

The teaching of history meets its past: teacher's memories during the civil-military dictatorship

Elaine Lourenço*

RESUMO

A ditadura civil-militar que se instalou no Brasil a partir de 1964 influenciou no cotidiano escolar e na atuação dos professores do período. As transformações se deram desde a nova legislação, implantada com a Lei 5692/71, até as mudanças que ocorreram em função da vigilância que os professores sentiam ao exercer sua profissão. As memórias aqui analisadas, de docentes da escola pública paulista no período, mostram diferentes percepções em torno dessa vigilância, o que implica diversas formas de aceitação ou de resistência. O que se pretende é mostrar que, a despeito de não haver uma repressão mais direta às escolas, como havia às universidades, os docentes da escola básica também se sentiam vigiados, o que se pode perceber nas suas práticas escolares e nas suas concepções de ensino.

Palavras-chave: ensino de História; ditadura militar; memória de professores.

ABSTRACT

The civil-military dictatorship, which took power in 1964, influenced the daily activities of schools and teachers. Many transformations occurred during this period, including the new legislation enacted under Law 5692/71 and changes which occurred due to the surveillance which teachers felt when working. The memories analyzed here of teachers from public schools in São Paulo show different perceptions of this surveillance, involving various forms of acceptance or resistance. The purpose of this article is to show that although there was no direct repression of schools, unlike in the universities, teachers in primary schools also felt constrained and this can be seen in their educational practices and teaching concepts.

Keywords: History teaching; military dictatorship; teacher memories.

Professor, Uninove; doctoral student, USP. Departamento de História, FFLCH, Universidade de São Paulo. Av. Prof. Dr. Lineu Prestes, 338, Cidade Universitária. 05508-000 São Paulo – SP – Brasil. elalourenco@gmail.com

Almost nobody wants to identify with the military dictatorship in Brazil these days. You can count on one hand those who are willing to defend the choices that led to its taking and consolidation of power. Even those who built themselves up in its shadow, and who owe to it their luck, power and wealth, are not willing, with few exceptions, to rush to its defense.¹

More than forty years after the military regime took power in Brazil in 1964, the memory of the period is presented as something negative, in other words no one wants to be associated with it. This memory seeks to strengthen the version that the regime was set up at the initiative of the military and that society, as soon it managed to awaken from this 'nightmare', returned to democratic life. This is an important premise for those who want to discuss the period. It is necessary to be attentive to the traps, constructions and reconstructions of memory in order to perceive the discourses between the lines or the eloquent silences. The military who appear as the only ones 'responsible' for the dictatorship, are perhaps the only ones interested in defending it.

It is the duty of history, however, to remind society of the role played by civilians in the establishment and support of the regime, especially when the elites benefited from the policies implemented. This is what Fernando Novais and João Manuel Cardoso de Mello, for example, do:

The '1964 Revolution,' by banishing with violence the forces of egalitarianism and democracy, produced during the 21 years it remained in power a deformed and plutocratic society, one ruled by the holders of wealth.

At the end of the period of rapid economic growth in 1980, the concrete relations between social classes only had a formal resemblance to those found in developed countries. Relative inequalities in terms of income and wealth were far greater in Brazil. Economic and social dynamics were continually supported, on the one hand, by unregulated competition between workers, and on the other by the monopolization of life opportunities for those at the top of society.²

The school was not immune to these changes. The principal reforms occurred after the enactment of 5.692/71 and implied the unification of primary education, which brought together first to fourth classes and *ginásio*, which also had been divided into first to fourth classes, eliminating the admission exam which had selected those entering the latter stage of education.

In place of this an eight class primary level was created, with vocational purposes in those places where most students finished their education at this level. Where it was possible for studies to be extended to secondary school, this too would have a vocational mission.

One of the possible effects of the new legislation was the growth in the number of students registered in all classes. In the state of São Paulo, according to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* – IBGE), initial registration for the first classes showed an entry of 3,426,960 students in 1971 compared to 4,987,739 in 1985. In fifth class, when the work of those qualified to teach history or social studies began, the number of registrations rose from 411,804 in 1971 to 702,276 in 1985.³ Despite the large number of students who left school early, it can be seen that in fifteen years an huge increase in the system occurred.

Accompanying this increase was an expansion in the physical network of the school, which was expressed both in the construction of new buildings to house the new entrants and in the increase in the number of classrooms in existing units. The functioning of the school in three shifts was another measure taken, which perfectly fitted into the spirit of ‘rationality,’ one of the principles of the new legislation.

In relation to teaching in particular, a notable change was the creation of the discipline of social studies, designed to take the place of history and geography between the fifth and eight classes. The Federal Council of Education, in Opinion 853/71, stipulated that its objectives were “the temporal-spatial and social education of the pupil in ever larger ambits. Its basic components are geography and history, with the former focusing on the Earth and the natural phenomenon referring to experience through time.” The verb used, ‘integrate,’ left it clear that that there was no perspective of change, let alone of criticism of the system: what was intended was that the student could be inserted into his environment.

The introduction of the new discipline was complemented by the creation of short licentiates in social studies, which could be completed in around a year and a half of study and would allow someone teach from fifth to eight class. In this way this level of teaching came to include teaching staff with full licentiates in history and geography alongside those who had graduated with shorter ones.⁴

Also reintroduced under the military regime was another discipline, moral and civic education, aimed at the exaltation of the Patria and its heroes,

as well as the diffusion of civic ideals upheld by the military. According to Juliana Filgueiras,

Moral and civic education was implemented in 1969, during the zenith of the Military Regime, with a large prepared structure. All the details were thought of: a curricular program for all classes, courses for the training of teachers and the production of school books. It was main discipline of the 'Revolution.' Nevertheless, if we stop to look at its construction, what will really strike us is the numerous conflicts that involved its implementation and its trajectory until 1993.⁵

The teachers who graduated with short licentiates in social studies were also responsible for these classes. Since these courses only began in the 1970s, teachers from various areas were responsible for the classes until the new teachers could take over, which caused one of the conflicts mentioned above. In the schools of this time we can find teachers with degrees in history and geography teaching the subject along with those who had licentiates in social studies, – and as will be seen below, they were not always very attentive to the aims of those who created the subject.

