

*United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

Counterinsurgency in Brazil: Lessons of the Fighting from 1968 to 1974

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 2010		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2010 to 00-00-2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Counterinsurgency in Brazil: Lessons of the Fighting from 1968 to 1974				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, VA, 22134				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 32	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Executive Summary

Title: Counterinsurgency in Brazil: Lessons of the Fighting from 1968 to 1974

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Thesis: The suspension of democratic rights and the use of brutal techniques of interrogations and combat against insurgent leftist movements during the last military governments in Brazil affected the relationships among military, politicians and civilians inside the Brazilian Society.

Discussion: During the counterinsurgency fighting against leftist armed groups in Brazil from 1968 to 1974, the military governments suspended democratic rights and lost control over sectors of the security organizations and armed forces. Those sectors used of extreme violence during the combat against the insurgents and the interrogation of detainees. The suspension of democratic rights and the use of violence in the combat and against detainees shaped the perceptions of influent sectors of the Brazilian people and politicians in the post-military government period.

Conclusion: The perception of influent sectors of the Brazilian society over the fighting against the insurgent armed groups and the control of the political life during the military governments brought consequences over the information instrument of national power, the current image of the military among sectors of the society and the current political environment in Brazil.

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Preface

The counterinsurgency warfighting during the last of the military governments period in Brazil contributed to the shaping of the current relationships among civilians, politicians and military inside the Brazilian society. If the military governments from 1964 to 1985 are currently perceived by influent sectors of the Brazilian politicians, press, writers, artists and musicians as the only responsible for the deprivation of the population of democratic rights for almost twenty years is, as a whole, partly due to the methods used to fight and defeat the insurgent leftist groups that flourished in Brazil from 1968 to 1974, which included the control over the media, the suspension of the habeas corpus and the use of violent methods to search for information.

The decision of these governments to use violence in the search for information and strict control of the information in order to defeat insurgences has not been an exception, but a common rule in history. In many counterinsurgencies, these methods contributed to tactical victory, like in Brazil, Argentina and Chile. But it also has brought consequences for the future relationships among civilians, the military and politicians inside the society. In the Brazilian case, although the tactical victory over the insurgents was absolute, the loss of control over the intelligence apparatus and radical sectors inside the military complicated the transition from the military to a civilian administration, planned by President Ernesto Geisel and his Chief of staff, General Golbery do Couto e Silva.

As a result, conservative sectors of the Brazilian society gradually lost power in the political arena and politicians who were connected in the past to leftist insurgent armed groups, are in charge of sectors of the government and dominate the 2010 presidential and governmental democratic elections.

Despite of the current democracy, Brazilian society is not invulnerable in the present or close future to the surge of armed groups willing to overthrow the legal power by force of arms. In that scenario, the Brazilian government would have to fight a counterinsurgency battle again, using its Armed Forces and security organizations. In this case, a honest and impartial look over the history is fundamental to comprehend the consequences of the choices made in the past for the current perception of the military among the Brazilian society. That understanding can help Brazilians take the correct decisions of the methods of fighting that could be employed in case of necessity, in order to legitimate the use of the force, according to the principles of a democratic society.

I would like to thank Doctor Bradford A. Wineman for the precise orientation over this research about some origins of the current civilian-military relationship in the Brazilian society. I also have to reaffirm my eternal gratitude to my wife Marcia, for her absolute support to all my ventures.

1 INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War, the Brazilian Military Governments succeeded in defeating all the leftist insurgent movements that tried to overthrow the political power in Brazil. However, the suspension of democratic rights during the fighting and the loss of control of security and intelligence organizations would bring negative consequences to the relationships among people, politicians and military in the current Brazilian Society.

In 1964, unsatisfied with the administration of President Joao Goulart (Jango), a leftist politician and pressed by rightist sectors of the Brazilian society, the military took power and ruled the government for more than twenty years. From 1968 to 1974 the military governments using all instruments of national power engaged and defeated all the insurgent leftist movements that arose inside the state. During this conflict, democratic rights were suspended by the military government. Although those measures facilitated the defeat of the armed groups they also brought consequences in the relationships among civilians, politicians and military inside the Brazilian society. An analysis of the struggle against the insurgent armed movements allows an understanding of some of the particularities in the current Brazilian society and provides conclusions that can be applied in the present and future days.

Firstly, this study will review the historic period of the Brazilian military governments, since its installation until the return to democracy. This overview will serve as background to understand the coup d'état, the performance of the governments and the redemocratization process. Secondly, the study will review how the military government conducted the fight against the insurgent movements. This review will address the use of the instruments of national power by the military government. Thirdly, the study will explore the consequences of the fighting for the current relationships among civilians, politicians and military in the Brazilian society. Finally, the study will conclude reflecting over the lessons from the past that could apply in case of a counterinsurgency fighting in the present day.

2 BACKGROUND: THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT

The military has always played an active political role in the Brazilian history, since the overthrow of the Brazilian monarchy in 1889. Many generals became presidents or openly supported the presidential succession processes. These succession processes have been accomplished sometimes by elections, other by coups d'état.

In 1961, Janio Quadros, a rightist politician, resigned from presidency and Jango, at the time the vice-president, ascended as the 24th Brazilian chief of the state. Quadros believed that the military and conservative groups inside the Brazilian society would bring him back to power just after his resignation, because of a strong rejection against the vice president, who was a leftist politician and had strong connections with workers syndicates and the communist party. The return to the power by a popular vote would give Quadros more legitimacy and freedom of action to govern the state.¹ However, Jango successfully remained in charge due to an agreement with the Congress that took away most of the formal presidential power. Jango wanted to implement leftist grass roots reforms in Brazil, but the economy during his government went into a deep decline. The inflation rate in 1963 achieved 75% a year and the projection to the next year was 140%. The foreign investments reduced by 50%. The number of work strikes doubled. In March of 1964, about 200.000 people protested in the streets of Sao Paulo City against the reforms intended by Jango.² In March 1964, after meeting with soldiers (primarily corporals and non-commissioned officers), workers associated in syndicates and representatives of the communist party in a club in Rio de Janeiro, Jango was deposed from the presidency by a military coup.³

