

# For the “pacification of the Brazilian family”: a brief comparison between the amnesties of 1945 and 1979

*Pela “pacificação da família brasileira”: uma breve comparação entre as anistias de 1945 e de 1979*

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## RESUMO

O artigo analisa fontes relacionadas às campanhas pró-anistia realizadas em 1945 e entre 1975 e 1979, buscando os sentidos que os atores políticos atribuíram à medida. Dá especial atenção à associação feita entre anistia e “pacificação da família brasileira” nos dois contextos e aponta para um processo de transformação em curso, no seio do qual a anistia deixou de ser vista como instrumento de conciliação e passou a ser encarada como ferramenta para a conquista de direitos. Esse esforço comparativo entre as anistias do final do Estado Novo e de 1979 (início da transição da ditadura para um regime civil) quer ser uma contribuição da pesquisa histórica para os debates atualmente em curso no Brasil a respeito das heranças ditatoriais e da busca de esclarecimento e justiça.

Palavras-chave: anistia; Estado Novo; ditadura civil-militar; conciliação.

## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes sources related to the pro-amnesty campaigns conducted in 1945 and between 1975 and 1979, seeking the meanings the political actors attributed to the act. The article highlights the connection between the amnesty and “pacification of the Brazilian family” in both contexts and points to an ongoing process of transformation, in which the amnesty stopped being considered a tool of reconciliation to be treated as a tool for the achievement of rights. This comparative effort between the amnesties of the end of the Estado Novo (New State) dictatorial regime and the one of 1979 (beginning of the transition from dictatorship to a civilian rule) aims to contribute to the historical research for the current debates in Brazil about the legacy of the dictatorship, the search for clarification and justice.

Keywords: amnesty; Estado Novo; dictatorship of 1964; reconciliation.

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Based on a comparative analysis of the 1979 amnesty and the amnesty decreed towards the end of the *Estado Novo* (New State) in 1945 and the examination of the meanings given to the act by different political actors involved in both processes, this study aims to shed light and understanding on the connection between “amnesty” and “the pacification of the Brazilian family”.<sup>1</sup> By highlighting and analysing the presence of this watchword or this rhetorical device, this article seeks to analyse amnesty’s standing during mobilizations towards the end of the dictatorial regimes.

This analysis is part of a joint research effort related to the pro-amnesty campaigns in the 1970s, the approval of the Amnesty Law in 1979 and more recent debates on the legacy of the dictatorships. More than three decades after the approval of the above mentioned law, Brazil is undergoing a process to seek clarification and justice in relation to the crimes committed by the agents of the dictatorship. One of the central themes of this debate has been a reinterpretation of the 1979 Amnesty Law to exclude perpetrators of so-called “related crimes”. Various political actors defend the opinion that the trial of agents of the former regime is indispensable for the effectuation of transitional justice and to ensure a more radical posture towards initiatives such as monetary or symbolic reparations, truth commissions, and legislation concerning access to documents. Within this context of impasses and unfinished stories, the historian’s eye may help investigate disputed meanings and reveal permanencies and breaking points.

In light of the above, this study seeks to understand the connection between amnesty and the pacification of the Brazilian family within the context of the *Estado Novo* and civic-military dictatorship between 1964 and 1989 by: 1) showing the conceptions of amnesty developed by militants during the period 1975 to 1979 based on oral and written information sources; 2) uncovering records of the meaning given to amnesty in 1945; and 3) seeking an explanation for the repeated appearance of the notion of amnesty as the pacification of the Brazilian family. Based on the above, the article attempts to show that the meaning of amnesty in Brazil has undergone a transformation since the end of the 1970s, when different actors sought to detach the meaning from concepts such “forgiveness”, “conciliation”, “forgetting” and “pacification”, associating it with notions of justice and citizenship. However, this process was affected by the permanence of the aforementioned meanings among other actors. The present study focuses on “pacification”. The reflections made here are by no means exhaustive, since it is also necessary to invest in an

analysis of the notions of forgiveness and forgetting, which were also particularly recurrent in the sources studied for the two periods.<sup>2</sup>

## CONCEPTIONS OF AMNESTY BETWEEN 1975 AND 1979

In order to understand the meanings given to amnesty by militants that defended the measure in the second half of the 1970s, at a time when organisations dedicated to its promotion began to emerge, the following text presents a selection of records of the campaign conducted by the Women’s Movement for Amnesty (MFPA, acronym in Portuguese) and the Brazilian Amnesty Committee (CBA, acronym in Portuguese).<sup>3</sup> The information sources used by the study comprised of correspondence, newspaper cuttings, pamphlets and manifestoes compiled by the coordinators of the MFPA base in the State of Rio Grande do Sul (hereafter the MFPA), Mila Cauduro and Lícia Peres. Apart from local activities, the documents give an indication of how the national campaign was organised, particularly with respect to the meetings and national conferences that occurred between 1978 and 1979, as well as providing information on the CBA base in the State of Rio Grande do Sul. Although the authors chose to focus on the actions of the above organisations, it should be mentioned that other actors were also involved in the campaign such as the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB, acronym in Portuguese), the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB, acronym in Portuguese), the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC, acronym in Portuguese) and alternative newspapers.