Nevertheless, civic education was not only reinforced in schools. Analyzing the propaganda of the period, produced by the Special Public Relations Advisory (AERP, 1968-1973) and by the Advisory of Public Relations (ARP, 1974-1978), bodies directly linked to the Brazilian Presidency, Carlos Fico emphasizes:

'moral and civic education' – 'the mania' of the time according to Toledo Camargo ... – a discipline whose teaching became obligatory in 1969, is one of the rare fields in which it is possible to perceive some type of reception of military propaganda. Many authors produced teaching material which reproduced the clichés and slogans of AERP/ARP ... Otávio Costa encouraged this type of approach a number of times, valorizing 'moral and civic education,' giving lectures on the question privileging the learning of songs and heroes.⁶

Otávio Costa and Toledo Camargo, both with a military background, were responsible for the above advisory bodies. The regime's propaganda, according to Fico, was characterized by its optimism, drawing on symbols and myths that were dear to Brazilian culture and diffusing moral values for the behavior of the population. For the military the people were 'unprepared,' so the former were responsible for their 'education.' Good habits, such as those linked to hygiene, the valorization of the family as a bulwark of society, and good

examples of civic heroes, all contributed to the creation of a new society, which was adapted to the new level of economic development created by the ‘Brazilian miracle.’

This civism proposed by the military and constructed at a moment of repression and authoritarianism was characterized by passivity – mobilization was not necessary. According to Luis Fernando Cerri,

Perhaps the partial success of the civic education of the military regime occurred through the presentation of clear, easily understandable and feasible advice about the role of the citizen in exercising their citizenship: stay in your corner, fulfill your role in the productive system (work, study, sport) and support – through symbolic gestures – not the regime, but ‘Brazil’ ... [For] civism ... involving oneself meant in the last analysis remaining passive, although with a confident and optimistic mental attitude, and not involving oneself also meant remaining in ‘one’s place.’⁷

For the author there is a strong demobilizing component in this vision, which characterizes the regime as authoritarian. More than this, his work, concerned with the analysis of how the propaganda that appeared in the magazines *Veja* and *Visão* diffused the values of the time, showed how publicity was also responsible for creating a historic consciousness and verifies how this did – or did not – reappear in interviews carried out at the end of the 1990s.⁸

It is against this backdrop that the statements of the teachers analyzed here need to be read and interpreted. It is necessary to take in account that there are intentionalities on the part of the military regime, that there are intentionalities in the interpretations that are made in the preparation of curricula for schools and that there is intentionality in teacher’s actions. As Antonio Simplicio de Almeida Neto states:

While in the Brazilian military regime, for example, we can see that there was no unity or unanimity related to the ideas of the dictatorship, it would be equivocal to image the opposite, that no one, student or teacher, was affected by the deflation of content and the pasteurization of conflict, through civic festivities, patriotic appeals and the attachment to traditions. Considering the various intentions possibly present in the teaching of history as chimeras, means ignoring the relationship between curriculum and power that has already been discussed by various authors.⁹

The objective of this text is to perceive in the memories of the teachers

interviewed how they exercised their profession during the period of the civil-military dictatorship. The interviews, carried out between 2009 and 2010, were based on the methodology of Oral History and were inserted in a greater panorama which discussed other aspects of the career and the practices of these teachers in the São Paulo state public network, all of whom started their careers at the end of the 1960s or the beginning of the 1970s.

INTERVIEWS AND THE CHALLENGES OF ORAL HISTORY

The interviews sought the memories of teachers about their activities. It should be emphasized that they are now retired as teachers, which demonstrates the construction of a trajectory over a number of years. Most preeminent here is the idea of the ‘bibliographic illusion,’ to which Bourdieu refers,¹⁰ since teachers talk of a ‘trajectory’ in a retrospective and teleological form, triggering discourse based on a determined sequence. There are also the dangers represented by the mutable character of memory, which leads the latter to construct and reconstruct itself at each moment of life. Nevertheless, it is possible to think that the reports can bring something about the period being analyzed. The key for the interpretation lies in taking each statement in its totality, looking not only for what was said and recanted, as well as what was *not* said. The interview and the conditions in which it occurs acquire an important role in this case. According to Alessandro Portelli, a *dialogue* is established between the historian and the source:

historians who work with oral history are ever more aware that it is a dialogical discourse, created not only by what the interviewees say, but also what we do as historians – by our presence in the field and by our presentation of the material. The expression ‘oral history’ as a result contains an ambivalence ... it refers simultaneously to what historians hear (oral sources) and to what they say or write. At a more convincing level, it refers to what the source and the historian do together at the moment they meet for the interview.¹¹

The question script and the presentation we make about ourselves are present at the moment of the interview and have to be considered in the interpretation of the material produced. In the interviews I present myself as a history teacher who taught in the state system and currently works in a licentiate course in the area, as well as researching the role of teachers in the civil-military dictatorship. The interviewees, thus, start from the principle that

they are speaking with colleagues from their profession, and a number of times I was asked to agree or disagree with what they said. Another original moment happened at the beginning of all the conversation: when I presented the script with the questions/topics that I would raise, *all* interviewees *appropriated* my page and used it to guide their interview. More than this, at certain moment they would check the script to see if ‘they had not forgotten anything.’ In some way the interviews were like ‘classes’ prepared by the teacher, given and afterwards ‘checked’ through exercises and evaluations. The interviewees thus exercise their profession once again during the interviews.

