



História Unisinos

E-ISSN: 2236-1782

efleck@unisinos.br

Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos
Brasil

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História Unisinos, vol. 18, núm. 3, septiembre-diciembre, 2014, pp. 452-463

Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos
São Leopoldo, Brasil

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Honoring repression: the award of the Peacemaker's Medal to state agents involved in security (1964-1985)

A repressão condecorada: a atribuição da Medalha do Pacificador a agentes do aparato de segurança (1964-1985)

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Abstract: The article analyzes the awarding of the Peacemaker's Medal to state officials involved in political repression in Brazil during the military dictatorship. The study aims to understand the characteristics of the medal and the criteria for awarding it, the justifications, the number of members of the intelligence community who were decorated and the time point when the medal was awarded during the period. For this purpose, the list of recipients was cross-referenced with the records produced by ex-political prisoners and human rights groups who denounced state agents for acts of torture. The article's conclusion is that the number of medals awarded to agents of repression is only a small percentage of the total. However, it is considerably higher in the case of the more prestigious category, "with Distinction". In addition, it shows that those state agents were decorated because of their involvement in political persecution, in spite of having violated human rights.

Keywords: military dictatorship, political repression, Peacemaker's Medal.

Resumo: A atribuição de Medalhas do Pacificador ao longo da ditadura militar brasileira a agentes do Estado envolvidos na repressão política é o objeto desse artigo. A investigação tem por objetivo compreender o perfil dessa medalha, os critérios de concessão da honraria, as justificativas, a proporção dos membros da comunidade de informações entre os agraciados e em que momentos isso foi feito. Para tanto, a lista dos condecorados foi cruzada com levantamentos efetuados por ex-presos políticos e grupos de defesa dos direitos humanos de agentes do Estado denunciados por terem praticado atos de tortura. Conclui-se que o número de agentes repressivos condecorados com a Medalha do Pacificador é reduzido no universo dos agraciados, mas expressivo quando se considera sua modalidade mais prestigiosa, "com Palma". Além disso, comprova-se que os encarregados da perseguição política no período, responsáveis por inúmeros casos de violação dos direitos humanos, não foram condecorados *a despeito* do que fizeram, mas *porque* o fizeram.

Palavras-chave: ditadura militar, repressão política, Medalha do Pacificador.

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When he was subpoenaed to testify at the National Truth Commission on May 10, 2013, the former head of the Intelligence Operations Detachment (DOI – Destacamento de Operações de Informação) of the Center of Internal Defense Operations (Codi – Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna) of São Paulo, Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, wore a discrete button in his left lapel, a miniature of the Peacemaker's Medal with Distinction. In his defense he said: "The one who should be here is not Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra. It is the Brazilian Army" (2013). In this way he attempted to call attention to the fact that, when violently fighting political opposition, he was following the Army guidelines. Implicitly he was stating that the illegal procedures used by DOI and its congeners, for which he had been called to testify in the Committee, were not only known to the upper hierarchy of the Armed Forces, but also accepted, encouraged and even rewarded by them.

Ustra commanded one of the main political repression agencies in Brazil during the harshest years of combat against the opposition. He lived daily with the systematic use of torture, abduction, murder and disappearance of political detainees. Later, already as a member of the Army Intelligence Center (CIE – Centro de Informações do Exército), he headed operations that led to the Lapa Massacre, in which part of the leaders of the Communist Party of Brazil were decimated. However, he never had the courage to publicly admit or defend the use of torture as a method to obtain information, at this hearing or in his two books (Ustra, 1987, 2006). He always denied this practice, even when standing before people who had suffered abuse at the hand of his subordinates.

When he stated that it was the Army that should be in his place, he sought to take refuge in the principle of binding obedience, justifying his actions as the result of orders from his hierarchical superiors. Even if military discipline cannot seriously be used as an excuse to violate human rights, the memory of the role played by the Army during that period is correct. During the military dictatorship and even after the political opening, the institution awarded the prestigious Peacemaker's Medal to various individuals who participated directly in the political violence, including the head of the DOI-Codi in São Paulo. This article proposes to analyze the granting of this honor during the military dictatorship to military people involved in the repression. The purpose of the investigation is to understand the characteristics of this medal, the criteria for granting it in the years from 1964 to 1985, how many members of the intelligence community were among the recipients and when it was awarded. Our thesis is that the Peacemaker's Medal, widely granted during the second half of the 20th century, was used as

a significant symbolic reward to the people working in repression during the military dictatorship, particularly its most prestigious modality, "with Distinction".

This fact, which has often been stated in the public space, but never scientifically investigated, leads to several questions about the relationship constructed during the years of the dictatorship between the military institution and the police state. Three of them particularly guide our work. The first is the place of involvement in repression in the military career: the valuing or not of this activity by the institution, the interest (financial, symbolic, in career development) – or, on the contrary, the stigma – of working for the police apparatus, the profile of the members of the system and how selection was performed. The literature on these aspects is very limited.