This article highlights examples that are indicative of the repeated appearance of the connection between amnesty and the pacification of the Brazilian family.<sup>4</sup> In 1975, during Homeland Week, Archbishop Don Paulo Evaristo Arns called for “wide-ranging *reconciliation* and amnesty for all those that fight for different standpoints, but love the same homeland” on behalf of the Catholics of São Paulo.<sup>5</sup> In a correspondence to the coordinators of the *gaúcho* MDB in September 1975, MFPA leaders, referring to the Geisel government, expressed “hope that a rio-grandense<sup>6</sup> will *pacify the Brazilian family*”. In a letter dated September 1976, the federal deputy Magnus Guimarães, member of the MDB, drew attention to the “policy used by the Duke of Caxias to pacify the State of Rio Grande do Sul after the *Guerra dos Farrapos* (the Ragamuffin War)” and questioned who would be the “*pacifier of the Brazilian family today*”. The empire’s military leader was also mentioned at the beginning of 1978 by removed general Pery Constant Bevilacqua during a talk he was invited to

give in Porto Alegre by the MFPA. He praised Caxias for “always knowing how to crown his military victories over the insurgents and *reestablish peace and fraternity* between Brazilians ... by granting amnesty to the defeated side”. Bevilacqua added the concept of forgetting to the notion of peace and fraternity, reminding those present that Caxias made the following call during the proclamation at the end of the *Guerra dos Farrapos*: “we are united by a single thought! United we march to the future, side by side and *those that dare remember past dissension face eternal damnation*”. A document handed to the presidential candidate, General João Batista Figueiredo, by MFPA leaders during a visit to Porto Alegre in July 1978 asked for “a wide-ranging and unrestricted amnesty, as a possible way of bringing immediate *reconciliation of the Brazilian family*”.<sup>7</sup>

The records presented here exemplify the meanings given to amnesty during the first years of the campaign: pacification and conciliation, the metaphor of Brazil as a family, the existence of a tradition of amnesty and an appeal to forget the past. Hope related to the political openness proposed by the Geisel government is visible in some records: at a time when the AI-5 other repressional devices were in force full confrontation was not an option. The opposition therefore adopted a discourse anchored in government promises and strategies which emphasised women’s political activities, presenting them as mothers, as was done by the coordinators of the MFPA, and used historical examples of reconciliation in Brazil achieved through amnesty.

Other factors may explain these meanings, the space occupied by the pacification of the Brazilian family buzzword and the call to action for women’s political participation: placing the metaphor of Brazil as a family at the heart of a moderate political discourse was a way of rekindling a symbolic element which had been influential a decade earlier. Despite government warnings, crowds took to the streets in 1964 to protest against the Goulart government. These protests were called “Family Marches for Liberty with God”, and gave the impression that the mobilisation of families would save Brazil from the dangers of communism. The family metaphor also made sense for a movement that brought together the family members of victims of political persecution: amnesty would allow the return of exiles and release of political prisoners, leading to the reconstruction of their families. As Therezinha Zerbini (1979, p.9), founder of the MFPA, reminds us, the emphasis on women’s leadership also rekindled the type of women’s participation seen during the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932.

It is important to note that the amnesty concept was constructed and transformed throughout the campaign and it is not possible to define the abovementioned actors’ understanding of amnesty based solely on quotations. However, these quotations were chosen because they appeared repeatedly throughout the records analysed by this study. It is also important to highlight the formula proposed by the MFPA in a request to the candidate for “*a wide-ranging and unrestricted amnesty, as a possible form of immediate reconciliation of the Brazilian family*” (emphases added), bringing together two slogans which were central to the struggle for amnesty in a single phrase. However, these slogans came to have opposite meanings towards the end of the campaign: while maintaining the goal of reconciliation and the use of the family metaphor, the expression “wide-ranging and unrestricted amnesty” brought the women’s appeal closer to the meaning of amnesty given by groups on the left of the political spectrum.

The choice to use the phrase “wide-ranging and unrestricted amnesty” as the campaign’s flagship slogan occurred during 1978, a year in which CBAs were founded in various Brazilian cities and in which the first national pro-amnesty events were held. These CBAs had a more pluralistic composition than the pioneer MFPA units and were beginning their activities at a time when civil society was strengthening its organisational capacity (Greco, 2003). It could be said that the document *Liberty for the Brazilian People: amnesty yesterday and today* written by the journalist Roberto Ribeiro Martins and published in April 1978 by *Editora Civilização Brasileira* was representative of the campaign that was underway.<sup>8</sup> After first presenting different moments in the country’s history when amnesty was granted, detailing the categories that should be benefitted by the measure and giving examples from other countries, the author turns to the “amnesty debate” and presents the demands made and the alternatives suggested by the government. With respect to the demands, he emphasises that the amnesty sought by civil society should be general or wide-ranging (its benefits should extend to all categories of victims of violations and emergency laws), absolute or unconditional (there should be no restrictions to its benefits), and full (it should permit the complete reintegration of all Brazilians to the functions they performed before the persecutions). The author goes on to advise that it is essential that the measure “contains no restrictions” and says that it is “politically correct to affirm: a general (or wide-ranging) amnesty, or *amnesty in the form demanded by the protestors that have taken to the streets: general and unrestricted*” (Martins, 1978, p.181, emphases added).

According to Ribeiro Martins, the alternatives presented by the government were the repeal of article 185 of the constitution (which embodied the AI-5), an individual review of violations, reduced sentences under the National Security Law and partial or graded amnesty. According to the author, in order to grant amnesty, the regime would have to deal with two delicate issues: consider those that took up arms; and the reinstatement of previously removed progressive members of the armed forces. The regime therefore backed the above mentioned alternatives to avoid confronting these issues. However, another issue had to be dealt with: amnesty for agents of the dictatorship. Ribeiro Martins states that “this problem differed from the amnesty issue” and should be dealt with and solved separately, given that amnesty referred only to the “victims of violations and emergency laws” (ibid., p.175 and 177). However, others involved in the cause saw things differently. Pery Bevilacqua, a general removed from his post during the dictatorship and a recognised amnesty supporter, made it clear in the majority of his writings and comments on the subject that the government would only grant amnesty to the opposition if there was a guarantee of impunity for the agents of the regime.<sup>9</sup> Martins Ribeiro and Pery Bevilacqua were in full agreement on another issue: amnesty would be only one of a number of prerequisites of democracy that included the repeal of emergency laws, the establishment of democratic liberties and the convocation of a National Constituent Assembly.

