. 32) and young people were considered one of the groups most vulnerable to the «contamination» of «sexual deviation». For Lieutenant Colonel Buenaventura Caviglia,⁵ representative of the Armed Forces' hard line, that is why the war was «integral» and should encompass all fronts, including the moral and psychological ones. The enemy – he added – had encouraged «alcoholism, family dissolution and disintegration through divorce and vices, prostitution, pornography, free love, which have been destroying the morality and character of a people that was once tough and indomitable» (CAVIGLIA, 1974, p. 231). Accordingly, the goal was to «disturb the sexual instincts» among the new generation in order to stimulate «attitudes of laziness and debasement which dialectically will open the door to communism» (CAVIGLIA, 1974, p. 208).

For all these reasons, the control of education was considered a strategic topic to train the new generations in line with the values and foundations of the «new Uruguay» (MARCHESI, 2001). The military intervention aimed at reorganizing the system to make it both a means of conveying values and a form of social discipline, making it essential to purge its cadres and closely monitor the work of its teachers and authorities.

The regulations generated

The first regulatory change that clearly enabled persecution for *moral reasons* was Law No. 14,101 of 1973, which, in addition to promoting denunciation, preventing unionization and political activism, also required teachers to maintain a «moral conduct in accordance with their functional obligations», as stated in Article 39 of the Common Provisions.⁶ In turn, this requirement was taken up by CONAE

Ordinance No. 17, which included as one of the requirements to be a civil servant in the educational system to have «moral conduct in accordance with the purposes of the organization and the duties of the position» (VITALIS, 2011, p. 21). This allowed authorities to dismiss a teacher if he/she carried out «acts contrary to morals and good customs or improper conduct in the performance of his/her duties; in the case of teachers, having criminal records that inhibit the moral education of students shall be considered a cause for dismissal» (VITALIS, 2011, p. 21). This Ordinance, therefore, aimed to control and standardize teachers' behavior inside and outside the classroom, since a legal violation or impropriety (wherever it took place) exposed them to be considered unfit to morally educate students, which was grounds for dismissal. In a similar vein, Ordinance No. 28 addressed this issue and established as mandatory «Not having any judicial, police or national security-related criminal record that inhibits the teaching function» and further defined «having criminal records that inhibit the moral and civic education of students» (Ordinance No. 28) as grounds for dismissal.

These three regulations were the most commonly used in the indictments brought against the 65 teachers for moral ineptitude during this period. Of these, 19 people were accused of being homosexuals, while the rest were women investigated for «elusive» sexual behaviors and male teachers accused of child sexual abuse, indecent assault and problematic use of psychoactive substances. Disrespect for school authority and patriotic symbols are also included in this category. It is interesting to note that the category of moral ineptitude does not generally include cases of crimes or felonies (thefts from the institution, embezzlement of funds from school economies or school canteens), teachers who forged signatures on public documents, those who faked illnesses to obtain medical leave or who received wage payments that were not due to them.⁷ In turn, the Council's administrative practices, which unified disrespect for authority and patriotic symbols and homosexuality (and other sexual practices) under the same label, confirm the ideological matrix analyzed in the previous section, as well as the fact that morality was integrated into a nationalist political project that ended up generating regulatory ideals about who would be in charge of taking on the task of educating the desired subjects of the nation.

Therefore, these institutional practices instrumentalized teachers as part of a transformation project that legitimized the authorities to erode the always artificial separation between the public and the private, on the assumption that there was only one morality and that, if the subjects were not *decent*, they were not moral subjects, hence directly linking a teacher's professional potential with what he or she did in his or her intimate life. This blurring of the boundary between the public and the private was something new and typical of the dictatorial regime. During the 20th century in Uruguay, there were no regulations that appealed to this type of figures to prevent access to teacher training or for the exercise of teaching within the educational system. At the beginning of the 20th century in Uruguay, as José Pedro Barrán, Gerardo Caetano and Teresa Porzecanski (1996) point out, a cultural matrix was installed that tended to nationalize the notion of *the public* and to secundarize private space *matters*, generating a strong social legitimization that these aspects should not be addressed by the State or through legislation. Accordingly, political and social leaders «could not – should not – make the private public, emphatically separating both spheres...» (BARRÁN; CAETANO; PORZECANSKI, 1996, p. 58). It is clear that the separation between the two dimensions is artificial and political, as feminist literature has profusely pointed out, but the social legitimization that the State should not advance on “private” matters had such an impact both on the press (which avoided talking about politicians' intimate matters) and on the public space, frequently making such matters invisible in