In relation to this scenario, it is necessary to emphasize that the dialogues reveal the *teaching identity* of the interviewees, whom, in thinking about their careers in a retrospective manner, see in it their way of seeing and interpreting the world. In the words of Maurice Tardif:

If a person teaches for thirty years, they do not simply do something, they also make something of themselves: their identity carries the marks of their activity, and a large part of their existence is characterized by their professional activities. In short, *with the passing of time*, the person becomes – in their eyes and those of others – a teacher, with their culture, their *ethos*, their ideas, their functions, their interests, etc.¹²

The holding of interviews, therefore, assumes, a fundamental importance in the process of constructing the source. The relaxed atmosphere that follows the initial tense moments, in which the presence of the recorder inhibits the conversation, guarantees that it can move away from the sequence previously organized by the narrator, or the rigid script prepared by the researcher, and bring to light original questions and reflections about their career and teaching practices. By way of example, a question that was raised in the first interview can be mentioned.

Yara, asked me, *and above all herself*, this question at the beginning of the conversation: “Sometimes I ask myself ... if I was a good teacher...”. I answered immediately, because I imagined that I should say something; at the same time, since I did not know exactly what I should say, I thought it best to answer another question: “What is a good teacher?” To which she answered: “Well... Concepts change so much, don’t they? I think that nowadays being a good teacher is ‘tying a know in a drop of water,’ you know? Cause you have to make people aware of the importance of knowing.” The conversation continued to the question of teaching at the present. Later, I stated: “But this is being a

teacher! Liking to learn, isn't it?" Yara replied: "Yes! Today they do not manage to have the ability to make these transitions. I think what you meant by your earlier question was being a good teacher nowadays, is being willing to learn. I think this is the path."¹³

The dialogue described here allows a perception not only of the balance which the teacher makes of their trajectory, when they ask themselves this question, but also a typical characteristic of the profession, which is returning to the same subject, not leaving questions unanswered. The question I asked her, when I was taken by surprise by her question, was left in air until the moment when she returned to it and answered it. She also showed something very common in these conversations: the comparison between the past, taken as the beginning of her career, and the current moment, when she had retired. It is necessary to remember here that these teachers began to teach when there had been a large expansion in the school system, but the school model and the relationship between teachers and students was very conservative. At the end of her career she saw a school model whose aim was no longer the learning of content, but rather the inclusion of everyone. This situation gave rise to new models of school organization and of the relationship between teachers and students, and its implications in terms of daily life in schools are present in all the reports. By way of example, below is an extract from the interview with Guilherme:

My class began in this way: I would say 'good afternoon,' they would say 'good afternoon.' I would say 'you may sit,' because they were all standing. I would make the roll call, and after this the class would begin. The class was never end with the bell, you know? Nowadays, recently, the bell goes and I stop writing in the middle of what I am saying. They always wanted more. They were students who learned fast. They were different from nowadays. I had lots of difficulties at the end, because you, who are from a traditional school, suddenly get forty students who do not know any limits. It is difficult, very difficult...¹⁴

This interview presents the bitterest vision of teaching in its final moments. Possibly this is because the teacher himself saw positive values in the 'traditional' posture and, naturally, had difficulties with 'students without limits.' The other teachers, despite seeing significant differences between one moment and the other, are not as emphatic.

The interview with Yara took place in her home. The contacts were made through a mutual friend and I had never met her before. Nevertheless, the interview took place in a very friendly atmosphere and her memories of the past often mixed with questions of the present, because we were both university professors, having worked in teacher training courses. She told me that she had begun to work as a state teacher at the end of the 1960s, working with first to fourth classes. She studied for a licentiate in history at the beginning of the 1970s in Faculdades Associadas do Ipiranga (FAI), São Paulo. In 1978 she took part in a public competition for history teachers, passed and started in her new position in a primary school in the East Zone of São Paulo in 1981, from which she retired in 1989.

Severiano was interviewed in the head office of the trade union in which he worked. He was indicated to me by the 'friend of a friend,' in other words, I did not know him. He started his career in the 1970s, in various schools in the ABC region of São Paulo, especially Santo André. He studied history in Universidade de São Paulo (USP), while he did his licentiate in the Faculty of Education of the same institution. He became a permanent teacher by passing in a public competition at the beginning of the 1980s and after 1988, when he passed in a new competition, he became the principal of a school in the region.

Arlete was interviewed in her home after being contacted by telephone, since we already knew each other. She studied to be a teacher in São Caetano do Sul, also in the ABC region of São Paulo, afterwards choosing to study social science, entering USP in 1969. During her second year in university she started to teach history in new schools on the periphery of São Paulo. At the end of the 1970s she studied history in Faculdades Associadas do Ipiranga (FAI). She was made permanent following a public competition in 1983. In 1973, since she was an activist in the National Liberation Alliance (*Ação Libertadora Nacional* – ALN), she was imprisoned for six months.

Guilherme was interviewed in his home following a telephone contact. He started his career at the end of the 1960s, teaching Technical Drawing, for which he had done a special course, and was only qualified to teach this. His initial intention was to study architecture, but after failing twice to pass the university entrance exam, he decided to follow another career. He chose the course of education in Universidade de Mogi das Cruzes. In the same institution he did the short licentiate in social studies in the middle of the 1970s. In the 1980s, when there emerged the possibility of 'expanding' the curriculum, he decided to study history in Faculdades Associadas do Ipiranga (FAI). He retired in 1999 from the state network and later from the municipal

one. The interview took place in a friendly atmosphere, though there was some 'tension' in the air, an attempt to say and highlight certain subjects and at the same time hide others.