The “wide-ranging and unrestricted amnesty” demanded by protesters at the beginning of 1978 had become “wide-ranging, general and unrestricted amnesty” by the end of the year. The slogan appears in documents produced by MFPA and CBA after the First National Amnesty Congress, held in November 1978 in São Paulo, in pamphlets and manifestos produced by the student movement, and in records of the activities of pro-amnesty units outside the country involving Brazilian exiles.<sup>10</sup> The abovementioned congress defined a strategy which involved widening support for the struggle for amnesty, which came to be seen as part of a wider struggle to conquer democratic rights. For example, the report of the Third National Meeting of Pro-amnesty Movements, held in June 1979, demanded an “end to all repressive legislation” and “a guarantee of effective democratic liberties, particularly the right to create political parties, unions and to strike...”. The slogan appears in the document with the affirmation that “only *wide-ranging, general and unrestricted amnesty* ... will meet the demands of the people and restore all rights usurped by the dictatorship. And, furthermore, the amnesty which we propose should not consist of simple forgiveness or forgetting the past”.

The fact that members of the MFPA addressed the government’s presidential candidate in July 1978 and mixed the concepts “amnesty – pacification/ conciliation” and “wide-ranging and unrestricted amnesty” in their speech indicates a wider process of change in the meaning given to the amnesty. This change was also evident in the movement’s strategy. At the end of 1978, the campaign’s national coordinators defined that the movement should follow a new path to gain popular support, as opposed to promoting awareness among government members as the MFPA had done during the initial stages of its activities and up to the middle of the year in an effort to persuade members of parliament belonging to the MDB to commit themselves to the cause, convince Geisel to advance political openness, and make the government’s presidential candidate João Figueiredo aware of their demands. By using the slogan “wide-ranging, general and unrestricted amnesty”, the pro-amnesty movement sought to counterpose the government’s proposal for a restricted and reciprocal amnesty which appeared in debates at the beginning of 1978 and materialised in the amnesty project presented to the national congress in June 1979. The project created complex mechanisms for reinstating civil servants and military members removed from their posts and excluded individuals who “were convicted for terrorism, assault, kidnapping and personal attacks”, exactly as envisaged by Ribeiro Martins’, while granting amnesty to individuals that committed “political crimes”, exactly as envisaged by Bevilacqua.

It is important to emphasise that there was a transformation of the meaning given to amnesty over the period 1975 to 1979, whereby the notion that the measure represented a break with the regime, a right of those citizens who were victim of repressions and the will of society as a whole gained force. The measure was no longer seen as a government concession or act of benevolence. Brazil began to emerge as a collective society that demanded its rights rather than a “family”, or “children” seeking paternal leniency.

Another tool used to define the meaning given to the 1979 amnesty by the opposition to the dictatorship was oral history interviewing. This technique permits the researcher access to specific events in the past lived by different actors and helps to uncover the process of signification. The interviews analysed by this study also have a particular characteristic: they were carried out amid a series of reparation efforts related to individuals persecuted by the dictatorship conducted by the Amnesty Commission of the Ministry of Justice of Brazil over the last several years. In 2011, the commission signed an agreement with three Brazilian universities to conduct over 100 oral history interviews with people who were part of militant opposition against the dictatorship

and/or victims of repression, encompassing situations such as imprisonment, clandestinity, removal from employment or official posts, torture, death or disappearance of family members, exile, and abandoning studies.<sup>11</sup> This led to the project *Memory Tracks: an Oral History of Amnesty in Brazil*.<sup>12</sup> The interview guide, which was adapted to each separate case, included questions on profession and political stance, family influence, beginning of political activities, details of the militant organisation in which the interviewee participated, how the interviewee was affected by political repression and how he/she rebuilt his/her life after the end of the regime, and the legacy and permanences of the dictatorship. With respect to the last point, the interview included questions regarding the 1979 Amnesty Law and policies created in Brazil in recent years that address the legacy of the dictatorship. In the 18 interviews carried out by the team from the Federal University of the State of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS, acronym in Portuguese), the question about amnesty was used to bridge the gap between the era of the dictatorship and present day, as a way of stimulating reflection on permanences and the achievements along the road to democracy. The following reflections are based on these interviews.

On the whole, interviewees were critical of the 1979 the amnesty and recent measures related to the issue.<sup>13</sup> Only one interviewee highlighted the aspect of amnesty related to struggle, while others referred to the abovementioned government project, criticising “reciprocal amnesty”, “self-amnesty”, and “twisted amnesty”. Others emphasised current reparation policies, and were largely critical of them, suggesting that they are a long way off similar policies in countries such as Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, which, according the interviewees, that have made greater progress towards the clarification, judgement and punishment of crimes committed under the respective dictatorships. Four of the 18 interviewees were positive with respect to the damages awarded for current cases in Brazil. The majority of the others expected measures to ensure justice and the right to memory rather than financial reparation. A common assertion among the interviewees was the importance of initiatives to recover the historical memory, and a number of participants suggested political activism to promote the recovery of the historical memory of the respective dictatorships.

The picture of amnesty drawn by the interviewees is a far cry from the idea of pacification of the Brazilian family. Except for one case detailed below, no evidence was found in the narratives to suggest that the interviewees expected that the memory of political conflicts, and the personal and collective wounds they caused, could be extinguished through pacification.



These findings suggest that the amnesty yearned for by the interviewees is characterised as “wide-ranging, general and unrestricted”. Since this ideal was defeated by the government proposal approved by the National Congress, only a negative image of amnesty prevails in the memory or choices of the interviewees, explaining why there was practically no mention of their experiences during the struggle.