the debate. But this defense of the right to privacy and a liberal approach coexisted, as pointed out by the same authors, with a certain tendency that sought to regulate intimacy and privacy, a tension in which the first pole of the pairing often triumphed in order to stop or soften the more disciplinary attempts. The only traceable precedent in which the disciplinary attempt succeeded was precisely during the dictatorship of Gabriel Terra (1933-1939), when conservative thought found a favorable conjuncture to impose its logic through a number of reforms in the Primary and Normal Education Council. Historian Eugenio Petit Muñoz denounced the attempt to impose a single morality when evaluating teachers and student teachers, since the proposal argued that «the teacher should be an element of moral authority, of manners that display a well-defined mastery of one's own nature» (PETIT MUÑOZ, 1944, p. 161).

The production of «evidence» and the coordination of surveillance apparatuses

On July 18, 1980, José and Mario,⁸ two young teachers, went for a night walk along the promenade of a small town in the center of the country. That day everything had been quite normal, but when, sheltered in the darkness of the grove, they kissed each other goodbye, they were arrested by two police officers. A simple kiss thus became the starting point of a judicial and administrative proceedings in which police officers, judges, physicians, lawyers and educational authorities collaborated, firstly, to deprive them of their freedom for 27 days and then, seven months later, to dismiss them from Primary school. During the indictment proceedings, which took some 167 pages, most of these actors sought to confirm the homosexual identity of both men, speculated on the inappropriateness of their working with children and debated on the legal grounds that should be used to expel them from the educational system. This case, which can be considered emblematic, is analyzed in this section in relation to the rest of the cases of teachers accused of being homosexual that were found in the Primary Education archive, in order to see common features and unique aspects at the same time.⁹

To the extent that a person's sexual identity is difficult to prove and is blurred among multiple practices that are not always coherent, the police and administrative apparatus often sought to produce *evidence* to confirm the systematicity of the challenged behavior, in order to demonstrate the existence of that abject identity. In this regard, during the indictment brought against both teachers, Mario was asked if he felt «sexual inclinations» for persons of the female sex (Folder No. 1109/980, folio 1, p. 27), at what age he had begun to have sexual relations with persons of the same sex and with how many men he had had sexual intercourses up to that moment. The same questions were asked to José, who explained that he felt «sexual inclinations for persons of the female sex [...] after trying and understanding me» (Folder No. 1109/980, folio 1, p. 29), and in fact stated in his defense that Mario «was the only person of the same sex [with whom] I had sexual relations» and that this «came about in an unexpected way and given the understanding that arose between the two of us» (Folder No. 1109/980, folio 1, p. 29).

In turn, it was common for the police to put psychological pressure on the detainee with insults, taunting, threats or manipulations in order to obtain a «confession» about his or her identity. This logic of producing truth about oneself through confession (FOUCAULT, 1998) was seen as irrefutable evidence and, as soon as the teacher «acknowledged» the fact for which he was being accused, he

automatically sealed his dismissal. Therefore, phrases such as «the accused widely confess their unlawful actions» (Folder No. 1109/980, p. 5) appear many times on the pages of both teachers' records.

In this sense, Mario currently recalls the episodes of that night and points out how his partner realized that they were being followed by two *cops*,¹⁰ so he suggested that they should split off. But the warning came too late and, once the arrest was made, the police officers deployed different forms of psychological violence to get them to sign the statement: «“You have to say such and such, otherwise this doesn't end here”, “You get out of here if you confirm this, otherwise this goes on”. Well, at that time I believed in what they told me... and what they wanted me to say was written down» (Interview with Mario, Dec. 11, 2019). The folder allows us to know the statements obtained, since the Chief of Police sent a copy to the Primary school in Official Letter No. 106. José and Mario stated that they kissed each other on the mouth on the promenade that night because they had been having an affective-sexual relationship for almost a year after they met in a group of friends with whom they shared outings to the beach and leisure activities (Folder No. 1109/980, file N 1-8, p. 1).