TEACHING PRACTICE DURING THE DICTATORSHIP

The interviews with the teachers were based on an extensive script, which ranged from questions related to their parents and their education, to their university studies and their professional practice. At this moment various aspects were highlighted, principally concerned with daily life in school; there was even a specific item related to the interference of the military regime in the teacher's practice. It is this theme that will be explored here, both when it was raised because of this question, and when it appeared due to other experiences of the interviewee.

In the case of Yara, the subject arose in the second half of the recording, motivated by a question of mine:

E – In the 1980s, was there still some military interference? Was there anything, the commemorations...

Yara – No, no longer.

E – Nothing? No civic festivities, dates, flags?

Yara – It was not obligatory like it was until the end of the 1970s. Cause, for example, in the other school, in Santos Amaro da Cruz [in which she taught first to fourth classes at the end of the 1970s], we were obliged to raise the flag at eight in the morning every Wednesday. Sing the National Anthem, raise the flag, and lower it at six in the evening.

E – For all classes?

Yara – Yes, from first to eighth. When I went to Orville Derby, it didn't exist anymore. It was already out of date. Tancredo was elected in 86, wasn't he?

She was referring to the ritual of raising the flag and singing the national anthem, which happened very often during the early years of the dictatorship, especially at the beginning of the 1970s. This obligation declined during the military regime and its practice was reserved for civic commemorations. This, however, gave rise to another memory, after a brief commentary about the election in 1985 of the first civilian president after the dictatorship, through indirect elections:

Yara – That’s it, it had begun to be relaxed and there was no longer that monitoring. I remember one occasion, I think it was 1976, around then, 75... No, 73, I was teaching the fourth class, suddenly I looked out the window and I saw an army truck and soldiers running into the school. I was terrified and suddenly a soldier opened the door very fast, looked at me, looked at the children, blam!, closed the door and left. The children, you know, everyone was astonished? But as soon as they came in, they left, I only saw the soldiers climbing into the truck and leaving. The janitor had raised the national flag upside down!

E – [laughter] Total subversion.

Yara – What craziness.

Following this Yara commented that she could have been arrested for ‘such crap!’ It should be noted that the year mentioned was the same one when Arlete was imprisoned, which did not occur because of disputes over the raising of the flag. Something very significant has to be emphasized: Yara, like all teachers in the period, *knew* that non-compliance with orders would lead to prison. In a regime of emergency legislation, implemented under AI-5, any lack of care could be fatal. In this way, it could be perceived that the norms were introjected and the actual school system and those who participated in it took responsibility for monitoring.

The conversation continued to discuss an episode in university in the 1970s, when there was an agent infiltrated in the classroom, another situation that was very common in higher level education. I took the opportunity and asked if the nickname of *Verdão* (Dark Green) for the Curricular Guides of the period was a reference to the ideology of the military and their nationalism, and she gave me this answer:

Yara – At the time I did not see any reference to this question of ideology. Even because people are not attentive to this. Most of the people did not experience any repression. The majority of people, no. There were some ‘elected’ though. Imagine, a primary teacher making some ideological reference? No way! No way at all!

What can be perceived here is, on the one hand, the affirmation of the alienation of the teachers and the population in general. On the other hand, taking into account the episode narrated above, it is possible to perceive that there was an *awareness* of what could or could not be done – in other words, this is not the alienation of not knowing what would happen, but a posture of not committing oneself. As described by Cerri, it was a form of ‘staying in one’s place.’ What can also be perceived is a reference to the ‘primary teacher.’ It can be noted that, despite the unification of primary school and the *ginásio*, the different cultures of each, expressed from the place of training to the form of work created a split within schools.¹⁵ In this case it is evident that the teacher sought to devalue the primary teachers who she believed were not capable of involving themselves in more engaging social and political causes.

Yara’s memories also bring another reflection on the authoritarianism, that was so typical of military regimes. She defines herself as ‘hard-line’ with students and said that this guaranteed her their respect and the trust of the parents:

Yara – I was patient with students. And it was funny, because at that time for the fifth to eighth classes, the mothers would arrive, ‘look, there is a tour, and so on;’ ‘who will go with them?’ ‘Yara is going.’ ‘Then you can go.’ Because they knew I was hard-line, I was very tough. I did not have any mercy on them. It was one for one and two for two, and we were finished. But they knew that going out was with me. This was what I thought, that the school could not be restricted to within the school walls. Once I was giving a class about Greece, to the seventh class, talking about the Platonic school, the Athenian school, how it worked. I looked to the yard, there was a *flamboyant* tree in the school, whose arms stretched over the stands around the sports court, a beautiful afternoon, warm, with the ice-cream man at the gate, cause the physical education class was leaving. I spoke to the girls: “Let’s go downstairs. We’ll go to the yard.” I went down and stayed with them. ‘Can we buy ice-cream?’ ‘You can.’ Everyone had ice-cream. When the class was over, the assistant principal called me: ‘what were you doing in the sports court?’ ‘Giving class.’ ‘Why in the sports court?’ ‘What is the problem of being in the court?’ “Ah, but the court is the classroom of the physical education teacher.’ ‘But he had finished, he was not doing anything.’ ‘But you cannot do it, you have to stay in the classroom.’ So I said to her: ‘you are right. I am stupid, am I not? I was trying to teach about education in Athens and forgot that I lived in Sparta.’ [Laughter] I think that she is still thinking about this today.

[Laughter] 'It is because the school...' I said: 'Look, the school to me begins with this wall. School to me is the world, it is not here. You are only spending a little time here. Because school is the world.'

This long extract reveals the authority exercised by the profession. This authority is shown in relation to the school management, which is confronted in relation to its norms for teacher activity. It also reveals two conflicting situations experienced in relation to authority: for students there is no space for contestation; for superiors the rules can and are contested. Despite exercising her authority with the students, the teacher does not valorize the authoritarianism of the military regime, nor does she agree with it.