However, the assessment made by one of the interviewees’, the lawyer Almoré Zoch Cavalheiro, who was 80 at the time of the interview,<sup>14</sup> stands out from the others. As a sergeant in the army and after participating in the Legality Campaign (*Campanha da Legalidade*), Almoré, with support from other junior officers, ran for state deputy of State of Rio Grande do Sul as a candidate of the Brazilian Labour Party (PTB). Although he was elected he was prohibited from taking office due to a decision made by the Brazilian Electoral Justice System based on the fact that army sergeants were not eligible to occupy political offices. He experienced the campaign for Basic Reforms and played an important political role during the period. He was target of abuse even before the dictatorship and was removed from his post after the military coup.

At one stage during the interview, recognising the various interests involved, the ex-sergeant highlighted the “various facets” of amnesty: “the first was amnesty during the Figueiredo government. During this amnesty, our greatest concern was to bring back our exiled political leaders. And their concern [the dictatorship] was protection for the torturers, to protect the torturers from the crimes they had committed”. At the end of his testimony, after giving an historical account of the facts related to his experience of the dictatorship and redemocratisation process, Almoré uses the family metaphor to describe the current political situation in Brazil and fire a question at the interviewing team:

who ended up losing after all during this period, over the last 50 or 60 years, since Getúlio up to now? Who ended up losing? Who won? Was it imperialistic capitalism? Was it communism or socialism? Was it the nationalists? It’s interesting isn’t it? Thinking about it, this period was dotted with battles. Some won some, others won others. At the time of Getúlio the reactionaries won, imperialism won; during the ‘Legality Campaign’ (*Campanha da Legalidade*) the “legalists”, the nationalists kind of won; during the [19]64 military coup, that battle of the coup of 64 that installed the military regime, the reactionaries won, imperialism won.

Following the same line of reasoning, the interviewee talks about the present day and reiterates: “who is winning?”. He answered his own question: “the

Brazilian people have always fought against the dictatorship” and, during this process, “Brazil has really been the winner”. Almoré then goes on to use the family metaphor:

What I'd say about these fights is that families fight. There are periods when brothers and sisters fight, sometimes even when they are adults, they fight for various reasons, and parents fight to *conciliate* things. As the family becomes more mature, brothers and sisters start to become good friends, and at the most advanced stage they begin to lament: “why did we fight, we should have been friends from the beginning”. I'd say that is what Brazil is like, the winner of this war over the last 50 or 60 years is Brazil and the Brazilian people. The members of the *Brazilian family* fought among themselves, the army against civilians, civilians against the army, civilians against civilians, the army against the army. But Brazilian society, my people, has matured, and today this economic power called Brazil is the seventh largest economy on the planet, its president was a guerrilla and was tortured by the military regime, and today is in charge of her jailers and is commander in chief of the armed forces. (emphases added)

It is interesting to note that Almoré mentions Getúlio Vargas and nationalism, showing that his perception of time goes beyond the civic-military dictatorship. Given his own trajectory, it is evident that he was involved in the debates about nationalism, socialism, capitalism, communism and imperialism that marked the beginning of the 1960s and appeared in 2011 in his concluding statements. It is interesting to note that only a few sentences separate the mention of Getúlio Vargas and the Brazilian president, “a guerrilla that was tortured”. Getúlio represents the nationalism defeated in 1954, but victorious in 1961. Dilma, previously defeated and now victor: an ex- guerrilla in charge of the armed forces!

Almoré's optimism can be summarised by two of his statements: “the family is becoming more mature” and “Brazil has matured”. For Almoré, the Brazilian family, is undergoing a process whereby the people are acknowledging that past conflicts should be lamented rather than perpetuated. Perhaps he is adding a new facet to the meaning of amnesty, given that he had already mentioned the existence of “various facets”. However, only one of these facets is made explicit in his testimony: what the 1979 law represented for the government and for the opposition. Does he suggest that the process underway today (damages, pressure for clarification, release of documents, reinterpretation of

the 1979 law) is a new facet of amnesty and opportune moment for the pacification of the Brazilian family?

### THE PACIFICATION OF THE BRAZILIAN FAMILY AND AMNESTY AT THE END OF THE *ESTADO NOVO*

The aim of the following paragraphs is to demonstrate the strong connection between amnesty and the pacification of the Brazilian family during the campaign preceding the amnesty proclaimed on 18 April 1945 by Getúlio Vargas which permitted the political reintegration of enemies of the Vargas regime – communists involved in the uprising of 1935, integralists from the 1938 uprising and politicians, many of which from the State of São Paulo, that, despite having supported the 1930 revolution, were removed from power between 1932 and 1937. The communists pioneered demands for amnesty or release of political prisoners, since many of them were affected by the wave of imprisonments that began in 1935 and political repression that intensified during the period prior to decreeing the *Estado Novo*. The call for amnesty continued during the dictatorship, but changed in nature due to a change in the position of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB, acronym in Portuguese) with respect to Vargas and the outbreak of the Second World War.<sup>15</sup> An analysis of different information sources (including pamphlets confiscated by the political police in the Federal District and correspondence sent to members of the Vargas government) shows a transition in the communists’ discourse from ferocious criticism of the government and the *demand* for amnesty or release of prisoners to a milder discourse in the context of the War characterised by an *appeal* for the reintegration of part of the Brazilians who were impeded from collaborating with the homeland in the defence tasks ahead because they were imprisoned or exiled.<sup>16</sup> However, the emergence of pro-amnesty organisations and the onset of public campaigns only started at the beginning of 1945 amidst a relaxation of censorship and reorganisation of the opposition forces.