Repression was, however, a topic studied early, from a perspective, at the same time, of history, journalism and militancy. Since the 1970s, the wish to denounce the crimes committed and the setting up of a system of political repression aroused a number of studies, in some cases centered on the memory and career of a victim or an opposition group, more than on the repression apparatus itself (Almeida Filho, 1978; Fon, 1979; Langguth, 1979; Valli, 1986). In a second moment, there was an interest in the divisions among the military (Martins Filho, 1996; Chirio, 2012), the architecture of repression (BNM, 1985; Fico 2001) and how it operated (Huggins, 1998; Gaspari, 2002; Figueiredo, 2005; Joffily, 2012). There are also interviews, testimonies and memories of the protagonists of political persecution themselves (D'Araújo *et al.*, 1994a, b, c; Ustra, 1987, 2006; Frota, 2006; Netto and Medeiros, 2012), and also studies on the action and psychology of the repression agents (Souza, 2000; Huggins *et al.*, 2002). None of the works, however, adopted the military staff working in repression overall as an object, attempting to understand the procedures designed to *constitute* this new corporation within the armed institution, which would allow understanding how the Brazilian state was able to increase its repressive capacities until it became a police state.

The second line of reflection is the contribution of the practices and rituals peculiar to the Armed Forces in recruiting and recognizing the staff involved in repression, through their system of granting decorations. This aspect leads us to reflect on the interconnections between the military institution and the state apparatus and, consequently, on the militarization of the latter. Indeed, the fact that a specifically military medal was used to distinguish the agents of political repression implies an essentially martial *legitimacy* and *imaginary* of this pillar of the regime. These elements may contribute to the ongoing debate on the nature of the dictatorship.

In fact, since a few years ago the name “military dictatorship” is being surpassed by the adoption of the term “civilian-military dictatorship”, in an operation accompanied by a decrease in the interest regarding the specifically martial characteristics of the dictatorship and the institutional involvement of the Armed Forces in the regime (Reis, 2010, 2014). This change of name has been the subject of two criticisms. First as to the idea of “civil support”: researchers who are the heirs to Marxist interpretations (Dreifuss, 1981) denounce a globalizing view of civil society – including that of the “organic intellectuals” and of the military themselves – and insist on the class character of the segments that not only joined, but were also one of the pillars of the construction of the authoritarian project:

In brief, shifting the focus of analysis from a process of raw political dispute to a metaphysical, disembodied civil society, without any connection with the social classes and categories that were the bearers of class projects is to induce the honorable public to the mystification of history (Lemos, 2012; see also Melo, 2014).

Secondly, as to ignoring the growing militarization of the state and the regime, for Carlos Fico the coup was civilian-military, but the military character of the dictatorship was greater than the civilian participation, since members of the Armed Forces, and above all of the Army, occupied a significant number of strategic positions in the government, in large Brazilian companies and at other levels of political decision-making.

Certainly, as shown by Dreifuss, major positions in the first rank were given to civilian members of IPES and, more importantly, the economic policy of the first military government followed the dictates of a financial stabilization that was of interest to the international capital. But the successive crises of the period were solved manu militari and the progressive institutionalization of the repression apparatus also showed the military character of the regime. Likewise, successive military groups began to occupy positions in major government agencies. While we can speak of a civilian-military coup, what we had, however, was the implementation of a military regime – in two words: of a military dictatorship (Fico, 2004, p. 52).

Martins Filho systematizes this argument in a recent article, highlighting four aspects that, to his mind, would justify further debate on maintaining the term “military regime” (2014): the homogeneity – despite the internal disputes – of the military world compared to the

civilian one; the military origin of the official ideology and of the associated imaginaries (anticivilianism and antipoliticism); the militarization of the structure of power and the state; and the essentially martial dynamics of the political crises during the dictatorship. In this debate it is clearly important to understand the forms of retribution and recognition of the repression agents, since in the case of the Peacemaker’s Medal it is the Army that rewards a structure – the repression machine – at the service of the state to impose a given political project.

The third question is that of the imaginaries of the medal and the Distinction, associated with the agents of repression. By awarding the decoration, the military authorities transformed the players of state violence – civilians and military – into defenders of national order and cohesion, and also of “civil peace”, while at the same time valuing their image as warriors.

The Peacemaker’s Medal

It is nothing new to associate the members of the political repression with the Peacemaker’s Medal. In the literature about the security and intelligence agencies, there are repeated mentions of this form of rewarding with a prize those involved in fighting the political opposition. According to Elio Gaspari,

One of the coins circulated by the Army Intelligence Center was to grant the torturers the Peacemaker’s Medal, an award for merit coveted by officers, politicians and businesspeople, because it expressed the acknowledgment of acts of bravery or relevant services rendered to the Army (Gaspari, 2002, p. 22).

The sector connected to intelligence and security, however, was given a smaller proportion of this modality of distinction, which was also meant to reward civilians and military people with very different profiles from each other. Instituted in August 1953, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of the Duke of Caxias, the honor was granted, the next year, to all officers and non-coms of the Army, active and in the reserve, who had been in the army for 15 or more years on that date and who were serving in the Army or in a national security agency (BE, nº 10, 1954).