In the interview with Severiano, the question of the dictatorship and repression appeared at the beginning, when in discussing his education in USP in the 1970s, he noted a hiatus between the activist generations of the 1960s and the professors who had recently arrived in the university:

Severiano – New professors were coming in, some would follow an academic career, and others, such as Heródoto [the journalist Heródoto Barbeiro], would not. I think that this really marked the university, in fact a university which was pruned, which was destroyed.

E – So, you had older generations ...

Severiano – With a distinct academic background, a distinct historiographic background as well. Very different and even the new ones were unable to try anything daring. Actually they occupied space within academia in a peripheral form. They were assistant professors. For our education this was bad. There was nothing that would make you think, reflect, discuss. This happened because it was, because it was a generation, mine, which I think is very interesting, isn't it? Because to a great extent it was also responsible for the opening of the country. We came from the armed struggle, for us this perspective did not exist anymore. This was a vision very common at the time, for people of my generation. We started from the principle that this would not lead us anywhere. Either we would head towards a more alienated vision, or we would look for some alternative. I think that we looked for and showed an alternative, because we had the courage to go to the street *en masse*, do things that were not done, that were not done by the previous glorious generation. Facing the street is more complicated.

What stands out in this long extract is the teacher saw himself as part of a ‘generation,’ in other words he saw his actions as going beyond a merely professional category, and as part of a group that was part of the re-democratization process. It can be inferred from his words that it is necessary to review the memory that valorizes *only* those who fought the dictatorship in the armed struggle, in other words to *also* valorize the generation that ‘took to the street,’ in other words was capable of mobilizing the population. According to Severiano, his generation had even faced a more ‘complicated’ situation because they fought ‘on the street.’ Like his teachers who did not have space in Universidade de São Paulo (USP), he did not think it was the moment to be ‘daring’ during the dictatorship. Only at the moment of redemocratization did the ‘street’ begin to appear.¹⁶

In the middle of the recording, I asked about the marks of the military regime in the school and the teacher returned to the question of repression and forms of resistance:

E – So, let us go back to your work in the classroom. In the 1970s was there some type of repression in school? Did the school have many marks of the military regime? In school practice, festivities, subjects, behavior?

Severiano – Yes! We all had a calendar aimed at the cult of the Patria. I was the supervisor of Morals and Civics. Because my file was clean, to the contrary of my friends, who did not have clean files, so they could not be nominated. You had to get a little blue paper from Dops to be the supervisor of Morals and Civics. It was good because you could stay outside the classes, and could do a whole pile of other things, including read what you should have read... The school libraries were intact, no one went to the library to get books they should not have. In fact, the libraries were intact all over the country. You had all this material available. And... what did you ask again?

E – About these practices aimed at militarism. If they persisted in the school.

Severiano – Ah, yes. So, we had a calendar. My generation was a very contained generation. We didn’t offer ourselves to be beaten. We knew a lot of things. I think we were not cowardly at all, but we did not provoke. For example, at the beginning we began to read the newspaper and to produce a ‘wall newspaper.’ When I realized that no one read it, that what was important was to do the ‘wall newspaper,’ I began to do it with people on manila paper, each group would do one and we would cover the whole school. And we sought to talk about what was happening in daily life, the political situation and everything else. I mean, never run away from what was going on, it was a time

when you did not make any provocations, no. You advanced, you would try to always go forward, but... Which is to the contrary of the generation that came before. I think the mark of my generation is this, a certain contention, but we did not retreat at any moment.

The teacher's discourse here demonstrates that 'daring' was only possible by producing 'wall newspapers' in which they always sought to show some headlines and to make students aware of what was happening in the country. At another moment, Severiano mentioned that some students were more politicized because the school was in the ABC region in São Paulo, the birth place of the new trade unionism that emerged at the end of the 1970s. These students 'dared' a little more and the headlines on their murals made more provocative. Nevertheless, what marked the teacher's work was 'contention:' once again 'daring' appears practiced within the 'limits' of what was possible. Here the situation of the dictatorship appears in a dissimulated form, but always present, infiltrated into school rituals through civic ceremonies and molding bodies and minds to the limits established. Here, 'stay in your place,' is expressed as 'make noise in the place where you are!'

The supreme 'daring' of the teacher was expressed in the evaluation system, in which he refused the authoritarian form and replaced it with a 'libertarian' one:

E – Still in the classroom: did you have an evaluation system, in other words how did you evaluate the students?

Severiano – The evaluation was repression. [Laughter] I am telling you what went through my head before. Evaluation is repression. Therefore, the student participated in the activities, he choose his mark.

E – Ah... It was libertarian...

Severiano – Yes, absolutely libertarian.

E – Self-evaluation.

Severiano – But they liked to do tests, so they, the students, made me give them one periodically. I had to go around giving classes, here and there. I would say: 'It's stupid for you to ask for a test, you have to speak in the class, you are speaking, I give you a mark.' But they wanted to do a test, so periodically I would given them one.

Here, despite the teacher valorizing group work and activities carried out in the classroom, the students had to such an extent interiorized school models,

marked by individual tests, that they even demanded evaluations. Here there is an inversion of values: rupture with the authoritarian models of evaluation caused such discomfort that preferred to return to the previous system.

The interview with Arlete is even more radical in the perception of the limits placed by the dictatorship. At the beginning of the recording she reported the conditions in which she was imprisoned by the military:

Arlete – I worked with history and moral and civic education, OSPB. The year I was imprisoned I was president of the Civic Center, in an irony of destiny. [Laughter] That is very funny: president of the Civic Center! And there I was working with these subjects, you know? ... Very interesting because with all that surveillance, we got around it, said terrible things. And there was reasonable surveillance. There was always a more reactionary principal, more attentive to this. Other people did not care. But we got around it, we did theater with the students and enacted misery. [Laughter] And you had to sign to be a teacher of moral and civic education, there was an order that came straight from Dops, you were registered and all. It is obvious that after being arrested and I went back, I never gave those classes again, you know? [Laughter] Actually it was like this: in the school where I had been teaching when I was arrested, I lost my classes. When I was released, I went back to demand my classes back. It was alleged that I had abandoned my employment. Imagine! I thought that when you have nothing left to lose, you know? Things were so bad that I went back to DOI-Codi and asked for a document saying I had been detained. Do you believe that I got it? What an unprecedented thing! So I went back to the school and gave it to the principal.