However, the detainees did not always end up being successfully manipulated by the authorities. On other occasions, the accused teachers flatly denied the label of homosexual or only half-accepted it in an attempt to relativize the episode or the impact of the experience on their biography. For example, Martín, who had already been arrested before 1973 by the police for inquiries about his homosexuality, acknowledged during the preliminary investigation carried out in 1975 that he had had «sporadic» homosexual experiences in his adolescence, but that he had also had relations with women, explaining that these homoerotic experiences were already over, since «at present, I do not have relations with men» (Folder No. 2710/975, p. 40). This provisional nature of the practices and the lack of a direct relationship with the identity labels caused the administrative language to become more sophisticated and accurate. The files sometimes use the designation «active homosexual» (Folder No. 2935/1975, p. 3 and Folder No. 2936/1975, p. 3), «having tried practices in that sense» (Folder No. 4083/1974, p. 5), «engaged in the practice of homosexual relations» (Folder No. 1527/980, p. 7), to refer to individuals who were exercising their non-hetero-conforming sexuality at the time of the investigation, on the understanding that such practices were irrefutable evidence that the «aberrant inclination» was part of that subjectivity.

When the detainees repeatedly denied the accusation, the Police then deployed other strategies. A widely used one was to perform a medical examination in the detainee in order to «certify» the practice of anal sex.¹¹ For example, teacher Sergio and his partner underwent a forensic examination. The confirmation of their sexual orientation was thus reinforced thanks to the «medical certificate of the practitioner who examined both pederasts» (Folder No. 1527/980, p. 7). José and Mario were also subjected to a medical examination for the purpose of producing this type of evidence, as well as to determine who was the «active» partner and who was the «passive» partner in the relationship. The public service physician certified that Mario «reports having had aberrant same-sex sexual relations since he was very young and today's examination showed no recent anal tearing lesions» (Folder No. 1109/980, file 1, p. 7), whereas, regarding José, the same physician stated that «upon examination of the anal region, there were no signs of lesions» (Folder No. 1109/980, file 1, p. 9). Furthermore, it appears from the folder that Mario acknowledged during the interrogation that «he played the role of a woman», while his partner «played the role of a man» (Folder No. 1109/980, file 1, p. 3), and the same was confirmed by José in his statement, «he played the role of a woman and I played the role of

a man, and this was repeated every time we performed such act» (Folder No. 1109/980, file 1, p. 5). And these statements are repeated again in the record by one of the intervening attorneys.

In turn, the expressions *like a woman* and *like a man* refer to the heteronormative logic that constructs some corporealities and practices as mere abject copies of heterosexual practice (BUTLER, 2005) and place these behaviors as something subaltern and lacking their own specificity and internal logics. All these records also reveal how the Uruguayan Police and the Primary School bureaucracy continued to identify homosexuals (as in the region and in almost all the Mediterranean culture) with the so-called *Latin model* (PERLONGHER, 1987) in which the traditional gender classification schemes are reproduced, according to which the man is the one who penetrates with his sex women or other *feminized* men under the category of *gay*, *queer* or *sissy*. The reproduction of the hierarchy in the relationship means that the active (*stallion*, *bugger*) partner is often not considered homosexual and almost completely escapes the stigma. And it was precisely this logic that José appealed to in his disclaimers when he emphasized the exceptionality of his sexual practices with another man, as well as the active sexual role he always played in them. In any case, for the Primary Education Intervening Council both things were indications of moral ineptitude and received equal disciplinary treatment.

While homosexuality in Uruguay had not been a crime since 1934, in order to legally prosecute the detainee, a case of *indecent assault* was sought by «demonstrating» practices against morality in public spaces or in the educational centers themselves. In the case of José and Mario, this strategy allowed the judicial system to hand down a sentence of 27 days of imprisonment on them, which was served in the central jail of the departmental Police Headquarters. The prosecution was made public and generated a great impact in that town. «One of the jailers, one afternoon, threw us the local newspaper, which reported the police operation and why we had been arrested. I couldn't help but think of all the parents of my students: what they would be saying! », recalls Mario in an interview on 11/12/2019.

