

**PUBLIC FORMS OF ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN PROTEST IN
BRAZIL IN 1968. STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL
COMPLICITY.**

Formas públicas de protesta contra el autoritarismo en Brasil durante 1968. Liderazgo estudiantil y complicidad social.

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RESUMEN

La rebelión global de los estudiantes del "largo 68" afectó a prácticamente todos los países de América Latina, especialmente a Argentina, México, Uruguay y Brasil. En este último, los jóvenes universitarios se revelaron como un grupo social, político y académico especialmente comprometido con la democratización y modernización del sistema universitario, como un movimiento a la vanguardia de la resistencia no violenta frente a la dictadura cívico-militar instaurada en 1964 y como un actor público capaz de movilizar y atraer hacia su causa a otros sectores de la comunidad con peso específico y capacidad de influencia. En este artículo se profundiza en las representaciones en la "esfera pública" (Arendt) de tales asuntos. Concretamente, se estudia la que se conoció como la *Passeata dos Cem Mil* y los sucesos que la motivaron. Esta fue la mayor movilización cívica desarrollada en Brasil –hasta ese momento–, estuvo liderada por los sectores más progresistas de los estudiantes universitarios, logró aglutinar a una pléyade de actores sociales –Iglesia católica, madres de jóvenes represaliados, artistas, políticos, obreros y profesores universitarios– y, muy pronto, se configuró en la "memoria colectiva" (Halbwachs) y los "imaginarios sociales" (Taylor) como un referente físico y simbólico de resistencia frente a la dictadura. A tal efecto, se han analizado crítica e ideológicamente (Van Dijk) las noticias, las crónicas, los reportajes y los editoriales sobre el tema objeto de estudio que aparecieron en los principales diarios de Brasil.

Palabras claves: Brasil; 1968; estudiantes universitarios; imaginarios sociales; esfera pública; prensa diaria.

ABSTRACT

The worldwide student rebellion in the so-called 'long 68' affected practically every country in Latin America: especially Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay and Brazil. In Brazil, students emerged as a social, political and academic group with an especially strong commitment to democratising and modernising the university system, a movement at the vanguard of non-violent resistance to the civil-military dictatorship established in 1964, and a public actor capable of mobilising and attracting other sectors of the community to their cause, the latter having a specific clout and capacity to influence. In this article, we delve into the manifestations of these aspects in the 'public sphere' (Arendt). In concrete terms, we look at what is known as the *Passeata dos Cem Mil* (March of the Hundred Thousand), and the events leading up to it. This was the largest civil mobilisation ever to take place in Brazil – up until that point. It was led by the most progressive sectors of university students, bringing together a wide range of social actors – the Catholic Church, the mothers of young people suffering repression, artists, politicians, workers and university professors. Very quickly, it entered the 'collective memory' (Halbwachs) and 'social imaginaries' (Taylor) as a physical and symbolic point of reference for resistance to the dictatorship. For this investigation, we have critically and ideologically analysed (Van Dijk) the news articles, newspaper columns, reports and editorials on the subject which appeared in Brazil's main newspapers.

Keywords: Brazil; 1968; university students; social imaginaries; public sphere; daily press.

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INTRODUCTION

The cycle of student protests unleashed at the start of the 1960s reached its peak in 1968, when these protests took place all over the world.¹ They were expressions of the so-called 'new social movements' or 'alternative movements'; they also represented a genuine manifestation of young people as a new social, political, cultural and economic class, the accelerated changes that took place within that group, and its capacity for action and for raising civil mobilisation during the long 1960s (Hobsbawm, 1999; Marwick, 2005; Ofer & Groves, 2016; Offe, 1985). Generally speaking, the common denominator that united explosions of rebellion so varied as those of the United States, France, Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Japan, Mexico, Greece, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the UK was a vague and nebulous idea of a better world – a freer, fairer, more peaceful world with greater solidarity – and 'pure courage', a 'surprising willingness to act' and 'a no-less-astounding confidence in the possibility of change' (Arendt, 2006, p. 70). The most common motives and demands sometimes involved issues concerning the whole human race, such as the Vietnam War, and the re-examination of the senses, meanings and styles of democracies or the recovery of the rights, freedoms and guarantees they provided. On other occasions, the demands were more concrete and frequently related to material issues, such as the conditions of university education, the quantity and quality of the additional services offered by universities, the setup of syllabi or the proportion of representation of students on the managing bodies. The repertoire of

strategies most usually employed for protest, dissidence and resistance, in all places included graffiti, posters, placards, slogans, aesthetics and performative acts, impromptu public assemblies, occupations of installations, demonstrations, concentrations and other forms of direct action (Carney, 2016; Chaplin & Pieper Mooney, 2017; Jasper, 2016; Klimke & Scharloth, 2008; Kurlansky, 2004).