The military government remained in power from 1964 to 1985. According to the journalist Elio Gaspari, this period of military control had three different phases: A first phase, from 1964 to 1968, when a moderate military government had as plan to overthrow

the communist threat represented by Jango and create conditions to reinstall democracy; a second phase, from 1968 to 1974, when the military governments were facing strong opposition by armed movements flourishing all over the country; and a third phase from 1974 to 1985, when moderate military governments effectively promoted a return to democracy. The leftist armed movements operated most actively during the second phase in both the large cities and in the countryside. In the cities, most of the actions took place in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, where the movements used several oppressive methods to destabilize the military government: kidnapping of foreign ambassadors and military personnel, terrorist attacks against military garrisons and assault of banks and groceries. The groups were usually composed of university students and leftist sympathizers with links to the communist party, with many of them trained in Cuba or Algiers. Meanwhile, the countryside leftist groups tried to establish guerrilla bases. The most important of the guerrilla bases were established in the Araguaia region, in the jungles located in the north of Brazil.⁴

These armed movements wanted to establish a leftist dictatorship in the country, similar to the regimes of Cuba, the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China. However, the movements that flourished after 1968 were defeated by 1974. A combination of actions taken by the military government and a lack of support of the Brazilian people for a leftist uprising contributed to their failure. The military government acted effectively in the primary areas of the national power: diplomatic, information, military and economic. The Brazilian people did not want a military government to remain in power forever. However, they feared a leftist dictatorship more than the military government.⁵

In the third phase starting in 1974, a process of the transition to democracy would be initiated by President Ernesto Geisel. The process was named "Abertura Política" (Political Opening) and would be gradual. Indeed, the transition from a military to a civilian government would take over ten years to accomplish. In 1985, the last military president,

General Joao Batista Figueiredo was replaced by Tancredo Neves, a civilian, officially ending almost twenty years of military government.⁶

After the 1985 elections, the military removed itself from the political leadership in Brazil. A law issued on 11 August 1979 established a general amnesty for both sides (civilian and military) that had liability for political crimes from 1961 to 1979. The Amnesty Law was an attempt to put an end on the differences between the radical leftists and military that went into the struggle. The final movement towards a democratic government system would be complete with the establishment of the 1988 constitution.⁷

3 THE COUNTERINSURGENCY FIGHTING FROM 1968-1974

The period from 1968 to 1974 was characterized by the military governments most aggressive fighting against the insurgent movements. Among the opposition groups, leftist radicals advocated that the only way to get to attain power would be through force of arms. The Brazilian government faced leftist armed groups supported by different communist countries. The movements were connected to the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB) and supported with money and training by the governments of Cuba, Algiers, Soviet Union and China. The leftist armed groups would commit crimes and terrorist acts against the Brazilian government and society in a connection with its fight against the military regime. Because of this, there were rightist radicals inside the military who wanted more freedom of action to fight against the left. This faction in the military did not trust in the control of the government by civilian authorities, fearing the administration would result in corruption or even worse, allow a Marxist ideology to be installed in the state.⁸ They would become known in the military community as the “Hard Line” and would be responsible for unlawful actions committed on behalf of the government fight against the subversion.⁹

In order to fight the insurgent movements inside a legal framework, the government issued laws making activities connected to the insurgency illegal. The primary laws stated were decrees named “Institutional Acts.” The “Institutional Acts” were supposed to be temporary measures stated during emergency situations to allow the government to deal with threats to the state security. In practice, the acts lasted long periods of time (some had no stated deadline) and gave the military governments powers not provisioned by the 1946 constitution. By the acts, presidents could change the constitution, suspend political mandates, prohibit political parties, suspend the Congress and carry on other measures without consultation to the Congress.¹⁰

In July 1967, there was the first attempt of establishment of a guerrilla force in the Caparaó mountains in southeast of Brazil. This effort was financially supported by Cuba and promoted by the leftist politician Leonel Brizola. In the cities, Carlos Mariguella, a dissident member of the Communist Party established links with the Cuban government and founded the National Liberation Alliance (ALN), increasing the number of terrorist acts in order to spread the chaos in the urban centers of Brazil. Another leftist armed movement, the Revolutionary Popular Vanguard (VPR) kidnapped and murdered foreign military personnel from allied countries extending their terror campaign. The Command of National Liberation (COLINA) is another example of an armed group which wanted to install a government based on the Soviet communism. The COLINA robbed banks and executed bomb attacks in Belo Horizonte City. In 1968, there were about ten leftist organizations promoting armed insurgencies as an attempt way to overthrow the government in Brazil.¹¹ Inside the Brazilian society, many groups that opposed to the military administration of the state sympathized with the armed groups’ cause. The National Students Union (UNE) and other opposition associations promoted a demonstration that same year that gathered 50.000 people in the Rio de Janeiro City against the continuation of the military regime.¹²

In order to have more power to fight against the insurgent movements and the opposition to the regime, in December 1968 General Costa e Silva, the military president in power issued the “Institutional Act Number Five” (AI-5). By the AI-5, the National Congress was closed, political mandates were suspended, the government was authorized to intervene in the states and municipalities administrations under national security necessities, the right to gather for political meetings were declared illegal, a censorship of songs, newspaper and magazines, films, theater and television was imposed in the media and the right of *habeas corpus* was suspended for 60 days for crimes of political motivation. The Act stated also that political crimes could be judged in military courts.¹³

The AI-5 allowed the government to characterize most of the activities in support of the leftist movements as being illegal. Once illegal, the governments could use all instruments of national power: Diplomacy, Information, Military and Economics to isolate and fight the movements within a legal framework.

Under the diplomatic instrument of national power, the military governments maintained strong ties with foreign states and institutions that supported the regime. After the coup d’état in 1964 the international community accepted the new Brazilian government almost immediately. Three factors contributed directly for this acceptance: the Cold War environment, the kidnapping of foreign persons by leftist movements and the support of the Itamaraty Institute to the military regime.

