

# Alfa-Omega: publishing Brazilian critical thought

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## Abstract

This paper presents the results of a research that is engaged in tracing the history of Editora Alfa-Omega (a publishing company) through bibliographical sources, document analysis and interviews. It aims to define the specificity and function of this publishing house inside the complex book industry in Brazil. Created in 1973, in São Paulo, by Fernando and Claudete Mangarielo, Alfa-Omega has been “publishing Brazilian critical thought”. During its first four years of activity (1973-1976), it produced 44 titles, 16 of which authored by academics of the University of São Paulo, then an important focus of opposition to the military regime. Nowadays, it holds over 200 titles in catalog. During the last 14 years, after going through a difficult period in the 1990s, the Alfa-Omega publishing has been investing heavily in the internet and digital Media as a tool for production and sales of books. It has maintained unaltered for 40 years its editorial guidelines. The paper finally discusses the difficulty of keeping left-wing middle-sized publishing houses and the importance of such enterprises in the maintenance of a pluralistic editorial situation.

**Keywords:** Editora Alfa-Omega. Fernando and Claudete Mangarielo. Publishing. Books.

This article will discuss several central elements of the trajectory of the publishing house Alfa-Omega from its beginnings in 1973 until today. It will look particularly at its early years, and show how the publisher has stuck to its editorial line with a focus on critical thinking. The study was undertaken using bibliographical resources, documentary analysis

and interviews, and its aim was to be able to characterise Alfa-Omega within the publishing industry in Brazil as a whole. This paper is part of what has become known as the new Media cultural and social history, which sees books as multifaceted and multi-determinate objects and seeks to encompass the history of books with the history of societies and collective mentalities.

### **From the Board of Culture to Alfa-Omega: the trajectory of a publisher**

Alfa-Omega was founded by Fernando and Claudete Mangarielo in the suburb of Pinheiros in the city of São Paulo in January 1973, with the intention of publishing “Brazilian critical thought”. Its focus was on history, sociology, politics, philosophy, economics, Marxist classics and legal pluralism. On 14 March 1973, an article written about the founding of Alfa-Omega in the newspaper *Diário da Noite* quoted Fernando Mangarielo and his three editorial guidelines: 1) Emphasis on national authors; 2) The publishing house as “an open window for writers who are concerned with present-day things, with present-day Brazil, and with the present-day political-economical process”; 3) Focus on “the country’s higher education needs”. These three facets are still the axes of Alfa-Omega today.

At first in 1973, the company was based at the couple’s home in Rua Cristiano Viana, 302; but it later moved to Rua Lisboa, 502, and then to building number 489 on the same street, which is where it still is.

According to Fernando Mangarielo, the name Alfa-Omega was chosen because it contains the “first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and signifies the struggle of oppositions: thought and action, high and low, thin and fat, poor and rich; and in our case [...] thought and action”. Although it is common to associate the term Alfa-Omega with Christianity because of its reference in the book of Revelation, 1, 4-8, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, said the Lord” (CHEVALIER, GHEERBRANT, 2003, p.29), according to

Mangarielo in interviews given on 15 May and 19 June 2013, this particular association was not a conscious one<sup>1</sup>.

In the early 1970s, Brazil was still under the brutally repressive dictatorship that had followed the 1964 coup d'état. This period also coincided with the so-called "Brazilian economic miracle", and the belief that Brazil showed "great potential", with a policy of "accelerated development", and the belief of growth of "a decade in a year". In his book *Desenvolvimento e Crise no Brasil, 1930-1983* [Development and Crisis in Brazil, 1930-1983], Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira called this period the "second industrial cycle in Brazil" – GDP rose by 11.3% and industrial production by 12.7% – rates that had been 3.2% and 2.6% respectively between 1963 and 1967, and that then reached 5.4% between 1974 and 1981. This so-called "economic miracle" lasted until 1974, when, "due to a variety of internal factors related to incompetency, the expansion process and the exogenous effects of the oil crisis, led to an economic downturn that triggered the recession of 1981" (REIMAO, 1996, p.56).

It is important to underline that during the "Brazilian economic miracle", "economic success did not equate any political progress whatsoever". Rather, it was taken as understood that while the dictatorship may not have been the cause, it would be able to guarantee continued prosperity. "Media control played an essential role in this anthem to 'Great Brazil' and in suppressing any internal conflicts" (GASPARI, 2002, p.210).