The cult of Caxias began in 1923, the year after the beginning of the lieutenants’ movement [*Movimento Tenentista*], and was the target of various “symbolic investments” over the next decades, but always centered on the concern with discipline and concordance in the Army. Two years later, on Caxias’ birth date, August 25, the Soldier’s Day began to be celebrated. According to Celso Castro,

in the 1930s the main content attributed to the image of military people was “the affirmation of the value of legality and of distance from politics, for the sake of the internal unity of the Army, torn apart in the 1920s by several internal rebellions and political cleavages” (2000, p. 107). During the course of the decade the speeches pronounced during the Soldier's Day ceremony began to associate the image of the commander to the nation itself, underscoring territorial integrity. As the public atmosphere tended to the political closure characteristic of the *Estado Novo* (1937), the emblematic content ascribed to Caxias became that of authority, so that military unity was no longer an issue in itself but was put at the service of the cause of the sustenance of a strong state. His action as “peacemaker” and guarantor of national cohesion was pushed to the forefront; in the words of José Murilo de Carvalho, “the conservative national face of the Republic” (in Castro, 2000). After the communist insurrection of 1937, the meaning of respect for Caxias also took on the aspect of “fighting subversion”, a content that was strengthened during the military dictatorship.

The end of the *Estado Novo* (1945) did not weaken the reverence for the figure of Caxias, which resolutely accompanied the democratization process. In 1949 the Ministry of War received the name of Duque de Caxias Palace, and a few years later, in 1953, his mausoleum was inaugurated in front of the Ministry building as part of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of his birth. Another component of the sesquicentennial celebration, the Peacemaker's Medal, created the same year, evoked the contents expressed over the years of cult of the head of the military: “symbol of national unity”, “Army cohesion”, “spirit of order” and “discipline” (Portaria nº 116, 23/02/1954).

The primary objective of the medal was to honor authorities, civilian or military institutions and individuals who had contributed to the homage rendered on the sesquicentennial. Another objective was to render homage to the officers and non-coms of the Army who had 15 or more years of service in the Army or in a national security agency. In 1954 alone 7,065 medals were distributed, 6,935 of them to military people, 128 to civilians and 2 to institutions. The most lasting purpose of the honor was, however, to distinguish military institutions (of the Army and other Armed Forces) and civilian ones, as well as Brazilians or foreigners who had “rendered highly meritorious services to the development of ties of friendship and understanding between the Brazilian Army and those of other nations, or who merited special homage from the Brazilian Army for their relevant services” (Decreto nº 37.745, 17/08/1955). Awarding the Medal was the attribution of the Minister of War, based on a proposal made by the Chief of Staff of the Army,

which would be altered in 1959, when the responsibility for doing so would become the attribution of the Office of the Ministry of War (Decreto nº 45.949, 30/04/1959). The award ceremony takes place on Soldier's Day, which is the same as Caxias' birthday.

The patronage of the Duke of Caxias to the army, which goes back to 1926, was made official in March 1962, together with that of various military units (Decreto nº 51.429, 13/05/1962). At the end of that year, a special category of distinction was introduced in the Peacemaker's Medal, the modality “with Palm” (= with Distinction), for “Brazilian military people who in times of peace, accomplishing their duty, distinguished themselves by duly proven personal actions of abnegation, courage and bravery at risk of their lives” (Decreto nº 1.884, 17/12/1962).

We may assume that creating the Distinction at the end of 1962 was a first stage in the integration of the decoration into the military scheme of the fight against the so-called “subversive threat”, in the context of the intensification of the cold war atmosphere in South America after the Cuban Revolution. In fact, 1962 is a key year in the articulation of the civilian and military right wing which would lead to the coup d'état. In particular that year coincides with the broader dissemination of the theory of Revolutionary War, originating in France, among the higher officers of the Brazilian Armed Forces. According to this theory, the communist revolution had not yet been implemented in Brazil, but it was ongoing, via social mobilizations and the ideological offensive of the left (Martins Filho, 2004). The imminence of the revolution, according to this logic, is the equivalent to the approaching of a civil war, whose combatants on the side of “order”, i.e. of the state – later decorated with the Peacemaker's Medal – were to be recruited and trained.

One year after the 1964 coup, under the Castelo Branco Administration, there was a small but significant change in the text that justifies awarding the medal with Distinction. There is an added need to prove “personal acts of abnegation, courage and bravery with a risk to life” with witness statements, authenticated by the unit commander, or copy of the outcome of the Military Police Enquiry, a repressive instrument that was plentifully used during the first months of the authoritarian government's “operation cleanup”. Article 2 suggests another change, this time a weighty one: The medal is still awarded by the Minister of War, but the proposals can be made in writing, “mandatorily specifying the facts or actions that motivated them”, and “sent through the hierarchy to the Office of the Ministry of War” (Decreto nº 56.518, 29/06/1965). These new requirements, namely, to prove the facts and go through the military hierarchy chain, can be explained by the new power's wish to instrumentalize

the Distinction, as it was interested in using it to thank or remember emblematic figures and heroic feats.

The decree, which would remain in force for ten years, also added the reasons that would lead to losing the right to use the medal: (a) medal recipients whose political rights were suspended; (b) people condemned for crimes against national institutions; (c) those who refuse or return the insignias that they have received; (d) Brazilian military who have committed acts against military honor; (e) officers sentenced to an accessory punishment of indignity and privates expelled for disciplinary reasons (Decreto nº 56.518, 29/06/1965). The new wording clearly suggests a need to acknowledge the merits of those who support the new political order and, at the same time, excludes the military and civilians identified as unworthy of the Army due to their ideological position.