During the Cold War, the relationship with the United States (U.S.) was very friendly during the early years of the military government. The installation of a communist regime in Cuba after the Revolution conducted by Fidel Castro in 1959 forced the U.S. to dispense more energy in the maintenance of its influence in Latin America. Previous to the military coup d’état on 31 March 1964, U. S. President Lyndon Johnson had already approved the sending of U.S. Navy Carrier Group Forrestal, if necessary, with fuel to support the

revolutionary military government that would replace Jango.¹⁴ In 1971, U.S. President Richard M. Nixon met the Brazilian President General Emilio Garrastazu Medici and reaffirmed the U.S. support to his government by telling him: “We know that as Brazil goes so will go the rest of the Latin-America continent.”¹⁵ The relationships between the Brazilian and the U.S. governments began to sour in 1976, when Jimmy Carter was elected. President Carter had the defense of the human rights as his priority and the Brazilian regime was been denounced for violation of human rights by Catholic fathers since 1970 in the international press.¹⁶

The Cold War environment dominated by the U.S. would force South American governments that were foes in the past, to support each other against the common enemy represented by the spread of the communism in South America. This support would create allied operations such as the Condor Operation (1975), a multinational cooperation conducted by Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Brazil to arrest or neutralize people connected to leftist movements in the continent.¹⁷

The decision of the insurgents to kill or kidnap foreign people in order to destabilize the government also contributed for the continuation of the support to the military governments in the international community. Three ambassadors were kidnapped in Brazil in 1969 and 1970: Charles B. Elbrick from the U.S., Ehrenfried V. Hollenen from German and Giovanni E. Bucher, from Switzerland.¹⁸ The Brazilian government, in turn, worked carefully to preserve the good relationships with the countries of origin of the kidnapped employees, ceding to the demands of the movements in order to preserve the lives of the victims. Those concessions helped to maintain the Brazilian ties with allied countries.

The Itamaraty Institute’s support of the military regime was the third factor of the acceptance of the new government in the international community. The Itamaraty, an organization with a very strong political influence and credibility among the international

community was the responsible for the Brazilian foreign affairs doctrine. Once the Itamaraty accepted the new government, Brazilian diplomats, under orders of the Institute worked for convincing the international community about the legitimacy of the new administration. The continuation of the Brazilian foreign policy, with the same diplomats representing the country abroad assured the acceptance of the military regime in the international community.¹⁹

Of all the instruments of national power, the government placed its greatest efforts into information. The control of the information was central to the victory over the insurgent movements, both in the acquisition of data over the leftist activities and in the dissemination to the Brazilian people of the image the government wanted for itself.

The first aspect of the use of the information instrument of national power, the acquisition of information, was coordinated by a central institution: the National Information Service (SNI). The SNI was founded in 1964 by General Golbery do Couto e Silva and employed military from the three distinguished services (Navy, Army and Air Force) among its personnel. The Service coordinated the collection of information from others military and civilian agencies along the country and exchanged data with foreign intelligence agencies, such as the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The SNI had autonomy to conduct its own secret operations. The acquisition of information was conducted through several means: electronic devices to intercept phone conversations, infiltration of agents among the insurgent groups, buying of information and conduction of interrogations of arrested people were some of the means used by the information agencies.²⁰ The control of the information allowed the government to closely follow the people who supported insurgent movements from the very beginning of their activities. The SNI had authority to investigate any person who lived in Brazil, including many politicians who were suspected of supporting insurgent movements.

The Chief of the SNI was given the status as a minister of state and could influence the decisions of the president directly, without having to respond to intermediate officers.

This gave him enormous power once he acquired the information before other state ministers.²¹ Two of the SNI Chiefs, General Emilio Garrastazu Medici and General Joao Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo would become presidents during the military governments.

The second aspect of the use of the information instrument of national power where the government succeeded was a positive image of the regime to the Brazilian people. The government always tried to disseminate throughout the media optimistic aspects of the new administration, such as improvements in the country's economy. The victory of the Brazilian national soccer team in the 1970 World Cup associated with the economical growth moment brought to the Brazilian society a confident image of the country.²² That indirectly helped the regime which was in the middle of the struggle against leftist armed movements. The federal administration established a control system over almost all information disseminated in the press, theaters, movies and music. Government agents worked as censors inside press agencies, magazine offices and many other private companies responsible by dissemination of news and artistic productions in order to prevent the diffusion of subversive ideology or even critics to the regime. That measure resulted in a total suppression of the freedom of press and speech. Newspaper articles, letter of songs and scenes from movies that were judged as being subversive were suppressed by censors.

Under the military instrument of national power, the counterinsurgency warfighting was characterized by intense violent actions by the armed forces and government security agencies against the leftist armed groups. These groups were trying to establish guerrilla movements in rural areas, while in the major cities they used to promote terrorism in order to destabilize the regime. The combat against the groups was carried by the government primarily by military units in the rural areas and by security agencies in the cities.

In the rural areas, however, the leftist movements did not succeed in the assembly of the significant guerrilla forces. The government military forces succeeded in detecting the

guerrilla initial activities inside the rural communities and fought them before they could gain the support of the population. The three main guerrilla movements in Brazil occurred in the Caparaó Mountains, the Ribeira Valley and the Araguaia Region. Altogether they could not account for more than 200 combatants and did not receive the necessary support of the local inhabitants.²³ The Armed Forces conversely used large numbers of soldiers in the operations. However, successes in locating and capturing the guerrillas were mostly due to using smaller numbers of specialized troops and information operations. The longest of the campaigns conducted by the military was in the Araguaia Region, the most dangerous of all the insurgent areas, from 1972 to 1974. The first campaign was executed by forces comprised mostly of recruits, without effective military training, and therefore did not succeed in exterminating the guerrillas. The Armed Forces did not achieve success until the government deployed specialized troops from the Parachutist Brigade and the Marine Corps. The fighting was extremely violent. Since there was no formal declaration of war, prisoners would not be protected by the Geneva Convention. Brutal methods of intimidation were used by both sides, such as cutting off the heads of dead bodies and execution of detainees. According to the journalist Fernando Portela, many prisoners were executed or violently interrogated by government agents.²⁴