Thus, for the first time in history, the barrier of more than one book published per head in Brazil was broken in the "Brazilian economic miracle" of the early 1970s.

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<sup>1</sup> All following quotations by Mangarielo are from these interviews.

Table 1 – Relation between the population of Brazil and the number of books published per year (in millions)

Year	Population of Brazil (in millions)	Total number of books published per year (in millions)	Number of published books per inhabitant per year
1964	78.8	51.9	0.6
1969	92.2	68.5	0.7
1971	95.9	80.1	0.8
1972	98.6	136.0	1.3
1973	101.4	136.0	1.3
1974	104.2	144.7	1.3
1978	116.3	186.7	1.6

Source: data from the demographic censuses by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). (REIMÃO, 1996, p.30 and 58).

When Fernando Mangarielo founded Alfa-Omega in 1973, he already had a level of publishing experience: he had worked in the commercial departments at several publishers; he had briefly owned a bookstore; and, in 1968, he had been responsible for book sales at the Banca da Cultura, a bookstore founded in February 1967 that ran at the residential development at the University of São Paulo (CRUSP) until 17 December 1968, when troops from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army invaded, evacuated and occupied the area and arrested everyone they found there.

Mangarielo's position at the Banca da Cultura at CRUSP brought him into contact with intellectuals and academics who sympathised with Alfa-Omega's editorial approach, one of whom was Jacob Bazarian, who invited Mangarielo to work at the magazine *Armenia* and became an intellectual ally and friend for the following three decades.

In an interview with the authors, Fernando Mangarielo explained his relationship with these intellectuals:

[...] Alfa-Omega appeared in January 1973. The first publication was *A Ideia Republicana no Brasil através dos Documentos* [The Republican Ideal in Brazil through Documentation]. It included sixteen documents from the Republican era, including one that although rumoured, had been

undiscovered and held in the Torre do Tombo in Lisbon, [...] The book was organised by Reynaldo Xavier Carneiro Pessoa, who was my secondary school teacher in Recife, and who went on to become my teacher for The History of the USSR at USP. [...] I found Reynaldo's book extremely inspiring as he managed to pinpoint and delineate the essence of the publishing house. The book was regularly used by USP as part of the History course that he taught. [...] José Sebastião Witter, one of the History professors at USP, supported us and suggested several other influential books like *História e Teoria dos Partidos Políticos*, [The History and Theory of Political Parties] by Afonso Arinos. This support from intellectuals and authors like Florestan Fernandes, Victor Nunes Leal, Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, has been extremely important for Alfa-Omega. [...] Another one of the early publications was the book *Castas, Estamentos e Classes Sociais: Introdução ao Pensamento de Marx e Weber* [Social Casts, Institutions and Classes: An introduction to the thinking of Marx and Weber], by Sedi Hirano who was a valued neighbour and close friend. [...] They were all authors from the academic world [...] and they immediately understood the flexibility of Alfa-Omega and the scope and area in which it wanted to act<sup>2</sup>.

The proximity to teaching staff at the University of São Paulo meant that over the first four years (1973-1976), of its total list of forty-four titles, sixteen were written by lecturers from USP; this at a time when “the university environment stood in significant opposition to the regime” (MAUÉS, 2013, p.18). Of particular note are *Castas, estamentos e classes sociais: Introdução ao pensamento de Marx e Weber*, [Social Casts, Institutions and Classes: An introduction to the thinking of Marx and Weber] by Sedi Hirano; *Universidade brasileira: Reforma ou revolução?* [Brazilian University: Reform or revolution?] by Florestan Fernandes; *Energia elétrica e capital estrangeiro no Brasil*, [Electric energy and foreign capital in Brazil] by Catullo Branco; *Sociologia e sociedade no Brasil* [Sociology and society in Brazil] by Otavio Ianni, and *A luta pela industrialização no Brasil* [The struggle for industrialisation in Brazil] by Nícia Vilela Luz.

It should be noted that at the time of writing, the owners of Alfa-Omega are in the process of moving to new headquarters and so records for all of the books published are not currently available. We drew up the list of publications from the first years

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<sup>2</sup> Interview as cited above.

with the help of articles from a range of newspapers, research in libraries and interviews with Fernando and Claudete Mangarielo.