The subsequent change of the provision regarding the medal, dated September 1975, includes the possibility of civilians receiving the Distinction. The decree also creates a modality for the military in the Army to receive it without the Distinction, with practically the same wording, in cases in which no risk to life was involved (Decreto nº 76.195, 2/9/1975). Curiously, according to the table that we are using as a source,³ only three civilians were awarded this modality of medal, two of them before 1975 and only one ostensibly involved in political repression: Luiz Timóteo de Lima, decorated in 1971. He was an agent of the Department of Political and Social Order (Departamento de Ordem Política e Social – DOPS) in Rio de Janeiro, worked at DOI-Codi, which was located in the 1st Battalion of Army Police, and is on the list of torturers in project *Brasil: nunca mais* [Brazil: Never Again]. He was one of the people denounced by the Federal Prosecutor's Office of Rio de Janeiro in 2013 for the abduction and disappearance of journalist Mário Alves (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 2013).⁴ It is surprising that more agents of DOPS, particularly those in São Paulo, which was the department's most active center in the country, were not rewarded with the superior variant of the Peacemaker's Medal.

Still in 1975, post mortem awards were authorized, possibly to honor those who had fallen during the persecution of opponents to the regime. Among those who might lose the right to use the decoration were “the Brazilian officers declared unworthy of being officers by decision of the Military Supreme Court” and “the military and civilians punished based on the Institutional Acts” (Decreto nº 76.195, 2/9/1975). The terms of this decree appear better adapted to the context of the war against subversion than the previous ones. When referring to

the institutional acts and including the possibility of an award after death, even though the expression “fighting subversion” is not formalized, it reflects more the years that preceded it than those that would follow, since the most intense phase of repression was to end little over a year after it was determined, with the Lapa Massacre.

When the government changed from the hands of the military to the civilians, there were minor changes in 1986 (Decreto nº 92.695, 20/5/1986). Under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the Insignia of the Flag was introduced in April 2002 “to honor military organizations and civilian institutions, Brazilian or foreign, that merit special honors from the Army” (Decreto nº 4.207, 23/4/2002).

From 1954 to 2011 37,795 medals were awarded (7,068 in 1954), of which 30,479 to the military (81%), 7,163 to civilians (19%), 153 to institutions (civilian bodies or military organizations) and 1,660 to foreigners. For the period comprised within the chronological section of this article, the distribution is as follows:

It should be underscored that, although a minority, the presence of non-military people is numerically significant, showing the importance ascribed by the Army to holding a dialogue with some sectors of the civilian population.

The honor, which is currently still being given by the Army, goes much beyond the spectrum of political repression and it is definitely not an expression of the involvement of the honorees in activities of this kind. Differently from Argentina, only part of the Brazilian Armed Forces were involved in repression (Novaro and Palermo, 2006, p. 50, note 23). It is no myth, however, that a considerable number of members of the intelligence community received this honor. This fact creates an uncomfortable common denominator between the honorees of the period, because they share the acknowledgment for services rendered to the Army with individuals involved in torture, murder and disappearances.

Separating the chaff from the wheat

The main difficulty in analyzing the presence of agents of the state responsible for torture and other forms of violence among the honorees awarded the Peacemaker's Medal lies in identifying the human composition of the repression agencies. We have a large bibliography, including some memorials from the military who were involved in political persecution, in which some agents are mentioned by name. There is also an appreciable number

³ The list of medal honorees was kindly provided to us by Prof. Dr. Maria Celina D'Araújo, whom we thank. It was obtained on site http://www.sgex.eb.mil.br/sistemas/almanaque_med_mdp/index.php, in which one can search individually, based on a specific name, using a program that made it possible to obtain all the data in an Excel list.

⁴ The other two are José Maria Nunes, post mortem (Portaria Ministerial nº 1.553, 14/10/1974), and Adoval Gama (Portaria Ministerial nº 1.612, 3/11/1975).

Table 1. Recipients of the Peacemaker's Medal 1964-1985.**Tabela 1.** Agraciados com a Medalha do Pacificador 1964-1985.

Year	Total	Distinction	Military	Civilians	Institution	Foreigners
1964	301	28	261	40	0	14
1965	198	2	154	42	2	64
1966	419	9	302	116	1	83
1967	146	13	73	73	0	28
1968	266	1	107	159	0	24
1969	250	8	160	88	2	27
1970	275	25	200	75	0	32
1971	282	32	213	69	0	38
1972	612	104	465	146	1	62
1973	533	62	411	122	0	41
1974	210	74	158	52	0	11
1975	124	29	96	28	0	3
1976	184	12	125	59	0	8
1977	221	6	165	56	0	19
1978	406	7	317	88	1	26
1979	470	15	378	92	0	24
1980	491	21	378	113	0	18
1981	647	18	481	166	0	17
1982	663	20	495	168	0	18
1983	593	11	468	125	0	18
1984	796	30	603	193	0	27
1985	620	14	521	99	0	20
Total	8,707	541	6,531	2,169	7	622

Note: We warn that the data must be used with care, due to possible errors in the list of honorees. When a same individual has received the medal doubly (with and without Distinction), they appear on the list only once.

of articles in the press dealing with specific situations and specific individuals. However, we lack a consistent and reliable comprehensive survey.⁵