Contrasting with the counterinsurgency fighting conducted by the Armed Forces of Chile and Argentina, the Brazilian military tried to be more selective when engaging the insurgent movements. Most of the violent actions were highly concentrated only over people effectively participating in leftist movements, avoiding reaching the population in general.²⁵ The result is a sharp contrast in the number of people disappeared or killed by the regime in Brazil, with the equivalent statistics in Chile and Argentina. In twenty years of military regime in Brazil, there were 426 people killed or missing because of the political fight conducted by the government. The number of deaths and missing in Brazil was about 59

times smaller than the 3.197 in the Chilean regime and 167 times smaller than the almost 30.000 Argentineans dead or missed.²⁶ In the operations against the guerrilla's in the Caparao Mountains, the government forces conducted humanitarian assistance such as distribution of food and medicine to minimize the impact of the large military presence in the area. Violent interrogations against ordinary population in the actions carried on against insurgent groups in rural areas were uncommon. According to the Brazilian Army doctrine at the time, the population should have their social needs attended, in order to avoid the return of the guerrilla force after its defeat.²⁷ The operation against the guerrillas in the Araguaia was an exception. About 300 local people were captured for interrogation during the counterinsurgency operations in 1972 and, according to Gaspari, submitted to violent interrogation and humiliation.²⁸ The capture and interrogation of locals in order to gather information about the guerrillas intended to intimidate the population. The purpose was to convince the locals they should fear the Army more than the guerrillas.²⁹

In the cities, however, the leftist movements were succeeding in creating a feeling of insecurity among the population, due to the use of terrorist acts. It was very difficult to fight the insurgent movements with regular troops because the terrorists could execute their attacks and hide among the population. In order to coordinate the efforts against the terrorist groups in the cities, the Minister of the Army created, in 1970, the Internal Security System. The system used small teams named "Information Operations Detachment (DOI)" composed of military personnel from the armed forces and state polices. The teams executed covert operations with military personnel in civilian clothes to investigate and arrest people involved in subversive activities. The covert nature of the investigations allowed for many times that agents working for the DOI executed tasks without the appropriate control by a superior officer. There were not specific rules on how to treat people under custody. In order to produce information that could collaborate with the investigations, agents working in the DOI

conducted violent interrogation of detainees. The techniques used for interrogation often times violated human rights.³⁰

To facilitate the fight through judicial means, the AI-5, among other measures, suspended *habeas corpus* for crimes of political motivation. The writ of *habeas corpus* allowed people arrested under suspicions of participation in subversive crimes to await trial in freedom. That made the investigations more difficult to be conducted once the success of the interrogations depended on keeping the suspect confined. Once the AI-5 was created, it was allowed to keep people confined for 60 days. The suspension of the *habeas corpus* facilitated the government efforts to keep members of the left movements arrested, while evidence against them was produced. It gave also an extra period of time for intelligence agents to conduct better interrogations of detainees, which led to the arrest of other members of the movements.³¹

Inside the military, the Hard Line always pressed for more autonomy to conduct secret operations against insurgent groups and adversaries of the military regime. They did not receive freedom of action during the government of the first military president, General Castello Branco, who believed the military administration should be a temporary situation while political conditions to restore democracy were settled. However, the Hard Line would eventually find more autonomy from 1968 to 1974, when the radicalization of the leftist movements would justify their conduct of violent repression against leftist groups. The last two governments, of Generals Geisel and Figueiredo would fight against representatives of the Hard Line working inside the Armed Forces, security organizations and information agencies. Their fight was conducted in order to allow the “Political Opening” and the transition to democracy.³²

Under the economic instrument of national power, the reorganization of the Brazilian economy contributed to the discredit and defeat of the insurgent movements and their

communist ideology. Since 1968 the Brazilian economy would be reoriented for production and exportation and would reach amazing rates of growth (10.4% in 1970). The government centralized control of the national economy borrowed large amounts of money from international institutions and invested these funds, plus a considerable rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in internal endeavors, such as the construction of roads and nuclear power plants. The result was rapid economic growth, so surprising that it would become known as “Brazilian Miracle.” The improvements were evidenced in the increasing of the employment rate, importation of machines and equipments, consumption of energy and internal business.³³ The possibility of accomplishing the dream of a large and developed country was the best propaganda against the regime’s opponents.

With the government under control and using all the instruments of national power, the military appeased the Brazilian population, kept the international alliances and defeated all the insurgent armed movements between 1968 and 1974. Although the victory was absolute, the methods employed and the suppression of democratic rights would bring consequences for the relationships among civilians, politicians and militaries.

4 SCARS OF THE FIGHT

In 1964, the majority of the Brazilian society, including the Command of the Armed Forces, did not want the establishment of a leftist government in Brazil. President Jango’s grass roots social reforms were viewed by conservatives as ideologically communist. In order to protect the Brazilian constitution and the law and order, the military took the power and ironically suspended democratic and constitutional rights for almost twenty years. Important democratic principles such as freedom of press and the institution of *habeas corpus* were suspended by “Institutional Acts” issued by the military presidents. Political parties were

extinguished, some politicians had their rights suspended, the National Congress was closed and many people connected to insurgent movements were arrested or banished from the country. Although the majority of the Brazilian society agreed at the time with the 1964 deposition of the president, the future generations and politicians did not agree with the following years of deprivation of democratic principles. President Castello Branco's initial plan of deposing Jango and calling for democratic elections would result in twenty years of military government. During this period, a hard fight against armed movements would make that politicians, students, professors, writers, journalists, musicians and artists connected to leftist ideology were arrested, sent into exile abroad or even executed by security forces. During the "Political Opening" those arrested would be freed and those in the exile would be allowed to return. But the scars of the fighting and the years in prison or exile would never be forgotten by many of those who participated in the insurgent movements. These people would inspire future generations to question who was protecting democracy: those who wanted to push for a Marxist or Maoist system under a leftist dictatorship or those who governed under a rightist military government.