In addition to the titles connected to authors from USP, there are also other of note published in the first four years by writers such as Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, Victor Nunes Leal, Virgínio Santa Rosa, Heitor Ferreira Lima and Leôncio Basbaum. The majority of titles published by these two groups of authors shed light on a critical perspective of Brazilian contemporary history and show a focus on national interests. There has also been a political approximation by these authors with left-wing parties opposed to the dictatorship.

It is interesting to note that as well as previously unpublished works, the publisher also re-issued titles that had been out of print, including those by Odilon Nogueira de Matos, Nícia Vilela Luz, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Maria Izaura Pereira de Queiroz, Barbosa Lima Sobrinho (*A verdade sobre a Revolução de Outubro de 1930* [The truth about the October Revolution of 1930], 1975); Victor Nunes Leal (*Coronelismo, enxada e voto* [Coronelismo, Labour and Votes] 1975); Virgínio Santa Rosa (*O sentido do tenentismo* [The meaning of *Tenentismo*] 1976); and Leôncio Basbaum (*História sincera da República*; [An honest history of the Republic], 1976).

In 1975 Fernando Mangarielo published the first of three volumes of selected works by Marx and Engels, but he took certain precautions: he entitled the book as merely *Textos* [Texts] (rather than *Obras Escolhidas* [Selected works]) and published it under the label *Edições Sociais*<sup>3</sup>, rather than that of Alfa-Omega. According to Mangarielo:

Edições Sociais' publication of Marx, under the name *Textos*, was motivated by fear more than anything else. [...] I ordered [the texts in each volume] inversely; while the 'Communist Party Manifesto' actually appeared in volume I of the official edition, in *Textos* it only appears in the final volume (III). I put the best-known texts in volume III, out with their original chronology so as to confuse the censors<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> I think it's interesting that one of the most important publishers with links to the French Communist Party, founded in 1927, was called *Éditions Sociales*.

<sup>4</sup> From the same interview.

However, the second edition was later published under the title *Obras Escolhidas* [Selected Works] and with the label Alfa-Omega.

## Censorship and best-sellers

### *Censored books '4 cantos de pavor' ['4 songs of lament'] and 'Em câmara lenta' ['In slow motion']*

There were two books published by Alfa-Omega that were censored by the Brazilian military dictatorship: *4 cantos de pavor e alguns poemas desesperados* [4 songs of lament and some poems of despair] by Álvaro Alves de Faria, published in 1973; and *Em câmara lenta*, [In slow motion], by Renato Tapajós, published in 1977.

### *'4 cantos de pavor' ['4 songs of lament']: the story of a censored book*

In 1965 and 1966 a group of young people took the decision to go out into the streets of central São Paulo in the Viaduto do Chá and recite poetry. The scene was described by Fernando Góes in the cover blurb for Álvaro Alves de Faria's book: "I came across a small crowd. It was dark and although it certainly wasn't a market [...], it also couldn't have been a political demonstration, as we were still living under the repressive rules of the Revolution". Fernando Góes went on: "So, I asked myself what was it?", and concluded: "I was amazed to discover that [...] it was a group of young people reciting poetry. And I then remembered something I read in the papers about young poets who had decided to take poetry to the people in the city squares and streets, bars and schools [...]" (GOES, 1973, inside cover).

One of these young poets was Álvaro Alves de Faria, whose first work *Noturno – Maior* [Major – Nocturne] was published in 1963. This was followed by *Tempo final* [Final time], 1964, and *O sermão do Viaduto* [The sermon from the Viaduct], 1965.

In 1973, Álvaro Alves collated and organized his poetic works under the title *4 Cantos de pavor e alguns poemas desesperados*. The book holds poems like:

quem responderá pela grande noite que percorre o mundo,  
 quem falará de dentro dos túneis,  
 quem mandará calar os que não erguem,  
 quem findará o cansaço dos tristes  
 [...]

Quem dirá não aos que fazem as bulas do horror,  
 quem dirá não aos assassinos da esperança,  
 quem dirá não aos donos das leis,  
 quem dirá não aos donos da terra  
 [...]

E quem dirá sim à tristeza operária  
 e quem lembrará que as flores precisam nascer? (FARIA, 1973, p.93-94)<sup>5</sup>.

According to Lygia Fagundes Telles (1973, p.18) in her foreword to *4 Cantos de pavor e alguns poemas desesperados*, “it is a book that is impregnated with a strong lyrical quality, but instead of being unsentimental and unpitying, Álvaro de Faria’s lyricism is energetic, perspicacious and challenging, and through wounded eyes he makes us feel the flesh and blood of his word”.