The great number of records involving the authoritarian period and currently available for research contrasts with the difficult access to official data about the provenance, the profile and the functions of members of the military and civilian policemen dedicated to fighting political crimes. As the repression records are persecution-oriented, they are more directly useful for seeking information about the targets of surveillance than about those who performed the surveillance. Illustrating the

zeal of repressive institutions in avoiding the exposure of the names of their employees is a confidential document of the National Intelligence Service (Serviço Nacional de Informações – SNI), found in the National Archives in Brasília, dated July 1980. It is the answer to a request by jurist and human rights advocate Dalmo de Abreu Dallari for photographs of the DOI-Codi agents who were working in the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Justifying the refusal, it was argued that

Intelligence operations must be as secure and confidential as possible, especially when – as the case of those

⁵ This work is being done by the National Truth Commission and by the state and municipal committees.

performed by the DOIs – they are for the purpose of offering information to combat subversion and terrorism. This security and confidentiality will necessarily include the identity of those who are involved in these activities. For this very reason, a military person is designated to work at a DOI through the publication of the appointment in a Confidential Internal Bulletin of the Internal Defense Command in that region.

If, as a rule, it is unacceptable to inform the complete composition of a DOI, this is even more the case when someone claims to be able to enjoy this right due to mere suspicion. Furthermore, even legally, considering the norms of the Regulation for Safeguarding Confidential Issues, this disclosure is forbidden (SNI, 1980, p. 2).

An exception to this trend are the entry books of DOPS found by former political prisoner and member of the Truth Commission of São Paulo Ivan Seixas in the State Archives. Although it is a significant source to prove that entrepreneurs and members of the United States embassy visited that agency, it does not offer complementary information regarding the profile of the visitors or the nature of the interactions (Brito, 2013).

The absence of more sophisticated search tools is also an obstacle to easily locating the bureaucratic documents that might throw additional light on the human make-up of the repression agencies. The results of nonsystematic attempts to locate administrative documents that would indicate the employees of some Army departments were not very promising. An example of this are the records of the regular meetings of the intelligence community of São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro. They mention the presence of representatives of the state security and intelligence agencies, but not their names. The results of the search for the names of well-known agents in the collection of the DOPS in São Paulo or in the National Archives are scarce concerning those who were the object of some kind of control by the repression agencies themselves because they committed some kind of offense, were involved in misdemeanors or administrative failures. This may occur less due to the lack of papers that mention the agents than to the absence of effective instruments to access their contents.

So far it is not, therefore, the collections of the repression agencies that can supply significant numbers of names of the people who worked in the repression agencies but rather, paradoxically, those of the victims of political violence. The best known is certainly the survey performed by project *Brasil: Nunca Mais* (BNM), containing 444 mentions of state agents accused of acts of torture, compiled from the complaints presented by

political prisoners at the hearings and recorded in the over 700 cases filed in the Military Court (BNM, 1985).

Before this list, whose extent can be measured by the number of designations and the consistency of the denunciations, at least another three became public in 1978 and 1979, before the Law of Amnesty, in an effort to hold responsible the people who had committed the state violence. The first listing of state agents involved in abuse contains 442 names and was elaborated by the Committee of Solidarity with the Revolutionaries of Brazil between February 1974 and February of the next year. Concluded on October 23, 1975 and sent to the President of the Federal Council of the Bar Association of Brazil (Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil – OAB), the second list had 233 names, collected by political activists who had done time in the Presídio da Justiça Militar Federal Barro Branco, in São Paulo, detained between September 1969 and February 1975. Both were published by Maria da Fonte Publishing House in Portugal, under the auspices of the Committee for the General Amnesty of Political Prisoners in Brazil (Comitê Pró-Amnistia Geral dos Presos Políticos no Brasil) (1976). A few months before the enactment of the Amnesty Law in April 1979, there was a third listing of 251 agents by 14 political prisoners who had been held in Presídio Milton Dias Moreira, in Rio de Janeiro. The three surveys gained national repercussion when they were published by the alternative opposition newspaper *Em Tempo* in 1978 and 1979 (Chirio and Joffily, 2014).

Although they express a marked concern for the veracity and with proving the data collected, these lists have their limitations: they are declarative sources, they were made without using techniques that would ensure geographic completeness or representativeness, besides presenting several first names without their complement or codenames, as a result of the circumstances under which they became known. However, they are an excellent beginning to know the agents of repression, both civilian and military, above all if we limit ourselves to the full names and cross-reference them with other kinds of sources.

In order to measure, among those who received the Peacemaker's Medal, the presence of members of political repression, data obtained from three distinct sources were added to the base constituted from these surveys: (i) a report from the National Truth Commission about the clandestine detention centers (CNV, 2014), (ii) a survey by the Truth Commission of São Paulo about DOI-Codi agents and (iii) list of military people involved in fighting the Araguaia Guerrilla War mentioned in a document of the Army Intelligence Center (*in* Moraes and Silva, 2005, p. 646).

The data on those decorated with the Peacemaker's Medal were examined considering this information.

Among the 10,775 who received it between 1964 and 1988, 233 were identified as participants in the political repression, be it in the documents mentioned here, be it by the military authorities themselves. Indeed, among the possible justifications for awarding the medal appear, at the height of the “years of lead”, mentions of “fighting subversion” or “terrorism”, which, enounced by the Army itself, leave no doubt about the involvement of the individuals cited in political persecution.⁶ While it is true that these people are small in number in the universe of those who were decorated, the inverse perspective is more eloquent: among the 717 individuals identified or publicly denounced as repressors, slightly less than one-third (233) received the medal.⁷ This proportion is important. Although in the last half century the Peacemaker's Medal has been a widely awarded decoration⁸, particularly to the military and even more so to officers, it was a significant form of symbolic retribution to the intelligence community.