Practically all countries in Latin America were affected by the activities of young university students. There, the movements were marked by physical and symbolic conditions and situations specific to the region, which lent some particular nuances to the demands, aspirations and ways in which the actions took place. Of particular note were: US interference in the national policies and regional development plans; structural poverty and political instability; marked socio-economic elitism; the authoritarian nature and inequality in higher education institutions; the effects of the Cuban Revolution; the recent winds of the Second Vatican Council and the incipient theology of liberation; the decolonisation movements in Africa and the Caribbean and the then-groundbreaking postcolonial ideas of Frantz Fanon; the second wave of the feminist movement; the prominent role played by the arts – especially music; the emergence of critical forms and styles of socialisation and broadening of cultures on the fringes of institutional channels; and the rise of a sense of fairness and freedom that went beyond the usual motives of revolutionary movements. Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina were scenes where the mobilisations reached vast numbers, involved other social actors, and the use of institutional violence to contain them reached dramatic levels of intensity, such as the so-called *Tlatelolco massacre* (Mexico), which garnered global media coverage, and quickly became a part of the significant points of reference surrounding 1968, embedded

¹ 1968 can be considered an example of what Sebastian Conrad (2017, p. 139) called a "global moment": "(...) events that were perceived in very different ways (sometimes even in mutually contradictory ways), but were nevertheless appropriated as global points of reference, and functioned as such."

in social imaginaries (Braghini, 2019; Bruno-Jofré, 2019; Hernández Huerta, 2022; Markarian, 2019; Pensado, 2015). In Brazil, the students became spearheads of the resistance to the dictatorship established in 1964, and one of the academic communities which were most firmly committed to the modernisation and democratisation of the university system. There, in 1968, there were frequent occupations of university premises, concentrations and demonstrations in the streets and plazas, as well as intense clashes between the forces of law and order and the students, to the point where other social, cultural and political actors – MDB (the recognised opposition party), the Catholic Church, the mothers of the students, journalists, intellectuals, artists and workers groups – were obliged to make public expressions of solidarity: most notably that known as the *Passeata dos Cem Mil* (March of the Hundred Thousand, Rio de Janeiro, 26 June).

In this article, we delve into the representations in the ‘public sphere’ (Arendt, 1993) of the mobilisations staged by Brazilian university students and their ability to raise social unrest during 1968. In concrete terms, we look at the so-called *Passeata dos Cem Mil* and the events which provoked it. This march – the biggest thus far in Brazil’s history – was led by the most progressive sectors of university students, and managed to mobilise a huge range of social actors: the Catholic Church, the mothers of the young people suffering repression, artists, politicians, workers and university professors – and, very quickly, it became part of the ‘collective memory’ (Halbwachs, 2004) and ‘social imaginaries’ (Taylor, 2006), as a physical and symbolic reference for resistance to the dictatorship. For this purpose, we critically and ideologically analyse (Van Dijk, 1996, 1999) the news items, columns, reports and editorials on the topic, which appeared in Brazil’s main newspapers: *Correio*

do Povo, *Zero Hora*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Última Hora*, *Tribuna da Imprensa*, *Correio da Manhã*, *Jornal do Comercio*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *Jornal dos Sports*, *O Jornal*, *Fôlha de São Paulo*, *Diário de São Paulo*, *O Globo*, *O Estado de São Paulo* and *O Paiz*.²

2. BRAZIL, YOUNG PEOPLE AND UNIVERSITY DURING THE LONG 1960S

As the so-called long 1960s wore on, Brazilian youth – particularly university students – much like the youth in other countries as well, developed and began to manifest greater political and social awareness. Gradually, the number of sympathisers with progressive, radical and Marxist/socialist ideas, based on ephemeral and undefined ideas of social justice and equity, critical of the capitalist development model and the new forms of cultural imperialism being rolled out by the United States. At the same time, the students developed a clear social awareness about the condition and situation of workers and peasants, and began to show more powerful manifestations of dissatisfaction, indignation and concern than the peasants themselves because of the problems in the north east of the country. This materialised into the gradual emergence of university students on the scene as a social and political force with the initiative and the capacity for mobilisation: an academic group committed to democratising, modernising and extending Higher Education institutions, especially during João Goulart’s government. The activities hinged, primarily, around the *União Nacional dos Estudantes* (UNE) – the largest student organisation, which included socialist,

² Copies of these publications have been consulted at the Arquivo Histórico de Porto Alegre Moysés Vellinho, the Museu da Comunicação Hipólito José da Costa and the Arquivo Histórico do Rio Grande do Sul, all of which are in Porto Alegre (Brazil). The author is grateful for the help and facilities provided by Carlos Roberto Saraiya da Costa Leite and Patrícia Elisiane da Rocha Coser.

communist, conservative, liberal and Catholic leanings (Cunha, 2007a; Mattos, 2014; Poerner, 2004).