The editorial history of *4 Cantos de pavor e alguns poemas desesperados* is unusual: the author sent the originals to the Departamento de Censura e Diversões Públicas [Department of Censorship and Public Entertainment], DCDP, and was duly censored on the grounds that there were verses in the book that “went against moral and acceptable customs”. However, not having been informed of the veto, the book was published in 1973 by Alfa-Omega with an initial print-run of five hundred and which was followed by a second print-run (REIMAO, 2011, p.51).

### ***‘Em câmara lenta’ [‘In slow motion’]: censorship and prison***

The novel *Em câmara lenta* was published in May 1977 and was one of the first works of fiction to look at Brazilian urban guerrillas. Its author, Renato Tapajós, had been a militant in

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<sup>5</sup> [...] who will answer to the vast night that covers the world, / who will speak in the tunnels, / who will silence those who do not stand true, / who will end the exhaustion of the desperate, / ... / Who will say no to those who commit terrible acts, / who will say no to those who assassinate hope, / who will say no to the law-owners / who will say no to the land-owners / ... / And who will say yes to workers’ sadness / and remember that flowers must blossom and bloom?]

the *Ala Vermelha* organization that had aimed to bring down the dictatorship, and he spent time in prison for this between 1969 and 1974. Tapajós wrote the novel while he was incarcerated, and this meant that the book not only describes the armed struggle, but also was written by someone who actually participated in it<sup>6</sup>.

As well as giving the view of someone who had direct experience, the book is also a lucid self-criticism of the situation. The narrative is built on the detailed description of a scene in which Aurora Maria Nascimento Furtado is tortured (although it should be pointed out that her name is not mentioned). She was a militant from the *Ação Libertadora Nacional* [National Liberation Group] (ALN) and was killed on 10 November 1972 by groups that were backed by the dictatorship.

However, the book goes much further than merely denouncing her torture, and questions the choice of armed fighting and its consequences. According to Tapajós, “It is an emotive text because it tries to capture the tension, the climate, the immense hopes, and the hate and despair that mark guerillas’ extremist political aims”. “More than anything else it is a discussion about the contradiction for the militants at the time between moral commitment and the political options that had been delineated [...] it is both a weighing up and a self-criticism” (TAPAJÓS, 1997, p.X).

However, the regime and its take on censorship did not see the book in this light; instead, they saw it as a call to arms – which was in fact a very mistaken reading of the work. Tapajós was imprisoned for this in July 1977, only two months after the work was first published. It is, however, a little strange that the work was only banned as of 13 August (ARAGÃO, 2013, p.68). This was the only example of someone imprisoned during the military dictatorship because of the contents of a book they had written. However, it was not only the author, but the publishing house that was taken to court, and the directors, Fernando Mangarielo and his wife, Claudete, were called as witnesses at the trial in a clear attempt to intimidate. Tapajós was imprisoned in São Paulo

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<sup>6</sup> There are several works that look at the issues of censorship in *Em Câmara Lenta*: RIDENTI, 2000; ARAGÃO, 2013; REIMÃO, 2011; MAUÉS, 2007; SILVA, 2008.

for about a month. Mangarielo was also detained because of the publication.

It is interesting to note that Tapajós had initially sent his work to the publishers Ática and Civilização Brasileira to see if they were interested, but both refused as they considered the book too politically risky at the time (RIDENTI, 2000, p.154). It was only after these two frustrated attempts that Tapajós came across Alfa-Omega, which accepted his proposal and took up the challenge of publishing the book.

According to Mangarielo:

The repression of Renato Tapajós was the strongest we ever came across, it was the most ridiculous that myself or my colleagues had experienced. They arrested the author. [...] The case had huge repercussions and so in the end Alfa-Omega became very well known, particularly to those interested in critical thought. It was for me though an extremely traumatic financial experience, as the book was then photocopied, and sold hardly any copies at all. The first print-run was three thousand, and the second was two thousand, and still I have some copies; I think it is more realistic to say that the book had many more repercussions than sales<sup>7</sup>.

### **'A Ilha' and 'Olga': two best-sellers**

Alfa-Omega had two big commercial successes: *A Ilha: um repórter brasileiro no país de Fidel Castro* [The Island: a Brazilian reporter in the country of Fidel Castro], and *Olga*, both written by Fernando Morais.