Decorating repression

Ministerial administrative rulings awarding the Peacemaker's Medal mostly justify it with predefined texts. Often only the letter of the alphabet corresponding to the reason is mentioned, which depends, among other things, on the status of the honoree. Briefly, beginning with the decree that was in force between 1965 and 1975, we have (a) the *Brazilian military* distinguished for acts of abnegation, courage and bravery at risk of their life (with Distinction); (b) the *military of the Army* who participated directly in the celebrations of the sesquicentennial of the Duke of Caxias; (c) the *military on active duty in the Army* who contributed to raise the Army's prestige in the Armed Forces of other countries; (d) the *foreign civilians and military* who rendered services to consolidate the ties of friendship between the Armies of Brazil and their country; (e) the *military of other Armed Forces of Brazil* who merit special homage from the Army; (f) the *Brazilian institutions and civilians* under the conditions described in item “e” (Decreto nº 56.518, 29/06/1965). The exception to the rule is acts of heroism, saving people in cases of fire, waterspout, drowning etc.; in these cases the specific conditions leading to the award are described.

The agents of repression were classified in the categories described in items “a” to “f”, so that from the justifications it is not possible to identify among those who

received the award whether they received it for activities of repression, except for a short while, between October 1969 and September 1972, when some of the texts, uncharacteristically, mention “fighting subversion”. It is presumed that the addition is related to the upsurge in political violence after Bandeirante Operation was started in São Paulo and the successful abduction of the US Ambassador Charles Burke Elbrick, in September 1969, by groups of the armed left, followed by the Institutional Acts nr. 13 and 14, which established respectively the sentences of banning and death.

The first ruling of this kind refers to four agents of the DOI-Codi in Rio de Janeiro, all of whom received the Distinction because they were injured when holding siege to Eremias Delizoicov, a Revolutionary Popular Vanguard (Vanguarda Popular Revolucionária) activist, murdered on the occasion (CFMDP, 2009). The event took place on October 16, 1969. Eleven days later, with surprising speed, the decoration was announced (Portaria Ministerial nº 511, 27/10/1969). During this time, at least 15 civilians and 54 military were expressly honored for involvement in political repression (42 of whom with Distinction): 4 in 1969, 15 in 1970, 22 in 1971 and 28 in 1972. In the administrative rulings, not all individuals known for working in the intelligence and security services who received the medal during this time had an explicit reference to the nature of their activities. That is the case of then Major Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, who received the medal with Distinction, together with six other agents of the São Paulo DOI-Codi, based on article “a” of the 1965 decree (Portaria Ministerial nº 135, 2/2/1972).

The variants of the texts justifying the award mention “capture of subversives”, cases of “bullet wounds” and giving their life (Boletim do Exército nº 1073, 27/10/1971; nº 82, 22/2/1971; nº 808, 12/08/1971). They refer to the “disaggregating action of subversive elements” and exalt the “defense of the peace of the Brazilian family, disturbed by the action of terrorists inimical to democracy, order and progress of the Brazilian nation” (Portaria Ministerial nº 808, 12/08/1971; nº 860, 3/8/1970). The terms express the depiction of the urban guerrilla war by the Army as a foreign body threatening a well-behaved and peaceful society. The military, who were the authors of the coup, an authoritarian legislation and a number of acts of coercion, presented themselves as defenders of a democracy threatened by “terrorists”.

⁶ We researched the justifications in the Army Newsletters (Boletins do Exército), looking at those that were not in accordance with the standardized formulation established in the law that regulated granting the medals.

⁷ This survey is still ongoing, as it is part of the research titled “Mapeamento do aparelho repressivo: Perfis e trajetórias profissionais de agentes acusados de atos de tortura durante a ditadura militar brasileira (1964-1985)” that is being developed by the authors with funding from CNPq.

⁸ In order to find the precise proportion of people in the Armed Forces who received the award, particularly in the officer corps, we would need to know how many individuals attended the institution during the period studied. This is a very complex operation, since it requires knowing the flow of career changes.

These small libels defending the authoritarian order, from November 1971 onwards, include the phrase “forbidden for re-publication by the press”, which indicates the fear that the public might recognize the members of the repression system (see, for instance, Portaria Ministerial nº 1.130, 5/11/1971). Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that they disappeared a few months later, replaced by the usual formulations, in order to protect the agents’ identity. The existence of explicit references to political combat is very limited from the numerical point of view and only partially covers the range of individuals involved in it. However, it expresses the explicit and institutional value ascribed by the Army to actions of this kind, besides using the Peacemaker’s Medal as an instrument to reward repression activities. Everything goes to show that these formulas would have been employed more often if there were not a concern to avoid these agents being recognized by name.

The peace of the cemeteries

If, as a whole, the rulings that name the agents of repression appear to be few in number, the ratio is radically modified when one works with the more select and restricted number of those who received the modality “with Distinction”. Aimed at acknowledging “bravery” in situations involving risk to life, it was granted very parsimoniously: in almost five decades (1963 to 2011), only 645 military received it, slightly over 5% of the total of honorees during the period. Although this distinction was created already during the João Goulart Administration, its politically conservative vocation is shown at the very beginning. In December 1963, First Lieutenant André Leite Pereira Filho was honored for having protected the building of the Ministry of the Air Force on the occasion of the episode known as the Sergeants’ Rebellion, one of the crises that would lead to the overthrow of President João Goulart. The lieutenant, who would later work at the São Paulo DOI-Codi, was praised for, according to the Army, having shown “abundant proof of sense of duty, initiative and unusual daring” (Portaria Ministerial nº 2.303, 6/12/1963).