E – Who was really happy to see you back?

Arlete – A lot! It was like this: he was the one who drew up the timetables, so I gave my first class and there were three of them at the window. I was in the middle of the class, he opened the door, I said: ‘Ah!’, and he came into the classroom... Terrible!

The experience of rejection was so striking that she finished by saying that when she became permanent in the public network, she insisted on going back to the same school, even though the principal was no longer the same. The report shows us also that even before being arrested, she was using less conventional strategies in the classroom. Imprisonment gave her another type of ‘visibility’ in school and surveillance tended to increase, which certainly

influenced her actions in the classroom. Her teaching of moral and civic education was not contested before her arrest. This shows us that the repression was not so strict, since an 'enemy of the regime' could assume the 'discipline of the Revolution' and put on plays in these classes which spoke about oppression. This space, as the teacher herself reported, became more restricted after she was released.

Her first experience in university, as happened with Severiano, was strongly marked by the experience of the dictatorship:

Arlete – My experience in university was very traumatic. It was during the worst part of the military dictatorship. We were scared, we could not study. There was a book by Marx, the teacher asked us to cover it. Because there were spies in the university, right? There was the popcorn guy who could be someone from DOI-Codi, there was the bookseller... So, it was a very heavy atmosphere, imprisonments, deaths had already started, so... And we were active in the student movement, which was underground. Very crazy, because it was underground, but only partly, it was semi-underground, because there would be meetings, some totally clandestine, others not. All the opportunities we had was to raise the question of the military dictatorship. The reception of the *bichos* (new students), which we called *Bichusp*, were activities where we did theater. Everything very quick, sketches. Precisely not to run risks, you know? We rehearsed a quick sketch, presented it and then everyone went back to their faculty. This was not just in history. There were people there from various academic centers.

This cultural effervescence of the university, watched at every moment, would have a repercussion on Arlete's teaching, according to her own reflection:

Arlete – This was a great experience, wasn't it? I think I gained from it. It influenced my life, I am talking about my academic life and how it was reflected in the classroom, since I was doing the two things at the same time. I wanted to bring in all this restlessness. All this ideology you bring into the classroom. And at a moment when the dictatorship was running wild, and you had this *Verdão* and we questioned this. But we always found breaches to manage to slip through, and now you can see from a distance. We, who were Marxists, taught the students historical materialism, the mode of production, schematics, but in a way that at that time, we saw ... And at the same time fighting against MEC-Usaid, the remnants of this which will

arrive with the *Verdão* ... Actually it was a period of resistance. We resisted what the dictatorship imposed as education, along with *Brasil Grande* (Great Brazil), *Para Frente Brasil* (Forwards Brazil). It was difficult to work with these two realities, but we did, I think ... There was someone there giving classes for a long time, more reactionary. There was a clash, but it was not too complicated, I think we managed. In moral and civic education we talked about misery. We even brought newspapers into the classroom, drawing on the university experience. And sometimes we brought these students for these experiences in the university, because we were very young and our students, especially from the night class, were only a little younger. So it was very crazy, we did theater, rehearsed in the basement of a house and they were very improvised things, you know? What it was permitted to do. But it was a period, despite the difficulties, that was very rich, very creative. You had to exercise your creativity to get past all these barriers. It was a very interesting experience.

The report allows us to perceive the relationship that is established between experience in the university and the experience of teaching in school. At certain moments, both are fused and use the same models, all flowing to the idea of resisting the dictatorship. However, this 'resistance' has limits, which are recognized by the group, notably after the experience of prison. All the ebullition of the classroom and the new experiences meet a watershed in prison. Not that she changed her way of acting, but became more cautious, the fear of being arrested again was always haunting her. Arlete's discourse refers to a 'us' who at that moment meant her family group, her husband and other relatives who worked in the same school or in others, and also refer to her generation, the same as Severiano. Her activism since university, however, made Arlete more 'daring,' at least until the moment when she was arrested.

Here there is a report in which the dictatorship was absolutely present in the teacher's actions. Its oppressive presence did not only appear in external signs, such as commemorations and the presence of the Civic Center, but were also experienced in the harsh experience of prison. Despite this, Arlete is not a bitter person, and at the beginning of the interview referred to teaching as an extremely gratifying career.

In an interview with Guilherme, the question of the dictatorship emerged at the beginning, when he commented on his university studies:

Guilherme – At this time, from 1971 to 1986, which was the time of the Military

Dictatorship, I did not work with history, I worked with moral education and OSPB, which were two subjects, I believe, created for government propaganda, to fill peoples' heads. But they did not achieve their objectives, because the teachers of moral education and of OSPB, they slipped away from the spirit behind the subjects, and suddenly I was teaching about the constitution. I said to the students in the eight class: 'Look, I am going to tell you what the constitution is like, and you can decide if the law is being obeyed or not. I am going to say what it should be like, you understand?' So, we did not make propaganda. I gave a class in a state college where the principal thought I was against the government, against anything similar. No, it was not against anything, it was against the Dictatorship, but you couldn't open your mouth, you see? There were informers in the classroom. It was a hard time, and you had to take care with what you said, how you acted, because to label you anti-political was easy.