According to Fernando Mangarielo:

The first successful book was *A Ilha*, by Fernando Morais, which was about Cuba... There were two atypical books in Brazil, the 265,000 copies that were sold of *Olga* and the 125,000 of *A Ilha*, by Fernando Morais<sup>8</sup>. [...] When *A Ilha* was published in 1976, Fernando Morais was a journalist for the weekly magazine *Veja*, however, I had previously met him at the magazine *Visão* [Vision] which was where [Vladimir] Herzog worked. There was a level of expectation about the book because of the journeys that

<sup>7</sup> Interview cited above.

<sup>8</sup> As is often the case, one needs to be careful of the accuracy of numbers recited from memory. For example, the cover blurb on *Olga*, which was released in 1985, states that the book *A Ilha* had sold "over 250,000 copies".

Fernando Morais had made and because of his writing style. [...] We also created a pocket edition of *A Ilha* on newspaper with a photographic insert, and with a hand-out for his candidacy for a local council<sup>9</sup>. And he won. The success of *A Ilha* gave me more financial security [...] and enabled me to bring more people on board. We now have a staff of twenty-four [...] who are subsidised by this. *Olga* [...] came a decade later. [...] Fernando Morais asked for our help, and so we paid for his ticket to Europe and he wrote his book, as we had agreed. *Olga* was the best-selling book, both in number of copies and in the speed of sales in four and half years.

Fernando Mangarielo described the publication of *Olga* thus:

I created a unique publishing technique [...] I am the only publisher who, in the case of *Olga*, has two lithographs of the book itself. I ordered 20,000 from one printers and 20,000 from another. In the past, Brazilian printers had a problem: they were able to do a large print-run, but they couldn't get the finish, the quality, the design etc. [...]. In one single day I managed to order three runs of 20,000 respectively<sup>10</sup>.

### **'A Ilha': a retrospective view**

Characterised as an *editora de oposição* [an opposition publisher] (MAUÉS, 2013), Alfa-Omega attracted authors who criticised the dictatorship, with on one hand, intellectuals with links to USP, and on the other, journalists who, even though working for popular Media, still held current critical perspectives. According to Mangarielo, such is the case of Fernando Morais, author of *A Ilha*, who had worked for the magazine *Visão* in a period in where Vladimir Herzog was at the helm, with a group of journalists with links to critical thought. And the report that led to the book was made by Morales for the magazine *Veja*, published by *Abril* – his base at the time.

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<sup>9</sup> In 1978, Fernando Morais stood for and was elected a São Paulo state candidate for the MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement). With the elimination of political parties (as decreed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Institutional Act in October 1965), the dictatorship allowed only two parties, one in support of government and the other as a permitted opposition. The latter came to be known as the MDB, which had been founded in 1966 and ended up becoming a cohesive factor between diverse oppositional sectors. 1978 saw the last elections in which the only parties that could participate were Arena and the MDB.

<sup>10</sup> From the same interview.

According to Lopes and Rodrigues (2012, p.6),

*A Ilha* (a Brazilian reporter in the country of Fidel Castro), published in 1976, was one the greatest investigations into the field of literary journalism. The work was highly successful and became a beacon for the Brazilian left-wing in the 1970s; it was after this that the journalist gave up his editing job to focus exclusively on books.

The repercussions of the book, which was part of what we call *literatura política* [political literature], meant it was influential in the political relaxation of the late 1970s – particularly because, for the times, it showed an innovative interpretation of the subject of the Cuban revolution, which was top of the list of subjects prohibited by the regime. “There were thousands of Brazilians who wanted to know more about Cuba, and *A Ilha* gave them access to this, together with a positive perspective on the results of the socialist regime as introduced by the Cuban Revolution” (GALVÃO, 2005, p.354). From between Fernando Morais’ visit to Cuba – a country with which Brazil had no diplomatic relations – until its publication, the book had been eagerly awaited, and this expectation was soon consolidated by it becoming a best-seller.