The result was that, after the military and civil *coup d'état* on 31 March 1964, the dictatorship viewed students as a priority group in the universities, to the degree where they were actually included in national security policies. From the very start, the government's *Operação Limpeza* was designed to be extendable to students and to all their structures and organisations. A rapidly rising number of students across the country were expelled from their universities and condemned to be unable to continue their studies. Some of these students were arrested, tortured and even subjected to a military tribunal; others still suffered an unknown fate, being 'disappeared'. The UNE was dismantled and forced underground, the students' main leaders were neutralised and the sociocultural initiatives halted. Only a few months after the coup, with the aim of dismantling the student resistance, *Lei 4464* was published on 9 November 1964. This law, known as the *Lei Suplicy*, replaced the UNE with the *Diretório Nacional dos Estudantes* (DNE), outlawed all types of political-ideological action, strikes and demonstrations, and made it obligatory for students to vote in their organisations (Cunha, 2007b; Motta, 2014).

Nevertheless, university students became a focal point of resistance to the dictatorship and of social, political and cultural desires. From 1965 onwards, once the shock of the initial phase of *Operação Limpeza* had passed, the organisations and groups of university students, mainly under the leadership of militants from various branches of the progressive political spectrum, resumed their academic, cultural and political activities. The strikes and occupations of university facilities grew in number, the demonstrations became more intense, and their capacity to raise support grew,

in the same proportion as the propensity for (sometimes extreme) violence on the part of the Polícia Militar (PM) to repress them; the tragic *Praia Vermelha Massacre* (Rio de Janeiro, 1966) was one notable example. The students' motives and demands became more nuanced and increasingly broad, as events unfolded, including: the imprisonment of their peers and teachers; the persecution and torture of a number of student leaders; the authoritarian style which impregnated the whole educational system; respect for human rights, the promulgation of an amnesty law; the restoration of the rights to strike, to association and to political/trade-union participation; and the return to democratic guarantees by means of direct elections; the government's economic policy; the rising levels of justice and equality, especially among peasants and labourers; the extension of the schooling system and ensuring it was free; the reorientation of the most baccalaureate that was most polyvalent and most closely focused on professional development; development of literacy in the popular sectors; the repeal of the *Lei Suplicy*; the agreements between the *Ministério da Educação* (MEC) and the *United States Agency for International Development* (USAID); and the final solution of the problem of 'excedentes' (overenrolment)³ at the universities (Braghini, 2014, 2015; Motta, 2014; Sanfelice, 2015).

Indeed, the attempted legal initiatives to reform the university system, which ultimately satisfied nobody, and the establishment of *Operação Rondon*⁴, which did not produce the

3 In the university sphere, an "excedente" was a student who, having passed the entrance exams and proved themselves worthy of the course, was not able to actually attend the course through lack of spaces (i.e. the courses were over-subscribed).

4 This project, which was undertaken by the government in July 1967, aimed to neutralise a portion of the political and cultural discourse that was most vehemently critical, and socially committed to the popular classes. The official objective was to encourage and inculcate the

desired effect, gave rise to a particularly potent force of rejection on the part of the most democratic and progressive students, as they flew in the face of their aspirations to extend the democratic management style in higher education institutions, to substantially increase the degree of student participation in the running of those institutions, making them more popular and more in solidarity with social causes, and making them into fora with freedom for debate and critical thinking. Thus, little by little, the process of politicisation of young university students gained intensity. Additionally, despite the physical, administrative and symbolic violence exercised by the government against the students, the intensity and frequency of their demonstrations, assemblies, occupations and other forms of day-to-day resistance they supported, to the point of exerting sufficient pressure to cause the *Lei Suplicy* to be revoked (in November 1967) and the *Comissão Especial Meira Mattos* to be set up (in December 1967), which was in charge of tackling the general reform of the university system (Ésther, 2015; Motta, 2014; Rothen, 2006).