Despite this long trajectory – which remains to be properly investigated – this study turns its attention to the press coverage of the campaign during March and April 1945 to give an insight into the level of organisation of these groups, propagation of political manifestos and holding of rallies in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and other Brazilian cities. While revealing the connection between amnesty and pacification, the material also reveals campaign’s

political actors, the objects of the amnesty (who would benefit) and how it was adapted to the context of redemocratisation present at the end of the *Estado Novo*.

In the beginning of March 1945, the São Paulo newspaper *Folha da Manhã* presented Jorge Amado's thoughts on the political situation in Brazil. The famous writer and communist militant spoke of amnesty as being: "wide-ranging and capable of making people forget old feelings of resentment, a measure to *pacify the whole Brazilian family*". On 20th March, the same newspaper published a document produced by the coordinators of the São Paulo National Defence League (LDN, acronym in Portuguese) which suggested two measures necessary for attaining national unity: strengthening of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB, acronym in Portuguese) and the "*the pacification of the Brazilian family*: wide-ranging amnesty for political prisoners and exiles".<sup>17</sup>

On 1st April, the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *Correio da Manhã* published a call from the Women's Pro-Amnesty Committee for "women from the Federal District to join this great movement growing across Brazil in favour of *the pacification of the Brazilian family*". On the same day, the editorial section of the *Folha da Manhã* touched on the subject of amnesty and the presidential elections, which "could not happen while party leaders remain in prison or exiled". At the same time, it alerted that "talk of demobilisation of spirits, *pacification of the Brazilian family*, and national unity would not be accepted while our compatriots continued to suffer the penalties imposed by this authoritarian government".<sup>18</sup>

These first records mention some of the actors involved in the pro-amnesty campaign: the communists; members of the LDN (an organisation which played a major role in the campaign for the creation of the FEB and placed itself as opposition to the *Estado Novo* despite its pluralistic composition); Women's Pro-Amnesty Committee; various other organisations created at the time,<sup>19</sup> and the press (one of the bastions of the campaign to end the dictatorship from the beginning of 1945). The targets of amnesty are mentioned as being the political prisoners and exiles suffering the penalties imposed by the authoritarian government. The topic of national unity is presented from two perspectives: as a desired goal or as a promise to be wary about. The pacification of the Brazilian family is presented as a goal (in the first three quotations) and worthy of precaution (the last quotation). The topic of elections also appears. It is important to note that the electoral calendar for 1945 had already been published, listing presidential election to be held in December. At the

time, the National Democratic Union (UDN, acronym in Portuguese) was in the process of being created and Eduardo Gomes was in campaign, both of which were looked on favourably by the newspapers analysed by the study.<sup>20</sup>

Other examples help to complete the picture. On 4th April, the *Correio da Manhã* published a press release produced by the Intellectual Workers Union (UTI, acronym in Portuguese) protesting against a declaration made by Batista Luzardo suggesting that Luiz Carlos Prestes would be excluded from the amnesty. The signatories claimed that the declaration “constituted a dis-service to purpose of *the pacification of the Brazilian family*, which can be attained only by granting wide-ranging and unrestricted amnesty”. On the same day, the newspaper covered a meeting held in the headquarters of the Sao Paulo Press Association (API, acronym in Portuguese) which launched the “Women’s Campaign for *the Pacification of the Brazilian family*”. Edith Negraes states that the campaign constituted a “totally apolitical movement in favour of a *wide-ranging, general and unrestricted amnesty*”. The publication of a speech by Herbert Moses, president of the Brazilian Press Association (ABI, acronym in Portuguese), by the *Correio da Manhã* four days later strengthened the role of the press organisations in the campaign. He spoke about the existence of “a common theme [in current opinion]: amnesty. This yearning for *pacification* of the spirits, by forgetting resentment, is the purifying fire”. On 12th April, the same newspaper reported the reinstatement of *habeas corpus* for exiled politicians by the Brazilian Supreme Federal Court (STF, acronym in Portuguese) allowing them to return to the country. According to the article, Armando de Sales Oliveira, one of the politicians benefitted by this measure, stated the following: “I will only feel happy when a wide-ranging amnesty advances reconciliation for the *Brazilian family*”.<sup>21</sup>

The excerpts presented above shed light on the organisations involved in the mobilisation (the UTI, API and ABI) and the names of the main targets of the campaign: Luiz Carlos Prestes and Armando de Sales Oliveira. The following paragraphs help to clarify the profile of the groups that demanded amnesty and the main differences between the supporters. Prestes, after leading the militia column known in Brazil as the *Coluna Prestes* in the 1920s, fled to Bolivia where he came into contact with Marxist literature.<sup>22</sup> He refused to support the 1930 revolution and was accepted as a member of the PCB after a period spent in the Soviet Union. He led the National Liberation Alliance (ANL, acronym in Portuguese) and was involved in the armed uprisings in November in the States of Natal and Rio de Janeiro which became known in Brazil as the *Intentona Comunista*. He was imprisoned in 1936, condemned

by the leaders of the armed movement, and later for his role in the murder of Elza Fernandes. He was released from prison under the amnesty granted on 18th April 1945. Armando de Sales Oliveira, participated in the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932 and, after its defeat, was nominated interim governor of the State of São Paulo by Vargas and later elected governor of the state in 1935. In 1937, he named himself candidate in presidential election scheduled for the beginning of 1938. Between October and November of that year he exposed the plot to stage a military coup. Upon the installation of the *Estado Novo*, he spent a year under house arrest and left for exile in France and later in the United States. Sales Oliveira returned to Brazil a few days before the STF granted amnesty. Due to health problems, he admitted himself to a sanatorium in São Paulo. The few statements he made to the press included expressions of support for amnesty and Eduardo Gomes' presidential election campaign.