Much has taken place in the three and half decades that separate us from Fernando Morais’ report on Cuba and its publication by Alfa-Omega. At the time there was a sense that the dictatorship was in decline and a promise of a new society, and these factors played a vital role in making the book a best-seller and in attracting readers eager for tales of Utopias that were an alternative to the reality of the Brazilian dictatorship. The fall of the dictatorship in Brazil gave rise to a struggle for idealist projects in Brazil, and in general these let down those who had identified with the Cuban revolution and other anti-capitalist movements. In this sense, thirty years after it was first published, the book no longer stands for those same aspects that made it such a success in terms of critical thought, sales and references in the 1970s, however, according to Lopes and Rodrigues (2012, p.10), “[...] despite the fact that the book *A Ilha* describes a Cuba that no longer exists, the work still holds its value, even three decades after publication, as a socio-historical document of the country [...]”.

Since 2001, the book has been part of the back catalogue of the publishing house Companhia das Letras, which gives the following information:

*A Ilha* sold out thirty print-runs, spent more than sixty weeks on the best-seller lists and was translated in Europe, the United States and Latin America. The book was highly controversial and was accused of justifying the Cuban Revolution, which led to it being prohibited in two states. At the time, Cuba was completely isolated from Brazil. After the 1964 military coup, Brazil severed relations with Fidel Castro's regime, doing the same thing that nearly all Latin America had already done. Brazilian passports started to carry the warning: 'Not valid in Cuba'<sup>11</sup>.

**'Olga': a publishing success story**

After the success of *A Ilha*, Alfa-Omega published another three books by Fernando Morais before releasing *Olga*. 1980 saw the publications of *Socos na porta* [Knocks on the door] and *Não às usinas nucleares: ação popular movida contra o presidente da República pelo deputado Fernando Morais* [Say no to nuclear power stations: a populist stand against the president of the republic by councillor Fernando Morais]; and, in 1982, *Primeira página: as melhores entrevistas feitas por Fernando Morais* [Page one: the selected interviews of Fernando Morais]. The former two include the journalist's speeches and interventions in the São Paulo legislative assembly, and the latter brings together his interviews.

In addition to these, 1981 saw the publication of the book *Freguesia do Ó: o inquérito que desmascarou as brigadas de Paulo Maluf*, [The investigation that uncovered the scandals of Paulo Maluf], which outlined the investigation presided over by Morais in the São Paulo state assembly on violence sponsored by the then state governor.

This demonstrates Mangarielo's efforts to, on the one hand, publish the author's works and keep him connected to Alfa-Omega, and, on the other, to capitalize on the success of *A Ilha* to the maximum. His efforts were successful, as the launch of

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<sup>11</sup> Information available at: <http://www.companhiadasletras.com.br/detalhe.php?codigo=11386>. Accessed December, 2013.

*Olga* in October 1985 saw the publisher's second greatest sales numbers – even greater than *A Ilha*. On this occasion though, the book was biographical and shed light on important moments from the trajectory of one of the most influential characters of the Brazilian left: Luís Carlos Prestes.

*Olga* “tells the tragic story of Olga Benario, the German Jew who was a member of the Soviet secret service, a Komintern emissary in Brazil, and the wife of [...] Prestes”. She was “pregnant, and after having been imprisoned by the Vargas dictatorship, she was handed over to the Nazis in 1936. That same year she gave birth in Barnimstrasse prison to her daughter, Ana Leocádia Benario Prestes [...]”. As if this were not enough, “she was then later taken to the Ravensbrück concentration camp, and from there was sent to her death in the gas chambers of Bernburg, in 1942” (GALVÃO, 2005, p.355). The book contained a great deal of new information about Olga's dramatic life and about her persecution and death, and also about Prestes' life and political stance from the era of the Coluna Prestes until the end of the Estado Novo. The connection between Olga and Prestes is described in detail in the book, which also introduces previously undocumented information about the fall of the Aliança Nacional Libertadora [National Liberational Alliance (ANL) in 1935.

Walnice Galvão classifies the book as part of the “new biographies”, a genre that was first characterised for looking at the little known lives “of Brazilians or people essential in the history of Brazil” and for defending “progressive causes” (GALVÃO, 2005, p.356).

After three years of research, the book was launched with an initial print-run of 20,000 copies and was a huge success, which yet again boosted Alfa-Omega commercially. By 1985 the book was in its fifth print-run and had sold over 55,000 copies, and in 1987 it had reached its fourteenth edition and had sold over 235,000 copies<sup>12</sup>. So as we have seen, Mangarielo and his publishing house sold 265,000 copies.

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<sup>12</sup> This information can be verified from the respective editions.