The absolute control of the media, central to the victory over the insurgent movements in 1968, would cause major repercussions with the Brazilian society in the future. The direct report system of the Chief of the SNI to the President filtered the information and limited the strategic decisions the President could make.³⁴ The autonomy of the SNI to execute covert operations allowed participants of the Hard Line working inside the organization to conduct violent actions with little organizational control. Violence against detainees during interrogations was committed at extreme levels in order to obtain information, violating basic human rights principles. Secret operations conducted by agents of the SNI ended also, for many times, in political and criminal scandals. According to Gaspari, after 1975, many agents of the SNI were involved in attacks and even terrorist attempts to destabilize the processes of

redemocratization. Among other actions, supporters of the “Hard Line” burned stores which used to sell magazines of leftist ideology, made bomb attacks to spread a feeling of insecurity among the population and tried to accomplish a fraud in order to change the results of a governor’s election in Rio de Janeiro.³⁵ The violent, and many times, uncontrolled actions of agents who worked in the DOI during the conduct of investigations violated human rights principles. The crimes committed by the Hard Line operating inside the DOI contributed during many years to the association of the military in Brazil to repression and disrespect to individual freedom. People connected to insurgent movements in the cities were subjected to violent interrogations or murdered by security forces and investigation services, without a legal judgment.³⁶

The violent actions of people working inside the SNI and the DOI resulted in a growing aversion to the use of the “Information” instrument of national power by the government in the post-military era. Fulfilling an electoral promise, President Fernando Collor de Mello elected in 1990 decided to extinguish the SNI. The extinction of the service was executed without the adequate replacement of the organizations by a service capable of providing the president with appropriate intelligence. It would take until 1999 for the government to create a proper substitute. The Institutional Security Cabinet (GSI) was then created under the command of a chief with status of minister of state.³⁷ From the extinction of the SNI in 1990 until the creation of the GSI in 1999 the chiefs of state did not receive accurate strategic intelligence assessment. Brazilian presidents in this period refused to use an appropriate instrument of national power because of the negative memory of its employment during the military government era.

The suspension of the *habeas corpus* affected one of the primary individual rights in a democratic state.³⁸ The denial of the *habeas corpus* for political crimes meant that citizens, just by been suspected of a political crime, could be kept in prison without legal evidence. In

practice, the security forces did not need to have evidence of guilt over the detainee to keep him in prison for 60 days. The accused, by its turn, was given the burden of proving his innocence. The extra time in prison was used many times to produce information through the use of violent interrogations and coercion. These measures contributed to the current perception of the military governments, inside the juridical community, as the suppressors of the democracy.

The use of censorship to control the press and artistic productions violated the democratic principle of freedom of speech. The press was not free to cover all the events of the Brazilian life. The control of the media was one of the actions that most caused anger among intellectuals and artists against the regime. The image of military officers used as censors remained many years inside the society and contributed for the rejection of the military by many people inside the press and artistic communities.³⁹

In the operations against the guerrillas in the Araguaia Region, there was strict government control of the information disseminated by the media. The Araguaia guerrilla campaign, therefore, still remains a little understood episode in the Brazilian history. The intimidation of the population in order to suppress any collaboration of the locals with the guerrilla and the elimination of prisoners were not known by the Brazilian public until many years after. Although ordinary people had been submitted to violent interrogations, the control of the information allowed the government to keep it hidden from the society. Relatives of guerrillas that fought in Araguaia to install a Marxist movement continue today to search for information over the fate of detainees that disappeared under mysterious circumstances. The Brazilian Army is often accused by the relatives of the missing guerrillas of hiding information that could lead to confirmation of deaths in Araguaia.⁴⁰ Although the issues have been addressed currently by a government commission created to investigate the

fate of people who disappeared in the Araguaia, the relationships between the Command of the Army and social groups that claim for a more rigorous investigation are still tense.

Today, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Brazilian militaries that made the Revolution in 1964 are not celebrated by the Brazilian society as the “saviors of the order” in a state that was on the brink of becoming another “Cuba” in Latin America.⁴¹ Except inside the military community and some conservative elements of the society, the period from 1964 to 1985 is remembered as “The Dictatorship Era.” The electoral campaigns in Brazil since 1994 tried to ironically associate the politicians that opposed the military governments as being the defenders of the current democratic political system, even if some of them had as real objective the replacement of the rightist dictatorship by a leftist dictatorship. The last two presidents, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) (1995-2002) and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Lula) (2003-present day) came from leftist parties and were classified by military governments at the time as subversives. President FHC was identified a communist after the 1964 coup d’état and had his political rights suspended by the military government.⁴² President Lula was head of the Workers Syndicate in 1980 and was arrested by the police because of the National Security Law.⁴³ The next elections in Brazil scheduled for 2010 currently have two leftist politicians as primary candidates. One of the candidates, Jose Serra from the Brazilian Social Democracy Party is the current governor of Sao Paulo state and was president of the UNE. Mr. Serra was classified as subversive and remained exiled in Chile, Argentina and U.S. from 1964 to 1978.⁴⁴ The other candidate, Mrs. Dilma Vana Russef from the Worker’s Party is the current chief of staff of the Presidency. Mrs. Russef was arrested in 1970 due to participation in activities of the COLINA group.⁴⁵ The association of persons that supported the leftist insurgencies during the military government period being viewed now as defenders of democracy is one consequential reaction to the suppression of democratic principles during the military government’s struggle against the

insurgent movements in the past. Even politicians that in the past belonged to right wing parties, such as the National Renovation Alliance (ARENA) try to disassociate themselves from the regime.

The economy growing of the 1970's known as "Brazilian Miracle," helped to lessen the Brazilian society's opposition to the military governments and contributed to discrediting leftist ideologies. However, the economic growth was dependent on the borrowing of large amounts of capital from foreign countries and international institutions. The result was the lack of sustainment in long term and the creation of an enormous national debt which further stains the legacy of the old military government.⁴⁶ This debt would affect the fiscal credibility of the country in the international community for more than 20 years after the redemocratization of 1985.⁴⁷ The reinvestment of large amounts of the GDP in major endeavors would reach an end in Geisel's government.

Another consequence derived from the control of the political system by military in Brazil took place after the democratic elections of 1989, during the first years of the post-military period. At the time, there was a lack of effort among politicians to define the role of the military in the state. Since the military would no longer run the government or focus on fighting subversives, it was necessary to rethink the role of the Armed Forces. However, instead of discussing this issue, politicians worried solely about reducing the military's overall political presence. There was a gradual decrease in the number of military ministers of state from six, just after the transition in 1985, to currently one.⁴⁸ With the decrease of the military participation in politics, the conclusion of the Cold War, and the elimination of Marxist insurgents, the military would now focus on external threats to the Brazilian sovereignty in the inhabited Amazon region and the Atlantic maritime zone, and enhance participation in international peace-keeping operations.