Once the coup had been struck, one week before the anniversary of the 1935 insurrection, a ruling was issued giving the award post-mortem to 23 military who had lost their lives resisting the attack of their brothers in arms in the Northeast and in Rio de Janeiro⁹ (Portaria Ministerial nº 2.387, 20/11/1964). The Distinction would thus evoke one of the great symbols of the Brazilian Republican anticommunist imaginary, the event pejoratively called “Intentona Comunista” [Communist Conspiracy].

In the version of the conservative sectors of the Armed Forces, the episode was unacceptable treason, an attack on the military hierarchy and honor.

In order to identify the proportion of repression agents among the people who received the Distinction, we begin with the hypothesis, which was verified several times, that the ensemble of individuals included in a same ministerial ruling are interconnected regarding the reason that led them to receive the decoration. Thus, when we locate more than one individual in the group involved in political repression, we consider that the others mentioned were likewise involved in activities of this kind and even in the same specific event – or series of episodes – that involved “risk of life”.

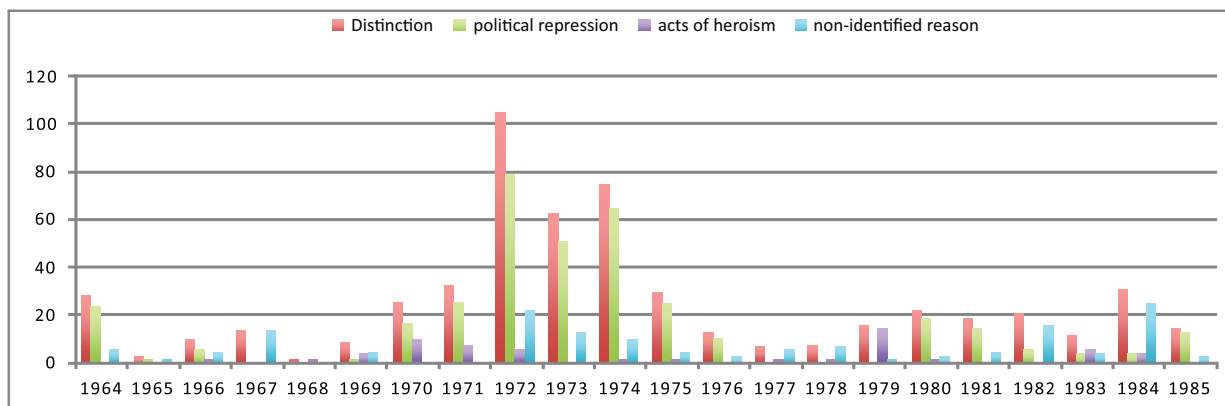
Looking at the people who were awarded the Distinction, we find that there is a significant presence of political repression, and some of its members received it after they had already gotten the Peacemaker’s Medal. The impossibility, in most cases, of getting to know the circumstances that led to giving them that honor made it difficult to produce more conclusive results. However, a survey of the honorees helps set up a significant summary-table, even if it is incomplete.

It is striking that there was a peak of awards between 1972 and 1974, ascribed by Elio Gaspari (2002) to the great number of medals given to those who participated in repressing the Araguaia Guerrilla War, although the presence of those who fought against the urban clandestine organizations is also considerable. In 541 cases, 136 (25%) were not identified, 53 (10%) correspond to acts of heroism and 352 (65%) concern political violence. The acts of heroism were only outstanding in 1970, 1971 and 1979 and were, as a whole, in much smaller number than the acts of coercion. Even though the definition of one quarter of the names about which no definite information was found may change the general picture, the proportion taken on by the cases involving political combat largely explains the association commonly established between the Peacemaker’s Medal and the intelligence community and allows claiming that the Medal with Distinction was a significant instrument of the authoritarian regime to reward political repression. Thus, peacemaking appears to have more to do with combating the political enemy than with saving lives.

The distribution of the military ranks of those who received the Distinction reveals the importance ascribed by the military leaders to the battle against the opposition.

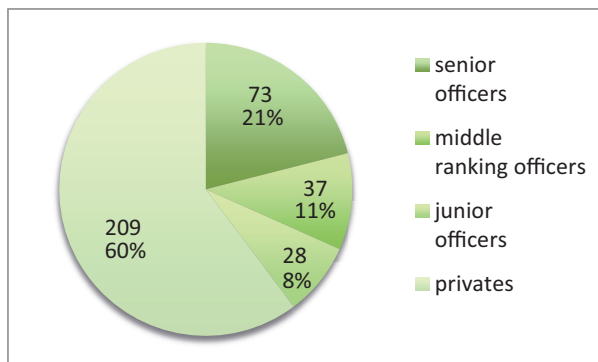
Based only on those who were involved in activities of this kind between 1964 and 1985, we notice an interesting fact: the lower ranks (209 military) were most decorated. This phenomenon is surprising due to the high level of the

⁹ Apparently it was an exceptional case, since the post mortem awarding would only be regulated and made official in 1975, with Decree n. 76,195, of September 2, 1975.