At the end of the 1980s, commercial differences meant that Moraes did not renew *Olga's* publishing contract with Alfa-Omega. The disagreement between Mangarielo and Moraes was due to contractual issues regarding copyright and to negotiations with other countries and for film rights. Mangarielo believed their contract had made it clear that such negotiations were to be conducted by the publishing house and not by the author. Mangarielo stated, "And so he appeared not to know how to compromise, in the sense of seeking a mutual understanding, and he tried take everything for himself".

This situation led to Moraes signing a contract at the start of 1988 with the publishing house Companhia das Letras, to publish his next book, *Chatô, o rei do Brasil*, [Chatô, a biography of Assis Chateaubriand]. At the time, the contract was considered "the most audacious in the country" between a writer and a publisher as it ensured a large percentage for the author (PRADO, 1988, p.35).

Moraes has not spoken publicly about his rupture with Alfa-Omega, but it is a fact that his works have never been published since by Mangarielo. Since the early 1990s, both *A Ilha* and *Olga* have been published by Companhia das Letras.

### **Other titles: a heterogeneous catalogue of opposition**

Alfa-Omega's history is a long and complex one. For over 40 years, the company published a wide range of titles, and this variety is aligned to its ideology of "critical thinking". Alfa-Omega positioned itself as *an opposition publisher*, and followed a path commonly associated with Marxist thinking, in particular that most closely associated with the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), although without being sectarian; and it also edited some titles that had clear links to the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB). One of the thinkers who most influenced the publisher's approach was the philosopher Jacob Bazarian, who had connections in the USSR and to Marxist thinking, and to whom he was very close. Even today, Mangarielo still refers to him as his mentor.

According to Flamarion Maués (2013, p.33-34), between 1974 and 1984 Alfa-Omega was one of forty opposition publishers who were publishing works characterised as *political literature*. Of these forty, thirty-two were considered micro or small businesses, and only eight were medium or large publishers, of which Alfa-Omega was one, together with Brasiliense, Civilização Brasileira, Codecri, Global, Paz e Terra, Vozes and Zahar.

### Final comments

Alfa-Omega has been active since 1973; however, since the second half of the noughties, the only regular staff in the company have been the owners themselves. Digital tools have contributed greatly to maintaining the business. Titles are initially published with small print-runs, and if and when necessary, further copies are printed in small quantities on demand, generally on the basis of previously saved digital files. For its distribution and publicity, the publisher regularly e-mails information about new publications via its large mailing list; and books can be bought on-line or by phone. The company is also planning to sell some of its books as eBooks.

From this study, one can see that from a business viewpoint, it is much harder to run a medium-sized publishing firm than one that is large or small. In his study on commercial publishing in London and New York at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, John B. Thompson noted something that, with the right contextualisation, could also be applied to other periods in the history of publishing: while large publishing houses have an advantage through their greater circulation and small presses tend to help each other and work together; “middle-sized commercial publishing houses have more difficulties to overcome” (THOMPSON, 2013, p.191). Middle-sized publishers neither benefit from the community spirit of small presses, nor do they have the resources of the big corporations. This means that in comparison with the others, middle-sized publishers have the greatest challenges to withstand.

Alfa-Omega has had to face many challenges, with moments of tremendous commercial and publishing success (with two best-

sellers that enabled it to print and sell larger numbers of new titles each year) and after the 1990s huge drops in sales.

An overview of the past forty years shows Alfa-Omega's clear continued focus on Marxist left-wing ideology in the face of "current market tastes", and in this light, the publisher's recent titles that reflect on the Right from a Marxist viewpoint are of particular interest, of note are: *Direito Internacional: para uma crítica marxista* [International Law: Towards a Marxist critique], by Júlio da Silveira Moreira, and *Direitos Humanos na perspectiva de Marx e Engels* [Human Rights from the perspective of Marx and Engels], by José Damião de Lima Trindade

Fernando and Claudete Mangarielo are both inspiring examples of persistent and resistant cultural producers; they have stayed faithful to their left-wing beliefs despite the fact these stood in the way of potential commercial expansion, and they have carried on the company's reputation as an *opposition publisher*. Although it no longer stands in opposition to the dictatorship, it is now in opposition to dominant ideology, and its business trajectory has remained subordinate to the same political aims that guided its initial creation. It is people like Fernando and Claudete Mangarielo, publishers who dare to challenge dominant market trends in publishing, who promote and maintain biblio-diversity, and make available a wide range of differing and even conflicting titles and views, ideas and opinions within an all-embracing framework that is vital for the constitution and maintenance of any democratic society.