From that point on, mainly between March and October 1968, the students ramped up their protest activities, which spread across all cities with universities (particularly Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Goiânia, Curitiba, Salvador, Brasília, Porto Alegre, Florianópolis and São Paulo), took on a new dimension and managed to draw in broader sections of society which, in turn, had a major capacity to motivate and a significant influence in the community – most notably the Catholic Church. These actions took the public form of assemblies, snap elections, stri-

kes, demonstrations, occupations of university premises and, within those, experiments with self-management and participative democracy, which transformed the institutions into spaces for youth independence and the social construction of democracy, and therefore, resistance to the dictatorship. The government, for its part, became harsher and more aggressive in its repression of the protests, which took the form of evictions, police charges, arrests, injuries, deaths and disappearances. The *Passeata dos Cem Mil* and the events leading up to it are probably the most representative example, with the greatest media impact and, subsequently, left an indelible mark in Brazilians' collective memories (da Conceição, 2016; De Moraes Freire, 2008; Hernández Huerta, 2018a; Vieira, 1998).

October 1968 was, possibly, the final act in the year of organised resistance and large-scale student mobilisations in Brazil. The month was rather eagerly anticipated, as UNE's 30th Congress was scheduled to take place then. This event represented an obvious challenge to the dictatorial regime, and a logistical challenge for the students. Finally, it was held on 12 October, in Ibiúna, a short distance from São Paulo. However, it was soon broken up by the army and the DOPS, whose raid resulted in the arrest of twelve hundred and forty students, including the most prominent and charismatic leaders. Shortly afterwards, the university reform law *Lei n. 5540* (November 1968) was passed, the *AI-5* came into force (December 1968) and *Decreto-lei n. 477* was published (February 1969). These measures dismantled and neutralised the student dissident movement – some of them by partly addressing the students' demands; others because they were the harshest repressive tools ever introduced by the military regime.

regime's modernising and development-oriented spirit in the most isolated and neglected geographic areas of Brazil, and to make young people aware of the social and cultural problems faced by people in the frontier regions.

3. REPRESENTATIONS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN BRAZIL'S NEWSPAPERS DURING 1968

In spite of the restrictions and limitations imposed by the regime's new policies on communication and information (Barbosa, 2007; Ribeiro, 2006), Brazil's newspapers lent a great deal of coverage to matters relating to the student protests, devoting significant page space – and even the front page, on some occasions – to the topic. Editorial, opinion pieces, reports, columns and news items reflected the growing malaise of that sector of the populace, the motives, demands and purposes behind their actions (occupations of university premises, snap elections and demonstrations), the official discourse surrounding the student issues (and, more broadly, youth issues), the government's violent responses to contain the student movement, and the public demonstrations of solidarity with the students by other social players, such as the students' parents, the Catholic Church, the MDB (the official authorised opposition party), artists, intellectuals, academics and journalists.⁵

Violence and the language of violence were aspects which, in Brazil as in other parts of the world, marked the development of student mobilisation during the long 1968, and seeped in to a not-insignificant portion of the physical, symbolic and media space. Indeed, violence was one of the main threads of argument in the narratives constructed by the daily press about the Brazilian students' rebellion. This was reflected in the depictions of the struggle, in the selection of content and the space devoted to the events, and in the ways and styles of argu-

ment and journalism. Thus, in general, the image most persistently projected of the young students and, thus, the one which gained most acceptance as reality in social imaginaries, was that of a social group who were decidedly revolutionary, well organised, violent, resistant to dialogue, aligned with the exiled political opposition, run by cells of international communists, responsible for chaos, material destruction, violence, the inconvenience suffered by ordinary citizens, and attempting to destabilise the order, peace and progress that had been introduced by the 'revolution of 64'.

The discourse which filtered through the papers, to a large extent, conformed to the requirements of the official line. Thus, the ideas of 'communist infiltration' and the 'silent majority', promulgated by the government to delegitimise and stigmatise the student movement, were persistently published. The mobilisations were painted as being promoted and managed by elements unconnected to the students' cause. They were portrayed as being 'international communist' cells that operated in secret and discreetly to destabilise the regime. Those involved in the occupations, assemblies, snap elections and demonstrations were, according to the official line, only a minority, made up of 'ersatz students', aiming to disrupt ordinary citizen's the peace, order and freedom, and to prevent 'real students' with legitimate aspirations, from exercising their rights and freedoms in education. These theories, in addition to representing clear examples of totalitarian language, had three effects. Firstly, it robbed the student mobilisations of a major portion of their specificity, autonomy and legitimisation. Secondly, it contributed to the creation of a broad, diffuse and polyvalent category of public enemy. Thirdly, it allowed the government to publicly justify its decision to include university students as a priority objective in national se-

⁵ Readers can find a fuller analysis of these matters in Hernández Huerta (2018a, 2018b). Interested readers are asked to refer to these two articles and, for reasons of space, the documentary sources used for this section are not cited here.

curity policies, and with it, the use of violence to contain them.