The names Prestes and Sales Oliveira appear repeatedly in the press records of the campaign conducted in March and April 1945 analysed by this study.<sup>23</sup> These people represent two important groups that opposed the *Estado Novo* and persecuted by the Vargas regime: the communists and the constitutionalists or liberals, also known as *Paulistas* in Brazil. These groups were affected differently by the dictatorship: the persecution of the communists, that already existed in relation to the activities of the ANL, intensified after the uprising of 1935 was crushed. The run up to the creation of the *Estado Novo* was marked by mass imprisonments without trial or criminal charges, disease ridden prisons and degrading treatment, detention of parliamentarians and the declaration of a State of Siege and State of War, extended on a number of occasions, with support from the National Congress and the mainstream press. Political repression continued throughout the dictatorship (Nasser, 1966; Pinto, 1950; Ramos, 1953; Cancelli, 1993). Communists involved in the events of 1935 remained behind bars or in exile in 1945. Prestes represented this group and also carried the tragic burden of family history marked by the deportation of his pregnant wife Olga Benário to Nazi Germany by the Brazilian government.<sup>24</sup> Despite this, at the beginning of 1945, Prestes defended the need for “national unity” around Vargas. The amnesty contributed towards this process. It was expected that the amnesty would be accompanied by the legalisation of the PCB, which was feasible at the time given the climate forged by the Allied victory in Europe with the participation of the Soviet Union. The

legalisation of activities yearned for by the communists demanded that they and the government (that was in need of new support) forgot the past.

Various members of the liberal group had participated in the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932 and fled to exile after the defeat. They were granted amnesty in 1934 and various members participated in the Constituent Assembly in 1934 and were once again removed from the political scene after the military coup of 1937. The group was therefore excluded in two separate moments, the second of which started two years after the beginning of the Communist witch hunt. In the context of the period 1936 to 1937, when the São Paulo government comprised the group led by Sales Oliveira, the communists, reduced to living in clandestinity, denounced the activities of the state public security forces, including the Maria Zélia prison massacre (cf. Karepovs, 2003, p.178).

It is important to emphasise that these two key figures of the campaign defended opposing viewpoints during the tense political environment towards the end of the *Estado Novo*. While Prestes defended national unity *around Vargas*, Sales Oliveira aligned himself with those that proposed uniting the opposition *against Vargas*. However, the rhetoric devices used by the supporters of both leaders in rallies, interviews and manifestos were very similar and based on the notion of pacification and Brazil as one big family. The plans drawn up for redemocratisation could be upset by the unexpected actions of political actors or by the appearance on the scene of new actors. The communists main concern was the legalisation of the party (which was now feasible given the climate of tolerance with respect to the Soviet Union) which would be more likely under Vargas than under the fledgling UDN or the anticommunist military. Furthermore, it was important to be on the government’s side until the threat of Nazi Fascism and its national representatives was definitively defeated. The Liberals main interest was the elections and ensuring the participation of the excluded leaders that were in a position to capitalise on the gains of the growing opposition to Vargas. Any brusque movement was likely to muddy the waters and frustrate these groups’ plans. Therefore, groups should verbalise their demands for amnesty by way of a reassuring discourse.

Returning to the press campaign, in a telegram sent to Vargas, the Women’s Pro-Amnesty Committee of São Paulo characterised amnesty as follows: “it means the return of husbands and children to their homes. For us amnesty means *the pacification of the Brazilian family*. For us, amnesty is a

milestone for national peace”. The use of the telegram as a strategy for communicating with the president was also adopted by the participants of a rally held on 14th April in Belo Horizonte: “the people of Belo Horizonte, at a time when *the pacification of the Brazilian family* is desired by all and based on the ideals upheld by the Expeditionary Force ... we are writing to plead with Your Excellency to grant a wide-ranging and unrestricted amnesty...”. A political rally was held on the same day in the Largo da Carioca, in Rio de Janeiro, where Maria Barata, the wife of the imprisoned communist Agildo Barata, “called for amnesty, an essential measure for *the pacification of the Brazilian family*”. Another telegram was sent to Vargas during the same period by protesters from Caxias do Sul introducing themselves as “Brazilians and democrats that aspire to *the pacification of the Brazilian family*, as the basis of the grandeur and cultural and moral unity of our homeland” and took the liberty of “suggesting and requesting [to the president of the republic] the proclamation of amnesty for prisoners jailed for political and related crimes...”.<sup>25</sup>

It is possible to detect a common thread in the notions of family and homeland in the context of the 1945 campaign in these excerpts: men returning home – made possible by the amnesty – is presented as the path to national peace. Thus, national peace leads to family peace. The fact that the homeland is characterised by grandeur and cultural and moral unity partakes of the “ideals upheld by the Expeditionary Force”. Here we have a decisive aspect of the Brazilian political framework in the first months of 1945: a context that reflected the end of World War II and Brazil’s participation alongside the Allied Forces. This participation had been widely demanded ever since the torpedoing of Brazilian ships by the German forces in 1942 and was consolidated through the formation of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force in 1943. The soldiers of the FEB were on Italian soil at the time of the pro-amnesty campaign. One of the ways of honouring their efforts and prepare the country – or prepare the “home” – for their return would be for the government to concede amnesty. The discourse of the mainstream press regarding the Brazilian soldiers participating in the War pointed out the incompatibility between the permanence of the dictatorship in the country and the fight against totalitarianism in the international sphere.

Despite the different viewpoints regarding the immediate future of the country, the communists and liberals were able to fight for the same cause during a short period of time. It appears that the notion of Brazil as one big family and amnesty as pacification was best suited to the need to forget the conflicts and focus on agreement.<sup>26</sup>



## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE MEANING OF PACIFICATION

The much talked about pacification of the Brazilian family, evident in the sources of information analysed by this study, is not a phenomenon restricted to the end of the dictatorships in Brazil in the Twentieth Century. Rather, it should be understood as a characteristic element of our political tradition, close to conciliation. Conciliation is part of a recurring trend in Brazilian political history of arrangements between the political elite whereby, according to José Honório Rodrigues, they have learned that it is the best strategy to avert popular participation and the claims of the “people” in situations of risk (Rodrigues, 1982). According to Renato Lemos, the tradition of amnesty during Brazilian history reflects “wider traditions: conciliation as a form of protecting the fundamental interests of the dominant classes in our society and that of preventive counter-revolution as an anti-crisis strategy” (Lemos, 2002).