The Amnesty Law declared by President Figueiredo was a pragmatic attempt to put an end on the differences between the radical leftists and the military Hard Line. The law was the result of a negotiation of representatives from both sides, to forgive crimes committed by radicals in the past. None of them would be held accountable anymore for any human rights abuse in that period.⁴⁹ The Amnesty would permit members from the insurgent armed movements that committed crimes such as terrorism and murdering, to participate again in public political life. The Amnesty would also protect military and members of security agencies of trials by any kind of crime, which included torture. However, some politicians who fought on the left side did not accept its absolute terms. These politicians are currently in charge in the Brazilian government and have used their power as an opportunity to call for a review or even a suspension of the 1979 law, in order to prosecute their former oppressors who participated in the Hard Line.⁵⁰

5 CONCLUSION

The strong antagonism between insurgent leftist movements and the right wing military government in Brazil from 1968 to 1974 resulted in continuous armed clashes in the major cities and rural areas of the countryside. Both sides would commit crimes in order to win the struggle. On the government side, the lack of control over the actions of military who belonged to the Hard Line generated disrespect to human rights and abuse of detainees. The use of censors to control the dissemination of ideas in the media and the control of the press were in conflict of the basic principle of democracy of freedom of speech. Although the number of people killed or disappeared is small, compared with other South American military regimes, the nature of the repression, which includes the use of violent methods of interrogations, the vanishing of dead bodies and the suspension of democratic principles

affected the relationships among civilians, politicians and militaries in Brazil in the beginning of the redemocratization period. As result, the military governments from 1964 to 1984 today endure the legacy of abusing democracy for twenty years while the leftist politicians who fought for the installation by force of arms for a Marxist government promote their image albeit unsuccessfully as those who fought against dictatorship in defense of democracy. The political arena after the “Political Opening” gradually presented a preponderance of leftist politicians. The Brazilian 2010 presidential elections political environment is currently dominated by leftist politicians.

Today, democracy is an undeniable element of the Brazilian state. In the eventuality of a new counterinsurgency warfighting in Brazil at the present time, the Brazilian government could not again make use of the instruments of national power in a non-democratic way as it was done in the past. The Brazilian Armed Forces would have to fight according to the basic principles of a legitimate democratic state, under the Constitution and according to the Brazilian laws. To promote a positive image of the government nowadays implies in maintaining an open and transparent relationship with the media, with no room for any kind of suppression of freedom of speech. Effective intelligence is also essential to a victory over insurgent movements. However, all these measures would have to apply inside ethical limits, because a free press would not allow the government to take absolute control of the information. The instruments of national power would have to be used inside the boundaries of democracy. Violent interrogations, control of the press and suppression of individual rights are practices that alienate the support of the population in a democratic state and hazard the legitimacy of the government. According to the writer Alessandro Visacro, in a counterinsurgency fight the government has to legitimate its efforts in order to maintain the support of the population. As consequence, its armed and security forces will have to operate

inside legal limits, present an ethical conduct, avoid collateral damages and contribute to the fulfillment of the basic needs, expectations and claims of the population.⁵¹

In 1976, during the Jimmy Carter administration the U.S. launched a crusade for the respect of human rights, pressing many Latin America countries not to submit detainees to violence or inhuman treatment. In 2008, the U.S. government conducted an internal inquiry in order to investigate its own abuse of detainees arrested in counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan during the President George W. Bush administration.⁵² The use of violent methods of interrogation to obtain intelligence collaborated to discredit much of the U.S. counterinsurgency efforts. The temptation to resource to violent interrogations methods during counterinsurgency warfighting to obtain information is not unique to authoritarian governments. Since intelligence is essential for victory in counterinsurgency fighting and violent interrogations methods can produce quick results concerning to the acquisition of information, this temptation will always exist, even in modern democracies. But once this practice becomes of public knowledge, the legitimacy of the counterinsurgency fighting is damaged, because modern democracies do not accept violations of human rights, even if used against hatred enemies. In the end, the legitimacy of the government itself becomes jeopardized. Fighting against a counterinsurgency is more difficult for Armed Forces of democratic countries because of the need to work inside the boundaries of a legitimate democratic state, what includes respect to human rights principles.

NOTES

¹ At the time, in the Brazilian electoral system, it was allowed to vote separately for President and Vice-president, what could result that the President and his Vice were originated from different political parties.

² The manifestation was named “March of the family with God for the Liberty”. The number of participants was about 200.000 according to Gaspari, but the Periodic Folha de Sao Paulo, at the time announced about 500.000. “Sao Paulo parou ontem para defender o regime (Sao Paulo stopped yesterday to defend the regime),” *Folha de Sao Paulo*. Sao Paulo, S.P.: March 20, 1964, http://almanaque.folha.uol.com.br/brasil_20mar1964.htm (accessed January 10, 2010).

³ Gaspari, Elio. *O Sacerdote e o Feiticeiro: A Ditadura Envergonhada. (The Clergyman and the Warlock: The Shy Dictatorship)*. Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002, p. 45-123

⁴ Ibid, p.35-41.

⁵ Ibid, p.239-250.

⁶ Ibid, p.36.

⁷ Skidmore, Thomas E. *The Politics of military Rule in Brazil, 1964-1985*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 217-219.

⁸ Gaspari, Elio. *O Sacerdote e o Feiticeiro: A Ditadura Escancarada. (The Clergyman and the Warlock: The Explicit Dictatorship)*. Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002, p. 405-409 and Gaspari, and *The Shy Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 201-205.

⁹ Subversive were ideas or actions that had by intention to attack the military regime and to promote leftist ideas.

¹⁰ Skidmore, p. 46-49.

¹¹ Gaspari, *The Shy Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 178-209.

¹² The manifestation that started with 50,000 people gathered about 100,000 in the end and became known as March of the 100,000. Ibid, p. 282.

¹³ Ibid, p. 333-343.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 99-102.