There is an amount of exaggeration in what he says about there being informers in the classroom, a fact not confirmed by any other source. Nevertheless, he felt watched, possibly by the principal, who saw him as 'anti-political.' The resistance he mentioned about the discipline, however, was not expressed in such a conflictual manner, since the study of the constitution was exactly what was expected.

In relation to the use of school books, the teacher reported that students bought the manual of moral and civic education that he indicated. When I asked how he used the book in the classroom, the answer was:

Guilherme – I used to do this: there was the text in the book, each student would read a paragraph, because it began at the time when students were learning to read, so you had to read to explain what was written. Sometimes they knew how to read mechanically, but they were not literate, they did not understand what they were reading. So, they would read a paragraph, I would explain it, the students would ask questions, we would discuss it and so on until the end, when we would do an exercise for them to remember it. This exercise was always corrected the following class, I would check who had done it, who had not. At the time, everyone did it; now no. I got a certain time... We got a certain time...

At this point the interview was interrupted by his wife, also a teacher, which began with the phrase, 'we got a wonderful time...' The contrast presented repeats the previous pattern: there is an idyllic time, the beginning,

and a tragic time, the end of the career. The extract cited seems to be somewhere in the middle, since it was a time ‘when students were not literate;’ nevertheless, there was the possibility of ‘redemption’ through the class and its dynamics, with the exercise to remember what had been taught. A contradiction can be found here: if the students had difficulties in ‘reading and interpreting’ the text, how could they resolved the problem to ‘remember’ the content, or in other words without problematizing the text? The evaluation of this teacher is based on these questions, very different from the ‘libertarian’ model proposed by Severiano.

At another moment of the interview, once again motivated by the contrast between the past/present, he stated that he did not have problems with the dictatorship:

Guilherme – Problems faced in relation to the military dictatorship?! I did not have any... Ah, what do you call those who were against the dictatorship, eh? Against the government?

E – Leftist?

Guilherme – No, there is another name.

E – Terrorist. [Laughter]

Guilherme – No, let me see if she [his wife] remembers: in the military dictatorship, what were those were who against her government called? Ah, there was a term which they used for those against the government in power. I no longer remember, what was dangerous was to be given this name. I was called it, but only orally, not officially. I was here in the state college, teaching, and the principal ...

E – Revolutionary, isn’t it?

Guilherme – No, dissident, revolutionary, that’s not it... Terrorist... My God, I can’t remember anymore, but I do remember that here the person responsible for the civic center was absent on the day of a commemoration. The principal called me and said: ‘Aren’t you in the civic center of another college?’ ‘I am,’ I replied. ‘So can you do me a favor and make the presentation?’ I said: ‘Ok, where will it be?’ ‘In the sports field,’ was the reply. I said: “I won’t do it there. On the sports field I won’t do it, it has to be on the closed yard, the covered one.’ She said: ‘Can I know why?’ I said: ‘You can. The students will sing the national anthem, so it has to be in an enclosed pace, otherwise the sound will disappear, all that will appear is the sound of whoever is at the microphone. I want it down there, on the closed yard.’ And she said: “If I say no?’ I said: ‘The party is yours, you present it.’ And this was an unequal balance, wasn’t

it? This is not common, but I was doing a favor, so why couldn't I choose the place where the commemoration would be? I went to the commemoration, but the students in line, you know? I said: 'We will sing the national anthem. Anyone who knows the national anthem, raise your arm.' Two or three did. So, I had to provide the disk with the recording, they were going to sing together. Students from the eighth class here in Tatuapé, in complete order. When the commemoration was finished, I said: 'We have finished the commemoration, you can go back to your normal duties.' They did not leave, but remained in line, with the principal looking at me in a strange way. When I proposed to organize something, I really organized it. It was a question of order, almost military, because it has to be like that. Otherwise there is no respect. Ah... I wish I could remember the term.

This long citation was chosen to show that the teacher was seriously concerned with finding the correct term used at that time to distance himself from it. What calls attention is the fact that he needs to find the correct word, precisely to say that it was *not* that! To corroborate his statement, he tells the story of a civic commemoration in another story, in which he taught but where he did not coordinate the Civic Center. In the narrative he makes a point of showing how he prepared these ceremonies with great rigor, making them, as he himself says, 'a question of order, almost military.' His affinity with the ideals of order, so dear to the military, is clear.

The conversation continued and the teacher said: 'my classes were never censored.' Nevertheless, he tells the story of a parent who watched his class from outside the window, saying that he was the president of the Association of Parents and Teachers (*Associação de Pais e Mestres* – APM). While there was no censorship on the part of the regime, there was some disturbance in the school, which he did not mention. He continued narrating another story, of a student who behaved badly, whose mother was called and attributed the problem to the 'racism' of the teachers. It is in this context that he remembered the word:

Guilherme – Subversive... I remember now, I was called subversive. The principal said to me: 'You are a subversive.' I said: 'Depends, when there is order and disorder, I am.' So, I never had a problem with the military dictatorship. There were some informers in classes. Suddenly, there would be people my age in the fifth class, doing what? But I never got upset with

this, I would ask: 'Sir, why are you here? Are you registered?' 'No, but I am from the Teaching Inspection Office.' 'Ah, ok, you can remain.'

The question of 'informers' in the classroom appeared once more, and once again is not articulated with resistance to the dictatorship, leaving only the hypothesis that it involved problems with the school rather than with the military regime. Also because the report continues with a narrative of how the teacher held elections in the Civic Center and of a commemoration of *Semana da Pátria* (Week of the Patria) with the students marching on the sports ground and which lasted an entire week. According to him, this was important in the school: 'it is registered there in a book, congratulating me for the organization and everything. It was very good, you know.'