At the same time, the family metaphor is evident in political discourse before this period, but not necessarily related to amnesty. The family metaphor may be explained with the aid of the reflections of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda regarding private and public settings throughout Brazil’s history. The large rural estates in Brazil were predominantly privately owned, setting the social and political context of the country ever since the colonial period and influencing the empire and first decades of the Republic. According to the historian, it is the “blood and heart ties” that “provide the model for any social composition between us” in a context of “unquestionable supremacy, that absorbs the family unit” (Holanda, 1982, p.106). In this context, the public setting was not formed based on equality, but rather on the affective ties and dependence that make up the home environment.

With regard to the pacification of the Brazilian family in the two contexts analysed by this study, it may be concluded that after a period where a closed political system and exclusion of certain actors prevailed, they or their representatives appealed to the general public, seeking to raise awareness among the authorities and of public opinion regarding the need for political reintegration. The return to public life of key figures who had been jailed or exiled, with emphasis on army members removed from their posts, was presented as the first and essential step towards building a new pact and achieving democratic liberties (expression found in the records of both periods). The much promised elections of 1945 would make no sense without the participation of the leaders exiled throughout the Vargas regime. In the same way, the promise of liberalization made by Geisel in the 1970s and pressure from the MDB to hold a

Constituent Assembly would not have happened without the reintegration of politicians such as Brizola, Prestes and Miguel Arraes.

In both contexts, at a different level, a process was underway to consolidate new political actors, which would demand political space and answers to their demands. In 1945, the pro-amnesty campaign was a contemporary not only of the creation of the UDN, but also of urban workers' strikes, the first protests of the popular mobilization known as *queremismo* and the creation of numerous workers', intellectuals', liberal professionals' and students' organisations. Between 1978 and 1979, the CBA capitalized on the energy and participation of militants from the student, union, "white collar", environmental, feminist, and black movements and protests against the high cost of living, drawing them into the amnesty struggle. This was a decisive factor in consolidating the slogan "wide-ranging, general and unrestricted amnesty" whose words suggested a more radical fight than the one waged until that time. Within this context, the space available for a discourse based on the family metaphor, an amnesty seen as an appeal to the benevolence of the government and forgetting the feelings of resentment about the past, was considerably reduced. It is also important to take into account the mobilisation of the members of family of the persecuted politicians that demanded amnesty in both periods, although not always based on the political reasons outlined above.<sup>27</sup>

In general terms, this comparative assessment of the pro-amnesty campaigns of 1945, and 1975 to 1979 highlights the recurrence of the idea of conciliation expressed in the association between amnesty and "the pacification of the Brazilian family". Although the slogan "wide-ranging, general and unrestricted amnesty" is found in records from amnesties prior to 1979, in this specific context the phrase portrays a new meaning given by political actors that proposed a radical confrontation of the dictatorship rather than new phase in process of institutionalisation of the regime. The CBA headed these resignification efforts and their criticism of the connection between amnesty and forgetting the past, i.e., between amnesty and pacification, is made clear in a number of documents produced by the organisation.

Although the defeat of the proposal for a "wide-ranging, general and unrestricted amnesty" may have erased the labour of constructing new meaning from the memory of future generations, and even from that of those who lived through this period, as Walter Benjamin suggests, the eyes of the historian can, "take possession of a memory just as it scintillates in a moment of danger" (Benjamin, 1985, p.224). By recovering the memory of signification he/she can also alert his/her readers to the survival of the logic of pacification even up to

the present day. Perhaps this survival can help to understand why the crimes committed by the dictatorship in Brazil are yet to be judged.

Amnesty in Brazil and settling scores with the dictatorship have been analysed and criticised generally in contrast to the examples of neighbouring countries, such as Argentina, where measures were overturned and the process of clarification and punishment of crimes was swifter and more radical. The comparison with contemporary cases can shed a light of understanding on this reality in the same way that a comparison over time can, especially given the long tradition of amnesty and conciliation in this country.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The majority of the empirical research for this comparative study of the two amnesties was undertaken in 2012 during a post doctorate intern at the CPDOC at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, under the supervision of Ângela de Castro Gomes. I am grateful to the professor for the reflections she shared with me. I am also grateful to Vanderlei Machado for revising the article and providing suggestions. I am also grateful to Janaína Contreiras (BIC-UFRGS) and Arthur Luiz Greci de Carlos (Fapergs) who received scientific initiation scholarships and collaborated with this study.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion regarding forgetting see: RODEGHERO, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Despite the dominance of information sources from the State of Rio Grande do Sul, this analysis takes into account the national extent of the pro-amnesty campaigns. These sources were analysed in a previous study about the historiographic production regarding the campaign in other regions of the country. The material was explored by RODEGHERO; DIENSTMANN; TRINDADE, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> The reference to the documents will be made at the end of each paragraph.

<sup>5</sup> These and other emphases were added.

<sup>6</sup> The terms gaúcho and rio-grandense describe anyone born in the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

<sup>7</sup> Statement by D. Paulo, *Folha da Manhã*, Porto Alegre, 6th Sept 1975, p.4; correspondence from the MFPA to the MDB on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 1975; statement of deputy Guimarães, *Correio do Povo*, Porto Alegre, 30th Sept 1976; Bevilacqua’s speech in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, 12<sup>th</sup> Apr 1978; MFPA letter to Figueiredo in *Zero Hora*, Porto Alegre, 29th Jul 1978.