¹⁵ Gaspari, *The Explicit Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 335.

¹⁶ Catholic Brazilian fathers were denouncing torture of detainees to the Church since 1969. In the 1970s some of these denounces were published at the New York Times, Le Monde and The Times, respectively in the U.S., France and Great Britain. Ibid, p. 271-292.

¹⁷ White, Robert. “Telegram 10/13/1974 from U.S. Ambassador in Paraguai,” in “Operation Condor: Cable suggests U.S. Role,” *The National Security Archive*. The George Washington University. March, 6, 2001. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/20010306/> (accessed January 11, 2010).

¹⁸ Gaspari, *The Explicit Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 86-104, 354.

¹⁹ Fernandes, A. Simoes. "A ditadura brasileira e a vigilância sobre seu "inimigo interno" no Uruguai (1964-1967): Os órgãos de repressão e de espionagem (The Brazilian Dictatorship and the surveillance over its internal enemy in Uruguay (1964-1967): The organisms of spying and repression)," Quoted in *Vestígios do Passado*. Ampuh, RS: Associacao Nacional de Historia, 2008. http://www.eeh2008.anpuh-rs.org.br/resources/content/anais/1210691256_ARQUIVO_textoanpuh2008.pdf (accessed January, 17, 2010).

²⁰ Gaspari, *The Shy Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 153-173.

²¹ Barros, Alexandre. "The Brazilian Military in the Late 1980s and Early 1990s: Is the Risk of Intervention Gone?" Quoted in Louis W. Goodman, Johanna S.R. Mendelson, Juan Rial. *The Military and Democracy: The Future of Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*. Washington D.C.: Lexington Books, 1990, p. 171-189.

²² Gaspari, *The Explicit Dictatorship*, 2002, p 207-208.

²³ Ibid p. 191-196.

²⁴ Portela, Fernando. *Guerra de Guerrilhas no Brasil: A Saga do Araguaia* (Guerrilla Warfare in Brazil: The Araguaia Sage). Sao Paulo: Terceiro Nome, 2002, p. 115 -127 and 233-234.

²⁵ Gaspari, *The Explicit Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 406-408.

²⁶ The number of deaths and vanishings during the military regime in Brazil (426) represents 0.006% of the 1970's population of 70 million. In Chile, the number of political killed or disappeared was 3,197 for a population of 9 million, and in Argentina, the number was almost 30,000, for a population of 28 million. "Dossie: Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos no Brasil (Dossier: Political Deathings and Vanishings in Brazil)," *Eremias Delizoicov – Documentation Center*. <http://www.desaparecidospoliticos.org.br/pagina.php?id=221> accessed 17 February 2010, and "Acerto de Contas: Argentina e Chile têm cobrado responsabilidade de ditaduras (Account Balance: Argentina and Chile have claimed dictatorships responsibilities)," *Carta Maior*, 30 December 2005. http://www.cartamaior.com.br/templates/materiaImprimir.cfm?materia_id=9587 (accessed 17 February 2010).

²⁷ "Notas Sobre Guerra Revolucionaria (Notes over Revolutionary War)," *Manobras de 1967 Handbook*. Ministerio do Exercito, III Exercito. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imprensa do Exército, 1969, p.11-47.

²⁸ Gaspari, *The Explicit Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 407.

²⁹ Ibid p.407.

³⁰ Ibid p. 175-190.

³¹ Gaspari, *The Shy Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 341.

³² Ibid p.270-275, and Gaspari, *The Explicit Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 282-283.

³³ Gaspari, *The Explicit Dictatorship*, 2002, p 207-221.

³⁴ Gaspari, *The Shy Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 163-174.

³⁵ Gaspari, Elio. *O Sacerdote e o Feiticeiro: A Ditadura Encurralada. (The Clergyman and the Warlock: The Dictatorship in a dead end)*. Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2004, p. 106-126.

³⁶ Gaspari, *The Explicit Dictatorship*, 2002, p. 175-190.

³⁷ The Nation Intelligence Brazilian Agency (ABIN) would be organized under the GSI and would become capable of providing the Minister strategic intelligence for the conduction of the government. "ABIN: 80 years of Intelligence Activity in Brazil," ABIN. Presidencia da Republica. Gabinete de Seguranca Institucional. Agencia Brasileira de Inteligencia, http://www.abin.gov.br/modules/mastop_publish/?tac=80_anos_da_Atividade_de_Intelig%Eancia_no_Brasil&%20lang=english (accessed January 3, 2010).

³⁸ Naves, Nilson Vital. "Sobre o *Habeas Corpus* (About the *Habeas Corpus*)." In *Conferência: O Direito Penal Contemporâneo (Conference: The Contemporary Penal Right)*. Brasília D.F. August 13, 2007, http://bdjur.stj.jus.br/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2011/20777/Sobre_Habeas%20Corpus.doc.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed January 3, 2010)

³⁹ Biroli, Flavia. *Representações do Golpe de 1964 e da Ditadura na Mídia: Sentidos e Silenciamentos na Atribuição de Papéis à Imprensa, 1984-2004 (Representations of the 1964's Coup and the Dictatorship in the Media: Meanings and Silences in the Roles Ascribed to Press, 1984-2004)*. Brasilia, D.F.: UnB 2009. <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/vh/v25n41/v25n41a14.pdf> (accessed March 06, 2010).

⁴⁰ Rodrigues, Alex. "Segunda fase das buscas a desaparecidos do Araguaia não encontra vestígios humanos (Second phase of the search fro the disappeared in Araguaia do not find human reminiscences)," *Agencia Brasil*. Empresa Brasil de Comunicacoes. Brasilia, D.F. August 29, 2009, <http://www.agenciabrasil.gov.br/noticias/2009/08/29/materia.2009-08-29.4898136158/view> (accessed January 17, 2010).

⁴¹ The Brazilian Constitutions, since 1891 stated that the Armed Forces are the keepers of the order inside the State. Once the Armed Forces represented the right wings in Brazil, during the Cold War period, "to keep the order inside the State" meant to keep the Marxist ideology or any kind of approach to it (Maoism, Foquism, or even Socialism at at the time) away from the government political leadership. For this reason, the military responsible for the coup d'état believed they were "saviors of the order". Barros, p. 171-189.