Nonetheless, through the sections which were more objective and apparently with no room for interpretation, the newspapers were able to convey to the public – sometimes indirectly – a number of uncomfortable truths for the regime. The news items and columns allowed the journalists, amongst other things, to include certain details about the students' motives for protesting, as well as data and facts which demonstrated the violent repression to which the government was subjecting the students. On the one hand, in addition to the causes institutionally ascribed to the student movement – typically reduced to structuring, organisation and financing of the universities – they offered the public other information which demonstrated the essentially nonviolent nature and openness to negotiation of the university students, and made direct reference to the dictatorial and repressive nature of the federal government and the various State bodies. On the other hand, by using a style that was sometimes reminiscent of war journalism – providing tactical details, reporting the destructive force and the numbers of injured, dead and arrests – they revealed a significant, real and tangible portion of the violence with which the government was dealing with the student issue. The events at the *Calabouço* restaurant (Rio de Janeiro, 28 March to 4 April), the event horizon represented by the *Passeata dos Cem Mil* (Rio de Janeiro, 18 to 26 June), the so-called *Batalha de Maria Antónia* (São Paulo, 3 October) and the raid on the *30th UNE Congress* (Ibiúna, São Paulo, 12 October) are four examples which are representative of this violent approach.

These and other events, which revealed the disproportionate and unjustified violence exercised by the government to contain the student movement, gradually and not always

with the same degree of prominence, the appearance on the scene of other social and political actors who publicly demonstrated their solidarity with the students and, in some cases, also their disgust for the military regime. In addition, these reactions were channelled through the newspapers to their readers, helping to temper the image of the students fabricated and publicised by the government. In this way, in the newspaper pages, space was carved out – especially at the times when the repression was particularly intense – for reports on critical interventions by representatives of the MDB at the various State parliaments and at federal level, declarations made, memos sent, interviews given and press conferences called by Church representatives. There were also columns about the protest actions spearheaded by the mothers of the students who were incarcerated, injured, dead or 'disappeared', and the active and prominent participation by these elements of the community and artists, journalists, teachers and workers in some of the multitudinous demonstrations led by university students.

4. THE PASSEATA DOS CEM MIL: STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY⁶

The relative and apparent 'calma chicha' (dead calm) experienced by the Brazilian student movement after the events at *Calabouço* was finally broken in late June 1968. At that point, events appeared to run in double time, the violence deployed by the government became more intense, the civil demonstrations of public protest took on a new dimension, and the narratives concerning the stu-

⁶ For this analysis, the author has consulted the editions on 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 June 1968 of the newspapers *Correio do Povo*, *Zero Hora*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Última Hora*, *Tribuna da Imprensa*, *Correio da Manhã*, *Jornal do Comercio*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *Jornal dos Sports*, *O Jornal*, *Fôlha de São Paulo*, *Diário de São Paulo*, *O Globo*, *O Estado de São Paulo* and *O Paiz*.

dent movement conveyed through the media became somewhat more nuanced. After nearly two months of mediation by the Catholic Church between the students and the government in an attempt to facilitate peaceful negotiations on the subject of university reform, the legalisation of the banned student organisations and an end to the institutional repression⁷, on 19 June, the student representatives elected to conduct those negotiations, accompanied by thousands of their fellow students, heeding the offer of dialogue published by Education Minister Tarso Dutra, marched to the administrative headquarters of the MEC (Rio de Janeiro), where they staged a peaceful demonstration calling for the promised meeting to take place. However, that meeting was never held, and the gathering was broken up by more than 4,000 law enforcement officers, equipped with riot gear, a helicopter, a number of military vehicles and cavalry units. It ended with over twenty students and thirty military personnel injured, dozens of students arrested, a military vehicle pelted with stones, an army truck set ablaze, and huge material damage throughout the area.