In turn, the authorities, in order to strengthen the case or when they were not able to arrest the person *in flagrante delicto*, tried to appeal for witnesses to ensure that the impudent acts informed had taken place. In the case of José and Mario, the chief of police of the department pointed out in his note to the authorities of the Intervening Council that he had obtained the testimony of a citizen who could certify how both teachers were walking along the street «arm in arm» (Folder No. 1109/980, file 1, p. 9). The need to confirm the visibilization of a homosexual identity in public spaces by verifying «objective» behaviors led the witnesses to declare things that do not seem very plausible. In statements made to the Investigation Department, details appear about the precautions taken by both of them to have their meetings, even moving to other areas or using houses considered safe (relatives) to avoid arousing suspicion or being detected, so it is not very plausible that they would have walked *arm in arm* in front of the whole town, a visibility policy that is not consistent with their sustained clandestinity strategies.

Similar doubts were raised by the indictment and dismissal faced by Adrián in 1976. In the investigation initiated due to a relationship problem among officials and irregularities in the management of an Intervening Council's section, several workers who had a strong conflict with the boss and Adrián accused the latter of not working together and of being a homosexual. Adrián flatly denied all the accusations and pointed out that all he did was «to play hands like anyone else» (Folder No. 409/1975, p. 85). Although one of his colleagues indicated that he had always thought that the rumor

about his homosexuality «was a joke», the investigator was able to obtain the testimony of one of the employees, who was at odds with Adrian, who stated that «when all the staff were gathered, he tried to grope me by touching my member, to which I reacted by giving him a push, but this person did not react and this did not happen again [sic]» (Folder No. 409/1975, p. 96). The recorded statements indicate that another of Adrian's workmates explained that «he witnessed the incident he narrated [...] and that he could not determine if his attitude was due to a joking mood, to which Adrian points out that it was in a joking mood because it is his manner» (Folder No. 409/1975, p. 97). It is striking that the incident reported six years after its occurrence, despite conflicting statements, was taken as true and that, in such a homophobic context, a homosexual dared, in broad daylight, in front of all his workmates, during a workday, to touch *the member* of a colleague for erotic-sexual purposes. In his defense, Adrian pointed out – unsuccessfully – how the accusations did not constitute proof or even half proof, but they were nothing more than «infamous comments about me» (File No. 409/1975, p. 111.).

Also striking is the appearance, in some cases, of homosexuals who declared «of their own free will» to the Police that they actually knew the accused in question and confirmed his sexual orientation because they had shared parties or outings to «get men to have sexual contacts» (Folder No. 2710/975, p. 20). In the proceedings it was even argued as an element that provided more certainty of veracity to the testimony that the informer had the same sexual orientation as the accused, but the administrative proceeding never included any discussion of the way in which these were produced/induced by the police institution, a situation that confirms that the loss of autonomy of the Primary School during the dictatorship was not only pedagogical, but also administrative and legal.

In turn, in light of the *corpus* analyzed, collaboration and coordination between the police-military surveillance apparatuses, the educational institution and, on some occasions, the neighbors of the locality where the teacher lived, seems to have prevailed. These crossings of information and surveillance were more effective in the interior of the country than in the capital, where population density facilitated anonymity and the invisibility of different survival strategies. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the cases in which a teacher was accused of being homosexual were in small towns, where social and institutional control had a record and was tighter. In this regard, the departmental inspector – a particularly trusted person and part of the civilian staff that collaborated with the Uruguayan dictatorship – played a key role in the prosecution of José and Mario. In a note addressed to the investigating attorney of the case, dated September 30, 1980, she acknowledged that «in order to verify the public comments and attitudes observed in teachers' meetings or in the aforementioned teachers' appearances at these offices, the undersigned requested the collaboration of the Head Office of Politics» to «put an end to what was considered contrary to the good moral principles that a teacher should have» (Folder No. 1109/980, page 1, p. 31). This official, reproducing the conservative matrix that defined as indispensable a behavior aligned with the values of the *new Uruguay*, put her two subordinates in the spotlight of the police surveillance apparatus that finally arrested them. During his interview, Mario clearly recalled the arrival of this regional inspector in the department where he worked: «she thought about making a raid, persecuting several teachers, because she thought we could be bad people for children's education» (Interview with Mario on 12/11/2019).