⁴² Gaspari, *The Explicit Dictatorship*, 2002, p 229.

⁴³ "Presidente Lula Oficial Biography (President Lula Official Biography)," *Secretaria de Imprensa*. Secretaria de Comunicacao Social. Presidencia da Republica. Brasilia D.F.: Press Office, 2010. <http://www.info.planalto.gov.br/download/pdf/Biografia%20do%20PR.pdf> (accessed January 17, 2010).

⁴⁴ "Leia a biografia do pré-candidato José Serra (Read the Biography of the pre-candidate Jose Serra)," *UOL noticias*. São Paulo S.P.: January 27, 2006. <http://noticias.uol.com.br/ultnot/brasil/2006/01/27/ult2041u154.jhtm> (accessed January 17, 2010).

⁴⁵ “Biografia Dilma Rousseff (Biography Dilma Rousseff),” *UOL Educacao*. Sao Paulo S.P., 2010, 19<http://educacao.uol.com.br/biografias/dilma-rousseff.jhtm> (accessed January 18, 2010).

⁴⁶ The debt reached 17.2 Billions of dollars in 1975. Skidmore, p. 217-219.

⁴⁷ Martins, Marco A. Campos. *A Economia do Brasil: Crescimento e estagnação da economia brasileira - 1947/2003 (The Brazilian Economy: Growing and Stagnation of the Brazilian Economy - 1947/2003)*. Brasilia, D.F. December 1, 2004, <http://www.aeconomiado brasil.com.br/artigo.php?artigo=157> (accessed January 03, 2010).

⁴⁸ Currently in Brazil, the Chief of the Institutional Security Cabinet (GSI) is the only military to have a status of minister of the state. In 1985, this function was known as Chief of the Military House. Besides this function, the other Military Authorities with Status of Minister of State were the Commanders of the three distinguish services (Navy, Army and Air Force), the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces (equivalent in the USA to the Chairman to the Joint Chief of Staff) and the Chief of the SNI. Barros, p. 171-189.

⁴⁹ Tollefson, Scott D. “Civil-Military Relations in Brazil: The Myth of Tutelary Democracy.” In *The 1995 Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association*. Washington D.C., September 28-30, 1995, accessed in <http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/project/lasa95/tellefson.html> (accessed October 22, 2009).

⁵⁰ The current Minister of Human Rights Paulo Vanucchi, was an opposition political activist during the 1970’s and was arrested for political crimes. Mr. Vannuchi proposed in 2009 the creation of a commission to cancel the Amnesty Law in order to allow the trial of military who participated in violent interrogations of detainees. As an act of protest against the proposal, on December 22, 2009, the Brazilian Minister of Defense and the Commandants of the three distinguish services presented their resignation to the President. Samarco, Christiane and Eugenia Lopes. “Jobim faz carta de demissao após ameaça de mudar a Lei de Anistia (Jobim writes resignation letter after threat of changes in the Amnesty Law)” *O Estadão*. Sao Paulo: December 30, 2009, http://www.estadao.com.br/estadaodehoje/20091230/not_imp488515,0.php (accessed January 12, 2010).

⁵¹ Visacro, Alessandro. *Guerra Irregular: Terrorismo, Guerrilha e Movimentos de Resistencia ao longo da Historia (Irregular Warfare: Terrorism, Guerrilla Warfare and Resistance Movements throughout History)*. Sao Paulo, SP: Contexto, 2009, p. 343.

⁵⁴ Almeida, Paulo Roberto. *Eleicoes Presidenciais 2010 (2010 Presidential Elections)*. January 11, 2010, <http://eleicoespresidenciais2010.blogspot.com/> (accessed January 11, 2010).

⁵⁵ Cavalcanti, Edi. “Maio de 68 – 40 anos (May of 68 – 40 years),” *Wordpress online*, May 26, 2008, <http://anos60.wordpress.com/2008/05/26/maio-de-68-40-anos/> (accessed January 08, 2010).

⁵⁶ Godoy, Marcelo. “General admite que Brasil fez parte da Operação Condor (General admits Brasil took part in the Condor Operation),” *O Estadão*. Sao Paulo, S.P.: December 30,

2007, http://www.estadao.com.br/nacional/not_nac102644,0.htm (accessed January 09, 2010).

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⁵⁸ Veiga, Alexandre, Bertotti, Valeria. "Contexto Histórico Anterior ao Golpe de 64 (Historical context previous to the 1964 Coup)," *Acervo da Luta contra a Ditadura online*. <http://www.acervoditadura.rs.gov.br/contextod.htm>, (accessed January 09, 2010).

⁵⁹ Brasil, Presidencia da Republica. "Estrutura do Governo Federal (Structure of the Federal Government)," *Ministerios online*. http://www.brasil.gov.br/governo_federal/estrutura/ministerios/, (accessed January 09, 2010).

⁶⁰ Brasil, Presidencia da Republica. Secretaria Especial de Direitos Humanos. *Biografia (Biography)*. http://www.presidencia.gov.br/estrutura_presidencia/sedh/ministro/ (accessed January 09, 2010).

⁶¹ "Arthur Virgílio destaca a luta do PC do B contra a ditadura (Arthur Virgílio remembers the Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B) against the dictatorship)," *Agencia Senado*. March 28, 2007. <http://www.direito2.com.br/asen/2007/mar/28/arthur-virgilio-destaca-a-luta-do-pcdob-contra-a-ditadura> (accessed January 17, 2010).

⁶² Bruneau, Thomas C. "Intelligence Reforms in Brazil: Contemporary Challenges and the Legacy of the Past." Quoted In *Strategic Insights*, Volume VI, Issue 3 (May 2007). Center for Contemporary Conflict. Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School. 2007. <http://www.nps.edu/Academics/centers/ccc/publications/OnlineJournal/2007/May/bruneauMay07.html> (accessed January 09, 2010).

⁵² "Inquiry into the Treatment of Detainees in U.S. Custody Executive Summary and Conclusion," *Senate Armed Services Committee*. December 11, 2008. <http://levin.senate.gov/newsroom/supporting/2008/Detainees.121108.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2010).