The narrative constructed by the newspapers primarily served the interests of the regime's information and propaganda machine. Hence, a great deal of coverage was devoted to Dutra's declarations, playing on the idea that the students' unruly actions were causing a breach of public order and social peace for the whole populace. Voice was also given to a number of elements from the army (so-called 'hard-liners'), who publicly declared their concern and dismay over the situation, which they painted as a lack of respect for the armed forces and a provocation, which had been met with more vigorous and forceful measures. Nonetheless, the events

allowed the students to demonstrate the inconsistency between what the government (particularly the Ministry of Education) said and what it did, as well as its repressive, violent and authoritarian nature.

This nature became evident once again in subsequent days, with special virulence and intensity on 21 June. That day, also in Rio de Janeiro, with the intention of setting a date for a new audience with the Education Minister, over a thousand students came out on the street to march to the Ministry in a demonstration. According to the columns published by the newspapers, the assembly took place peaceably, with no altercations or disorder, until a group of students started throwing stones at the US Embassy, and the forces of law and order came into play. The contingents from the PM and the DOPS, using truncheons, gas canisters and firearms, were supported by five helicopters in monitoring the students' movements, a range of military vehicles and cavalry units, which also entered into the action. The clashes went on for more than ten hours, spreading across various locations in the city, with the initial violence only increasing, until it reached astounding levels of intensity and extent (the attending journalists were also caught up in it. It reached the point of drawing in the general public. In an act of spontaneous human solidarity, some residents in the areas where the battle was raging – the narratives took on a tone and style typically associated with war journalism – decided to offer the students refuge in their homes. In some cases, these actors were active allies to the students, calling the PM and DOPS 'murderers' and even throwing whatever blunt objects they had to hand – mainly stones and paperweights – from their windows and balconies. In the wake of the day's disturbances, five military vehicles were destroyed, and huge amounts of material damage, with two people dead, dozens with bulletwounds,

⁷ These aspects pertaining to the public role of the Catholic Church in relation to the student protests in Brazil in 1968 are analysed in Hernández Huerta and Payà Rico (2019).

hundreds wounded by blunt instruments and gas attacks, and over a thousand arrested.

These events gave rise to swift and widely varying reactions, from a range of social and political actors, which were also picked up by the newspapers. Immediately, the governor of Rio de Janeiro, Negrão de Lima, made statements insisting that the demonstrating students only represented the interests of a minority, devoted to destabilising the social order of the country and, in particular, impeding the work under way to bring forth the general university reform law; he also pointed out that the State government remained committed to safeguarding peace and order and, whilst the students' attitude persisted, it would not be open to any type of dialogue or negotiation. The Church's response was also swift, and two-pronged: firstly, it continued with its efforts to channel the students' mobilisation down the path of understanding and rapprochement; secondly, it levelled harsh criticism at the government for the violence unleashed and demonstrated unequivocal solidarity with the student cause. The representatives of various State legislative assemblies brought the topic up during sessions. In those assemblies, the leaders of ARENA – the governmental party – maintained that the Ministry of Education remained open to dialogue with the students and willing to meet their justified demands, and the MDB delegates held that the Ministry's apparent willingness to negotiate peacefully was questionable, and at the same time, they managed to steer the analysis of the situation beyond the police aspect, impacting the background generational conflict, with the demonstrations being seen as merely a symptom of a deeper crisis. Twelve national workers' unions circulated a joint declaration of solidarity with the students' cause, recognising its legitimacy; the interests of both sectors of the resistance were recognised to coincide, and the

unions decried the arbitrary nature, violence and dictatorial character of the regime established in 1964.

The university students, for their part, responded in two ways: firstly, as happened in the wake of the killing at *Calabouço*, students from other university cities carried out a range of actions in solidarity with their peers in Rio de Janeiro – especially in Brasília, Porto Alegre and São Paulo; secondly, the students in Rio de Janeiro began planning a non-violent demonstration for 26 June as an act of protest against the government's repressive measures.

This latter idea of a mass mobilisation against violence and, more broadly, against the dictatorship, on 26 June, attracted echoes amongst a range of cultural and popular sectors with specific clout and influence in the community, showing their support for the students' cause of resistance to the dictatorship. Gradually, artists, intellectuals, students' mothers, politicians from the official opposition, professional groups and unions and the Catholic Church confirmed they would be answering the call and would be present at the demonstration organised by the students. For example, during the evening of 24 June, at Teatro Gláucio Gil (Rio de Janeiro), a group of writers, artists and intellectuals met, along with over three hundred mothers who decided to join the students in their efforts, in their *Marcha da Família com Deus pela Liberdade e contra a Repressão* (Family March with God for Freedom and Against Repression); the representatives of the upper echelons of the Church, through various declarations and press releases, showed their decision to support the demonstration and actively participate in it, with the civic objective of preventing further violence. They made it clear that their presence should not be interpreted as an ideological stance on the Church's part, but as a simple act of Christian kindness and solidarity with the people.