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## Apendix I – Alfa-Omega – first titles: from 1973 to 1976

As the publisher does not have a back catalogue this list was drawn from articles in a range of newspapers and journals, library research, and interviews with Fernando and Claudete Mangarielo.

1. *A ideia republicana no Brasil através dos documentos* (1973), Reinaldo Xavier Carneiro Pessoa (org.)
2. *Intuição heurística: uma análise científica da intuição criadora* (1973), Jacob Bazarian
3. *4 Cantos de pavor e alguns poemas desesperados* (1973), Álvaro Alves de Faria
4. *Café e ferrovias* (2ª. ed.) (1974), Odilon Nogueira de Matos
5. *Castas, estamentos e classes sociais: Introdução ao pensamento de Marx e Weber* (2ª. ed.) (1974), Sedi Hirano
6. *Política e segurança. Força Pública do Estado de São Paulo: fundamentos históricos-sociais* (1974), Heloisa Rodrigues Fernandes
7. *História e teoria dos partidos políticos no Brasil* (2ª ed.) (1974), Afonso Arinos de Melo Franco (sobrinho)
8. *Condicionamento verbal: pesquisa e ensino* (1974), Geraldina Porto Witter, Maria Cecília Manzolli and Euza Maria de Rezende Bonamigo
9. *Sete Ensaios de interpretação da realidade peruana* (1975), José Carlos Mariátegui
10. *A verdade sobre a Revolução de Outubro de 1930* (2ª ed.) (1975), Barbosa Lima Sobrinho
11. *Universidade brasileira: Reforma ou revolução?* (1975), Florestan Fernandes
12. *Estatística básica para ciências humanas* (2ª ed.) (1975), Bernadete Gattie Nagib L. Feres
13. *Ciência, ensino e aprendizagem* (1975), Geraldina Porto Witter
14. *Energia elétrica e capital estrangeiro no Brasil* (1975), Catullo Branco
15. *Sociologia e sociedade no Brasil* (1975), Otavio Ianni
16. *Violência: uma análise do homo brutalis* (1975), José Pereira
17. *Coronelismo, enxada e voto* (1975), Victor Nunes Leal
- 18 to 20. *Textos I* (1975) *II* (1976) e *III* (undated) (Selected works), Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (Edições Sociais)
21. *A luta pela industrialização no Brasil* (1975), Nícia Vilela Luz
22. *Escravidão africana no Brasil* (3ª ed.) (1975), Mauricio Goulart
23. *O sentido do tenentismo* (3rd ed.) (1976), Virginio Santa Rosa
- 24 to 27. *História sincera da República*, volumes 1,2,3 e 4 (1976), Leôncio Basbaum
28. *Monções* (2ª. ed.) (1976), Sergio Buarque de Holanda
29. *A tecnocracia na história* (1975), Carlos Estevam Martins

30. *Uma vida em seis tempos (memórias)* (1976), Leôncio Basbaum
31. *Mandonismo local na vida política brasileira e outros ensaios* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (1976), Maria Izaura Pereira de Queiroz
32. *Três industrialistas brasileiros: Mauá, Rui Barbosa, Roberto Simonsen* (1976), Heitor Ferreira Lima
33. *Para te comer melhor* (1976), Eduardo GudinoKiefler
34. *A luta pela modernização da economia brasileira* (1976), Helio Duque
35. *A ilha: um repórter brasileiro no país de Fidel Castro* (1976) (1<sup>st</sup> ed. agosto 1976, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. January 1977), Fernando Moraes
36. *Quatro-olhos: romance* (1976), Renato Pompeu
37. *O Túnel* (1976), Ernesto Sabato
38. *Expansão cafeeira e origens da indústria no Brasil* (1976), Sergio Silva
39. *Estado e partidos políticos no Brasil (1930-1964)* (1976), Maria do Carmo Campello de Souza
40. *O cérebro consciente* (1976), Steven Rose
41. *Tango fantasma* (1976), Márcia Denser
42. *Testamento político de D. Luis da Cunha* (1976), Nanci Leonzo (Introduction)
43. *Assim escrevem os gaúchos* (1976), Janer Cristaldo (organiser)
44. *Assim escrevem os catarinenses* (1976), Emanuel Medeiros Vieira (organiser)

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