The Chief of Police of the department where José and Mario were arrested acknowledged, «in view of confidential information obtained and in compliance with the order of the Command»,

that surveillance had begun on «the activities of two teachers who practice their profession in this department, since it was presumed that they themselves were performing acts against decency in public places and/or exposed to the public» (Folder No. 1109/980, file 1, p. 8). The follow-up «bore fruit», as both teachers were caught «*in fraganti* kissing each other on the mouth» (Folder No. 1109/980, file 1, p. 8). In the case of teacher Alberto, also dismissed for being homosexual (Folder No. 2935/1975), the information that triggered the investigation came from the Infantry Battalion of the town where he worked, which warned the Intervening Council about the teacher's behavior. Something similar happened to Carlos, who was denounced through Official Letter No. 2501/976 generated by an Infantry Battalion, which stated things that implied «an unusual gravity that calls into question a personal situation absolutely incompatible with the teaching function» (Folder 2936/1975, p. 2).

On other occasions, the administrative or police investigation was triggered by complaints from neighbors and people close to the school. Martín was denounced, among others, by two neighbors who stated that the head teacher was not

... well regarded in the neighborhood for having marked characteristics of homosexuality. That he has been seen several times wearing make-up and dressed as a woman in the city. That it is inexplicable how he can play such an important role in contact with children. He attends dances [...] wearing women's clothes and adornments. He walks in the company of people with the same characteristics [...] That he has even gone out in the street wearing women's underwear in the neighborhood (Folder 2710/1975, p. 50).

The complaints would suggest that one is dealing with a person who is experiencing some form of transition in terms of gender identity or who performs a *fag* identity, but it is difficult to confirm, since in the indictment, the informers stated that they only saw the head teacher dressed once during the local carnival festivities, while other witnesses completely denied this version. Additionally, both informers gave names of the homosexuals with whom the head teacher met and indicated addresses and meeting places of this group in their locality. This confirms, on the one hand, the strong surveillance and social control that existed in the small communities, as well as the existence of support for the moral policies developed by the civil-military dictatorship among some social sectors (both informers were well-known merchants in that locality). Their words confirm the anxiety of a part of society in the face of this type of performativities with *marked*, socially unexpected gender expressions, as well as the demand that the binary division and a traditional sexual identity be respected if one fulfilled a function in which there was *contact with children*. The idea of *contagion* associated with homosexuality, worked out by Jorge Salessi (1995) for the Río de la Plata, was present as a key aspect for removing teachers from their function due to the «delicate human material entrusted to their care» (Folder No. 1527/980, p. 7). Moreover, it was considered that the «prestige» of public education was at stake, so it was necessary to «adopt measures to extirpate (sic) from its bosom individuals lacking the essential moral conditions» for teaching (Folder No. 1109/980, file 1-8, p. 44). The surgical language widely used in military discourses and in the DSN is applied here to reinforce the need to radically separate this «sick» element from the living organism that was primary education.

The proceeding faced by Martín is also interesting because, in addition to the complaints, the Intervening Council received information provided by the local Police confirming that he had been

arrested on June 5, 1969, April 28, 1970, and March 17, 1973 «in all cases for problems inherent to his sexual conduct» (Folder No. 2710/1975, p. 21). This information is key, because Martín was already a teacher in 1973 and yet, at that time, it seems that there was no exchange of information between both institutional actors, which allowed him to continue to perform his teaching duties without problems. However, this exchange did take place in 1975, and it was then that he was dismissed.

With respect to the neighbors who participated in the school's development committee, the police report also stated the following:

... it has been noted that [...] he has won the affection of the members of the committee, taking advantage of their low level of education in different ways, solving economic problems, collaborating unselfishly with the committee, giving gifts to some of them, and in general showing himself to be affable in his dealings and meticulous in his duties (Folder No. 2710/1975, p. 5). He has taken advantage of their low level of education in different ways, solving economic problems, collaborating disinterestedly with the committee, giving gifts to some of them, and in general showing himself affable in his dealings with people and meticulous in his duties (Folder No. 2710/1975, p. 5).

All the virtues of a good teacher and his fluid communication with the school's neighbors and parents are recoded here as a form of manipulation that allowed this *marked homosexual* to keep them deceived, thus preventing complaints against him. The counterinsurgent preaching of teachers who sought to infiltrate the system and, through deception, corrupt parents and children by taking advantage of their ignorance, embodied the pages of this story.

Some closing remarks

From the proposed analysis, it emerges that during the authoritarian period there was a turning point in the way in which the Uruguayan State related to the homosexual population in the field of primary education. Although, before the civil-military dictatorship, there were homophobic discourses in society as well as claims by right-wing and ultra-right groups in favor of a fight against communism that included the repression of the changes that were taking place in the field of sexuality and gender relations, all these elements converged in the educational field only during the period analyzed.