The government, faced with such a massive demonstration of social discontent, was forced to alter some of its discourse, in order to show a more pleasant image, show itself as disposed to dialogue and negotiation, but also firm and secure. Thus, the narrative continued to reinforce the idea of communist infiltration into the student organisations, whose leaders were now considered experts in urban guerrilla tactics, with strong connections to the exiled political opposition, demonstrating preparedness and determination to contain any type of disorder that could upset the tranquillity of the Brazilian families committed to the principles of the *Revolution of '64*. However, at the same time as social upset was raging, they managed to convey a message of moderation, security and efficiency, dismissing the circulating rumours about the possible declaration of a state of exception, and affirming that the PM would only take action in defence of public order and peace: under no circumstances would they instigate or incite violence.

On 26 June 1968, despite the political and social tension, and the deployment of over ten thousand PM and DOPS, as well as a number of helicopters for surveillance, the demonstration that came to be known as the *Passeata dos Cem Mil* took place. It was conducted in an orderly fashion, peacefully and without incident, with the strictest respect for the principle of non-violence and in an atmosphere of fraternal camaraderie amongst the participants. These aspects were reported in all the newspapers, which all covered the event, without exception, with varying degrees of detail. Initially, around 50,000 people congregated, but this number rose steadily as the march progressed, finally reaching between 120,000 and 150,000. Among that number were students, intellectuals, artists, composers, civil leaders, labourers, religious figures, bankers, journalists and all manner of people who felt

solidarity with the students' cause, and disillusioned with the military dictatorship. The most oft-repeated slogans, which brought the different actors together, included 'Down with the dictatorship! Power to the people!', 'When we organise, the people will tear down dictatorships!', 'No to censorship!' and 'Free the prisoners!'

The *Passeata* was organised and coordinated by the students, who were also the protagonists of the day. At various times, the student leaders, most notably including Elinor Brito, Luiz Travassos and Vladimir Palmeira, made speeches, met with rapturous applause and ovations from those in attendance, to stir them up, channel the development of the demonstration and voice their demands: the recovery of the bodies of their two friends who had been killed during the disturbances on 21 June, the reopening of the *Calabouço* student restaurant (this demand took on an added symbolic value because of the events of March and April), the cessation of the police repression and of the violence exercised by the government, and preventing federal universities from being turned into semi-private foundations. They also managed to show the marchers that the students' commitment to fight also extended to the workers' cause, calling for civil solidarity to actively influence reality, in order to end the dictatorship. They also warned the government that, though the students and ordinary citizens would not initiate violence, they were prepared to respond to it in kind.

Nonetheless, all the social, cultural and political groups that participated in the event, through spokespeople or through the slogans chanted or written on banners and placards, had the opportunity to make themselves heard and manifest their disgust with the lack of freedom and the restrictions that the dictatorship had imposed on the Brazilian people. The press gave special coverage to the contributions of João Batis-

ta, a Lazarist monk appointed by the Catholic Church, and Irene Papi, the representative of the mothers of students suffering repression, which were received with applause and ovations. Batista stressed the idea that trying to silence the young people was tantamount to violating the conscience of society as a whole, and that, however hard the government tried, this would never be possible as long as the people retained the desire for a fairer, freer and more humane social order. He also affirmed that the Church, in the struggle to achieve those aspirations, would always be present amongst the people, and connected to them. Irene Papi's speech was more emotive and more direct; she directly accused the State of murdering and incarcerating their children, and of attributing them false reasons for their protests. She vigorously called for the release of the imprisoned students, and warned the government that the mothers would carry on with their protests as long as the government pursued its policies of repression and continued spilling blood.

The reporters in charge of covering the event had the opportunity to record testimony from some of the most representative participants who had not been able to address the general public. They interviewed José de Castro Pinto (curate general of the archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro), Vicente Adamo (President of the *Associação de Educação Católica*) and Pierre Secondi (a Dominican friar), all of whom had leading roles in the negotiation processes between the government and the students, which had been taking place since April. With various nuances, the three all agreed on the significance of so vast and peaceful a social demonstration against institutional violence, and in favour of freedom. It could, they said, represent the start of an era of greater social justice and human sensitivity. They took the opportunity to underline that they were participating on the basis of the Church's duty to stand beside those suffering abuse and violence. They

also echoed the statements of recognised figures in the Rio de Janeiro artistic and cultural scene: Eneida, Hélio Pellegrini, Clarice Lispector, Vinícius de Moraes, Grande Otelo, Dias Gomes, Paulo Autran, Napoleão Muniz Freire, Bárbara Heliodora, Odete Lara, Chico Buarque de Hollanda, Edu Lôbo and Néelson Mota. All declared their sincere solidarity with the students, both in terms of their demands and in terms of the violence they were suffering. They expressed their repulsion for the dictatorial regime – especially in view of the lack of freedom of expression and the absence of democracy – and some agreed that what was happening was something important, socially and politically relevant, which could be the awakening of popular awareness.