<sup>8</sup> MARTINS, 1978. Signs of the representativeness of the work: in the presentation of the book, Ribeiro Martins mentions his experiences with political prisoners and his concern over the lack of historical studies regarding the tradition of amnesties in Brazil. Before publication, he had divulged part of his research on alternative newspapers (*Coojornal* and *Movimento*). He thanks the president of the CBA, created in Rio de Janeiro in February 2013. In a letter sent to the *gaúcho* unit of the MFPA in April 1978, Ribeiro Martins agreed the details of trip to Porto Alegre to debate the topic.

<sup>9</sup> A preliminary analysis of the documents from the “Amnesty” fund from Pery Constant Bevilacqua’s archives, available at the Fundação Casa de Benjamim Constant, in Rio de Janeiro, provides the basis for this affirmation.

<sup>10</sup> Examples of material on amnesty propagated and produced by the students’ movement can be found at the public archives of the State of Rio de Janeiro. See especially the documents which are part of the Fundo Jean Marc Van Der Weid at the same organisation and contain important evidence of the fight for amnesty outside Brazil among the exiles.

<sup>11</sup> The universities involved in this project between 2011 and 2012 are the UFPE, UFRJ and UFRGS.

<sup>12</sup> Regarding the project see: RODEGHERO; MONTENEGRO; ARAÚJO (Org.), 2012.

<sup>13</sup> The topic is widely explored in: RODEGHERO, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Almoré Zoch Cavalheiro. Interview by Aryanne Torres Nunes in Porto Alegre on 5th Oct 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Regarding the debates to define the political alignment of the PCB between 1937 and 1938, see KAREPOVS, 2003. The demand for amnesty appears in a large part of the documents analysed confiscated by the police or sent to the *Internacional Comunista*.

<sup>16</sup> These affirmations are based on the analysis of pamphlets of the DESPS, Aperj, the personal archives of Osvaldo Aranha, Eurico Dutra and Getúlio Vargas, and of the CPDOC of the Getulio Vargas Foundation.

<sup>17</sup> The excerpts, in the order in which they appear were taken from the *Folha da Manhã*, São Paulo, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1945, p.5 and 20 March 1945, p.4. Excerpts were chosen that showed a connection between amnesty and “pacification of the Brazilian Family” after registering all the articles related to amnesty in March and April. Although they were not quantified, the analysis revealed the intensive use of the notion.

<sup>18</sup> The excerpts, in the order in which they appear were taken from the *Correio da Manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, 1st April 1945, p.3 and the *Folha da Manhã*, São Paulo, 1st April 1945, p.6.

<sup>19</sup> The São Paulo Pro-amnesty Medical Committee (*Folha da Manhã*, 6th April, p.5); the

Press and Radio Pro-amnesty Committee (*Folha da Manhã*, 30th March p.3); the Women's Pro-amnesty Committee (*Folha da Manhã*, 10th April, p.5); the Artists Pro-amnesty Committee (*Folha da Manhã*, 10 April, p.5); the Radio Workers' Pro-amnesty Committee (*Folha da Manhã*, 12 abr., p.4) can be highlighted among the pro-amnesty organisations in São Paulo. In Rio de Janeiro organisations included the Women's Pro-amnesty Committee (*Correio da Manhã*, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1945, p.3) or Feminist Pro-amnesty Committee (*Correio da Manhã*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1945, p.12) which are apparently the same organisation.

<sup>20</sup> Regarding the redemocratisation context in 1945 see: RODEGHERO, 2006, and FERREIRA, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> *Correio da Manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1945, p.3; *Folha da Manhã*, São Paulo, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1945, p.5; *Correio da Manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, 8<sup>th</sup> April 1945 and 12<sup>th</sup> April 1945, p.18.

<sup>22</sup> Based on the *Brazilian Historical-Biographical Dictionary* of the CPDOC at the Getulio Vargas Foundation.

<sup>23</sup> Another two figures are highlighted in press coverage (mentioned in published manifestos, speeches, banners and pamphlets during political rallies): Octávio Mangabeira and Paulo Nogueira Filho. Mangabeira, politician from the State of Bahia, was against the Revolution of 1930, fled to exile in the same year and returned to Brazil during the amnesty of 1934. Supported the presidential candidate Armando de Sales Oliveira in 1937 and exposed manoeuvres that led to the military coup of the *Estado Novo*. Was imprisoned during the dictatorship and was exiled in Europe and the United States. Paulo Nogueira Filho, from São Paulo, participated in the movement of 1932, fled to exile and returned to Brazil in 1934. Supported the creation of the Constitutionalist Party and the presidential candidate Armando de Sales Oliveira in 1937. Was forced into exile after the military coup. Information based on the *Brazilian Historical-Biographical Dictionary*.

<sup>24</sup> The *Internacional Comunista* promoted an international campaign for the release of Luiz Carlos Prestes and the rest of the Brazilian political prisoners led by his mother (Leocádia) and one of Prestes' sisters (Lygia) which resulted in release of the child born in captivity in Germany. The campaign is described by in: PRESTES, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> *Folha da Manhã*, São Paulo, 13th April 1945, p.4; *Correio da Manhã*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1945, p.3 and 28; *Diário de Notícias*, Porto Alegre, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

<sup>26</sup> Both groups requested the exclusion of the groups “*quintas-colunas*” from the amnesty. However, there was no specific request to exclude the integralists. The same climate of tolerance that permitted the legalisation of the Communist party also facilitated the acceptance of the integralists, also known as the “*camisas verdes*” (green shirts). However, according to the information sources studied, the climate was not so tolerant as to allow them to take the stage at pro-amnesty rallies.

<sup>27</sup> Regarding this topic see: MACHADO, 2013.

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