Guilherme's report shows that he had moved away from Severiano's model, 'daring within limits,' and Arlete's, 'daring until a limit is met.' Despite being described as 'subversive' by a principal, his practices were very close to those expected by the regime.¹⁷

A COMPLEX AND DIVERSIFIED PANORAMA

In summary, the interviews presented here allow us perceive different postures and perceptions in relation to the military dictatorship in Brazil. Each teacher experienced the period through their own personal experiences, their engagement and the choices they made. Yara felt intimidated to a certain extent, because she felt she was participating in an 'alienated' environment. Severiano recognized the limits of his professional activities during the dictatorship and went beyond this, understanding that his 'generation' played a role is resistance to the dictatorship. Arlete, who had the bitterest experience of imprisonment and torture at the hands of the military regime, did not let herself be intimidated and returned to school to work as soon as she left prison. During her career, she continued working with the Marxist texts she had used since the beginning. The fear of going back to prison became part of her daily routine, but did not stop her continuing. Guilherme is quite distanced from the others because, notwithstanding the opinion of the principal who labeled him as 'subversive,' his practice confirmed what the military regime expected from a good teacher, especially one involved with civic and moral education.

These reports open a window in the history of education under the military regime and allows us see the distinct actions of four teachers, four lives that show us different paths. Without a doubt this can lead us to reflect on the

current day, and especially to remember that the field where teachers work is always a territory of multiple possibilities and different paths.

NOTES

¹ REIS, Daniel Aarão. *Ditadura militar, esquerdas e sociedade*. 3.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 2005, p.7.

² MELLO, João Manuel Cardoso de; NOVAIS, Fernando. Capitalismo tardio e sociabilidade moderna. In: SCHWARCZ, Lilia Moritz (Org.). *História da vida privada no Brasil*. 4: Contrastes da intimidade contemporânea. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998, p.618.

³ Cf. BRASIL. IBGE. Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. *Estatísticas do século XX*. Rio de Janeiro, 2003.

⁴ There are various studies of the question of social studies in school and the licentiate. Among these, one that deserves special attention is MARTINS, Maria do Carmo. *A história prescrita e disciplinada nos currículos escolares: quem legitima estes saberes?* Bragança Paulista (SP): Edusf, 2002.

⁵ FILGUEIRAS, Juliana Miranda. A Educação Moral e Cívica e sua produção didática: 1969-1993. Master's Thesis (Master in Education: History, Politics and Society) – PUC-SP. São Paulo, 2006, p.186. Various types of conflict are mentioned by the author, including those related to the creation of the discipline in the Federal Council of Education and disputes between teachers over classes. There was also resistance to content, as is discussed in this text.

⁶ FICO, Carlos. *Reinventando o otimismo*. Ditadura, propaganda e imaginário social no Brasil. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. FGV, 1997, p.133.

⁷ CERRI, Luis Fernando. *Ensino de História e nação na publicidade do milagre econômico – Brasil: 1969-1973*. Doctoral Dissertation (Doctorate in Education) – Unicamp. Campinas (SP), 2000, p.55.

⁸ In a later work the author affirms the creation of an identity based on this historic consciousness: “The images of Brazil formed by the propaganda of the period in question composes a historic consciousness which as such is intrinsically identity based, since (in the dual sense of something dated and something which refers to historical time) all politico-territorial identity is historical.” CERRI, Luis Fernando. *Ensino de História e nação na propaganda do “milagre econômico”*. *Revista Brasileira de História*, São Paulo, v.22, n.43, 2002, p.196.

⁹ ALMEIDA NETO, Antonio Simplicio de. Dimensão utópica nas representações sobre o ensino de História: memórias de professores. Dissertation (Doctorate in Education) – FE-USP. São Paulo, 2002, p.24.

¹⁰ BOURDIEU, Pierre. A ilusão biográfica. In: FERREIRA, Marieta de Moraes; AMADO, Janaína (Org.). *Usos e abusos da História Oral*. 8.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. FGV, 2006.

¹¹ PORTELLI, Alessandro. História oral como gênero. *Projeto História*, São Paulo, v.22, p.10, jun. 2001.

¹² TARDIF, Maurice. *Saberes docentes e formação profissional*. 9.ed. Petrópolis (RJ): Vozes, 2008, p.56.

¹³ Interview with Yara. São Paulo, 28 April 2009. The teachers interviewed are identified only by their first names. The interviews were authorized, though in this way some anonymity can be guaranteed to the teachers, some of whom are still working in functions linked to education.

¹⁴ Interview with Guilherme. São Paulo, 31 Aug. 2010.

¹⁵ The different concepts of primary and *ginásio* education can be found in: REVAH, Daniel; TOLEDO, Maria Rita de Almeida. O regime militar na (des)memória da Abril: a revista *Escola* e a difusão da 5692/71. *História da Educação*, Ufpel, 2009. (In print).

¹⁶ Francisco Carlos Teixeira da Silva states that “given the evident signs of the saturation and decrepitude of the dictatorship, the popular movement grew and took over the streets.” These demonstrations happened in relation to the Amnesty Campaign and were repeated in *Diretas Já* Campaign. SILVA, Francisco Carlos Teixeira da. Crise da ditadura militar e o processo de abertura política. In: FERREIRA, Jorge; DELGADO, Lucilia de Almeida Neves (Org.). *O Brasil Republicano*. 4: O tempo da ditadura. Regime militar e movimentos sociais em fins do século XX. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2003, p.271.

¹⁷ Juliana Miranda Filgueiras states that the purposes of the discipline, according to the official documents, were “the education of young people for democracy and for the conscious exercise of citizenship, called to participate in the effort to develop the country. This education would be based on the cult of the symbols of the Patria, the knowledge of its traditions, its institutions and the figures of its history. Students should understand the rights and duties of Brazilians and understand the social, political and economic organization of the country. They should be prepared to exercise a function in society. The discipline would form the character of young people, strengthening moral habits and values. The acquisition of ethical habits would be achieved through educational activities, which would allow the practice of citizenship and the experience of democracy” (2006, p.187).