Despite these and other hopes, in the space of only a few days, the effect of the *Passeata dos Cem Mil* – at the time, the largest demonstration ever recorded in Brazil's history – gradually faded, and eventually disappeared from the narrative. The newspapers treated the issue of 28 June as settled, running headlines such as 'Calm prevails among students of Guanabara and major cities'. However, though it did not make headlines, the press reflected that the event marked a turning point – a before and after – in public opinion of the student issue: it could no longer, by any means, be dismissed as the action of small groups of nonconformists, or as restricted solely to university circles; these ideas had been utterly disproven by the multitudinous and diverse demonstration held on 26 June 1968.

CONCLUSIONS

The Brazilian university students, with their occupations of premises, assemblies, demonstrations and other forms of social, political and cultural mobilisation during the Long 1968, were given a great deal of page space in the country's newspapers. Their activities and the narrative constructed by the papers were conditioned

by the context of control and repression imposed by the military dictatorship. This was publicly reflected in the type of demands made by the students, the violence deployed by the government in handling the matter of the students, and also in the discourse generated, the content conveyed and the ways in which the newspapers presented ideas and facts. In addition to the demands connected to the situation and the need to reform the university system, the students also included others, referring directly to the dictatorship. Among these, the press gave prominent coverage to the demand to restore the democratic freedoms that had been guaranteed before the coup of 1964, and to desist from policies and institutional practices that were increasingly akin to totalitarianism on the part of the government, such as administrative sanctions, imprisonments, military tribunals, kidnapping and various forms of violence against the students during demonstrations and evictions. Events such as these turned into intense conflicts, where were reported as though they were battles, causing widespread destruction of public property and military assets, detentions, injuries and even some deaths. Besides this physical violence which was plain for anyone to see, the government deployed another type of violence against the students: one which was more subtle and, perhaps, more effective, having a greater capacity to infiltrate the social imaginaries. It is exemplified beautifully in the ideas of 'infiltration' and of the 'silent majority', which were devised by the government and sustained and disseminated widely by the daily press. Thus, one of the representations of university students that gained most traction was that of a social group which, though in the minority, was well organised, imbued with a violent and revolutionary nature, and in reality, controlled by cells that had been infiltrated by so-called international communism, having alliances with the opposition

in exile and, ultimately, was aiming to destabilise the peace and order that the 'revolution of 64' had brought about.

Nonetheless, the newspapers were able to inject certain nuances into this received discourse, and even to generate new narratives, albeit subtly. They did so through the media coverage of the events in columns, reports and news items which, in presenting reality 'just as it is', enabled the journalists to convey a significant part of the extensive and intensive violence unleashed by the government, and some of the students' demands which were most uncomfortable for the authorities, and most difficult for them to justify. Thus, especially at those times when the violence reached astonishing proportions and went beyond the boundaries of society's tolerance for others' suffering, the students came to be regarded, in public opinion, as social, political and cultural figurehead, dedicated to modernising the university system and bringing democracy to society as a whole, at the vanguard of resistance to the dictatorship and with sufficient operating capacity to rouse other social players into action.

The *Passeata dos Cem Mil*, which arose because of disproportionate and unjustifiable use of violence by the government to contain student protests, was a representative example of the students' capacity for social and political leadership, and of solidarity within the community. This demonstration represented an unequivocal challenge to the regime, a genuine exercise in freedom, and proof of the rejection of the dictatorship by broad sections of society. Some of these players, such as the Catholic Church, artists and intellectuals, had significant power to influence reality, and helped to legitimise the students' demands, aspirations and mobilisations. The march was also a representative example of how the streets momentarily became arenas for the

creation and testing of styles of popular democracy, forums of collective debate, and spaces for civil resistance to the dictatorship. There, the students and other social actors came into contact, having the opportunity to talk to one another and strengthen the bonds of solidarity between them, with the simple but powerful goal of creating a fairer, freer future, where democracy reigned, and institutional violence was entirely absent.

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