Graph 1. Recipients of the Peacemaker's Medal with Distinction 1964-1985.

Gráfico 1. Agraciados com a Medalha do Pacificador com Palma 1964-1985.



Graph 2. Distribution by rank of the agents of repression identified who received the Peacemaker's Medal with Distinction between 1964 and 1985.

Gráfico 2. Distribuição por patentes dos agentes repressivos identificados agraciados com a Medalha do Pacificador com Palma entre 1964 e 1985.

distinction, the hierarchical nature of an institution such as the Army and the orientations according to which the teams of the repression agencies should be staffed by trained officers. It is, however, explained by the fact that the search and seizure teams, which are most subject to dealing with confrontations, were preferentially composed by the lower ranks precisely because of the risk involved (Joffily, 2012).

After the end of the most acute period of persecution and after the Institutional Acts (1978) and the Amnesty Law (1979) had been decreed, agents who were notorious for their involvement in political repression continued to receive the medal with Distinction. In some cases, in fact, it is specified that the award concerns the activities developed during the 1970s, showing

that the merit of violence practiced against dissidents was acknowledged at the same time as the political opening was taking place. The last record identified of granting the Distinction to exponents of coercion dates from November 1985 (Portaria Ministerial nº 1.091, 11/11/1985). This means that even after the government passed into the hands of civilians the agents of repression continued to be honored. This corroborates an ongoing discussion about the chronology of the dictatorship, which some authors advocate extending until 1988, the date of the new Constitution, arguing that the civilians contributed to constructing the military dictatorship and that José Sarney, the first civilian President to take office, is a political personality who was highly committed to the military dictatorship. Besides, since the medal was granted by the Minister of the Army, the fact that the award continued to be granted after the transition may mean that the military sphere did not carry out its democratic transition – through purges or changes of commanders, public self-criticism etc. – and could, as it indeed did, continue, in this way, to commemorate the events and honor the actors of the dictatorship.

Conclusion

The verb “to make peace”, according to the Houaiss dictionary, means “to make return or to return to peace”, “to pacify”, “to calm down”. Historically it was used in different situations with the meaning of waging war to bring peace, constructing a “conservative harmony” (Lemos, 2002).¹⁰ The association of the noun “peacemaker” with the figure of the Duke of Caxias is not fortuitous. The Duke of Caxias was praised for his military action in

¹⁰ The phrase by Renato Lemos refers to the conciliatory tradition of the Brazilian elite, but it is perfectly appropriate to the discussion presented here.

wars and conflicts of independence against the monarchical power established in 1822. A keeper of “order” and “discipline”, the figure is evoked to legitimize the defense of the prevailing political status and, at the same time, to disqualify the seditious movements against which fight was waged. Thus, the use of violence by the state, from this perspective, does not contradict the notion of peace; on the contrary, it is a constituent of this view of the exercise of power. To make peace takes on the meaning of quelling demonstrations that threaten the established order by force.

Granting the Peacemaker’s Medal – especially in its upper variant, with Distinction – sanctioned the action of the Army sectors connected to political repression and reinforced the ties of the institution with these individuals. In a printed handout of the Internal Security System this connection is referred to as follows:

In 3 years, 90 individuals of the Second Army’s DOI-Codi received the Peacemaker’s Medal with Distinction, all for having been in combat several times, always showing discipline, obedience to superior orders and practicing acts of bravery (Sissegin, 1974, p. 41).

Besides the significant number of decorations to a single agency with the higher category of the medal, the terms used to describe what the agents did, which stress their loyalty to the acclaiming institution, and their sequence in the text should be noted: “discipline” and “obedience to superior orders” come before “acts of bravery”, so as to ratify that these actions were performed on behalf of and under the auspices of the Army. Although the Army was not involved as a whole in the intelligence community, as occurred in Argentina, institutionally it commanded, participated in and rewarded political repression.

Nowadays, with a consolidated democracy, the leadership of the Armed Forces is composed mainly by generals who began their career during the military dictatorship, especially in the harsher years of the closure of the regime, between Institutional Act number 5 (1968) and the approval of the Law of Amnesty (1979) (Maisonave, 2014). This composition helps explain the reasons why the Army leaders (i) did not perform any public gesture of contrition for the acts of political persecution committed during the dictatorship, (ii) preserve an important part of the documents that prove the institutionalization of violence and (iii) protect the Army’s members by supporting a conservative reading of the Law of Amnesty and acting as an obstacle to the consolidation of human rights

in the country (D’Araújo, 2012). This attitude prevents the Army from dissociating itself, as an institution, from a past of coercion and arbitrariness, perpetuating in the present the notion that “making peace” means to violently extirpate dissidence or conflict¹¹ (Mota e Silva, 2014). The Army, as Colonel Brilhante Ustra, former commander of DOI-Codi, reminds, did not even take back the highest honor granted in peace time. Fifty years later the esprit de corps still supplants the democratic spirit. They were not rotten apples...

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¹¹ Twenty one years after the Carandiru Massacre, in which 111 convicts were killed in 1993, the Military Police does not yet consider that its agents committed a crime and many of them were promoted afterwards.

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Submitted on June 11, 2014

Accepted on July 30, 2014

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