In the first place, a new set of regulations was defined in accordance with the objectives and philosophical-educational assumptions of the regime, in which the *moral reasons* for dismissing teachers gained visibility, a framework from which a bureaucratic-administrative practice was constructed that gradually configured the scope and limits of this category. This caused the accusation of homosexuality (as well as political and union participation) to become during this stage a way to settle differences between workers, to take revenge or to move up in the workplace at the expense of others.

Additionally, a strong collaboration was developed between the Primary Education Intervening Council authorities and other state actors such as the Police and the Armed Forces in order to exchange information and adopt in a coordinated way procedures to definitely *extirpate* teachers suspected of being homosexual from the educational system. A part of society that denounced, followed up the cases by giving testimony of what they wanted to prove, and demanded the restoration of «order» in

public education for the sake of the children also converged in this coordination. The final result was the formulation of a state policy that put into operation an effective apparatus of identification and detention of teachers considered incompatible with the teaching function and with the educational project pursued by the civil-military regime because of their sexuality. These institutional practices strongly affected the privacy of the accused and also generated an important turning point in the traditional political differentiation of what was considered public and private, and its importance for the performance of a public task or function.

Dismissal on moral grounds was accompanied by a strong process of stigmatization and public scandal, which meant that the people affected often had to leave the locality in which they lived for good. Therefore, the social and political impact of these cases was not proportional to the number of people dismissed for this reason. Even today, in many of these localities there is a high level of remembrance of the episodes generated around the dismissal of the local teacher for moral reasons. It was then an exemplary message from the authoritarian regime for the affected group and for the whole society.

Finally, it is possible to think of these practices as part of a series of measures that rejected the Batllista matrix and its belligerent secularism, and that, in turn, sought to have the State establish and impose a Christian morality capable of combating the growing liberalization of sexuality and gender customs that were taking place globally. The development of this policy in the field of education, a topic of great centrality in the collective imaginary, can be understood then as the rehearsal of a moral policy that seems to have taken root much more in the interior than in the capital of the country. In short, the lack of *moral fitness* and its strongly cis-heteronormative logics can be understood as part of the cultural policy deployed by the dictatorial regime both to increase its social support and, at the same time, to discredit its enemies.

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Notas

- 1 Pacheco Areco's government (1967-1972) implemented Early Security Measures (state of exception) almost throughout his administration, thus initiating the path towards authoritarianism.
2. For global approaches to the history of education during this period, see Castagnola and Mieres (2004), Appratto and Artagaveytia (2004), Campodónico, Massera and Sala (1991), and Bralich (1987). On the student protest situation, see Markarian (2012); for an analysis on the dictatorship impact on Secondary Education, see Romano (2011), and for a state of the art on research into the intervention at the Markarian University (2015).
3. Bordaberry (Colorado Party) was elected president in 1971 and, together with the Armed Forces, dissolved the parliament on June 27, 1973, thus initiating 13 years of dictatorship.
4. According to official data provided in 1985 by the CEP, a total of 789 teachers were dismissed for political-partisan reasons during the dictatorship, but this study was unable to include all the cases that took place during the dictatorship.
5. Caviglia was a lieutenant colonel in the Uruguayan army reserve, lawyer and advisor to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Esmaco).
- 6 The only regulatory precedent was Art. 2, Item D of Decree-Law No. 10,388 (2/13/1943), which establishes the following as a condition for entry into public service: "To prove moral fitness by providing satisfactory information on life and customs".
7. Of the entire *corpus* analyzed, only one case of smuggling was found, which was labeled by the Legal Counsel of the Primary Education Intervening Council as a cause for dismissal, because Ordinance No. 28 required «to prove moral conduct in accordance with the purposes of the agency» (Folder No. 167/1978, p. 5).
8. These names, as well as those of all those affected by this type of violence, are fictitious, in order to protect them from possible consequences in the present.
9. In only one case was a woman explicitly accused of being homosexual, but the investigation determined that it was false.
10. Plainclothes (undercover) police officers.
11. It was common for forensic doctors to check the detainee's anus looking for fissures, bruises or any trace of semen that would allow them to confirm that this type of sexual practice had taken place.

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