

Memory fragments of a professor of Journalism: the evident perplexity in the late itinerary of the political amnesty

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Abstract

Journalism professor at Universidade de São Paulo, José Marques de Melo was accused of teaching “subversive” practices during the military dictatorship. A class occurred in 1968, about lead technique, was the key part of the investigation that invoked Decree-Law 477, resulting in a “white forfeiture” even though it had been cleared by an act published in *Diário Oficial*, in 1972, fact which motivated the professor to apply for political amnesty, one right of him. Being for a period of more than a quarter of a century, the lawsuit culminated with a favorable decision, in July 2015, prompting perplex attitudes. This text, a mixed of memorialistic essay and testimonials – based in a bibliographical research –, presents a contextual issues about the episode, highlighting also the demonstration made in Brazil and abroad about this subject, which associate the facts to broader issues about the academic way and the own Communication field. Keywords: Memory. Military dictatorship. Journalism. Mastership. Communication Field.

*“Amazement is the mystery that is life.
My astonishment increases when I look back [...] because freedom is never out of the truth.
So the truth is unbearable for authoritarian spirits, because it generates freedom” (Leonardo Boff, 1989).*

Facts and versions

The Republican history of Brazil shows a clear alternation of political cycles, with the amnesty as a sign beacon of constitutional itinerary that creates parameters to regulate the passage of Exception regime for the rule of law – or, rather, from *dictatorship* to *democracy*.

The Amnesty of 1945 symbolized the transition from authoritarian Vargas cycle, which took place between the 1930 Revolution and the Redemocratization period in 1945. Its most painful icons were perpetrated by the lawyer Sobral Pinto, in defense of prisoners accused to counter the authors labeled “Communist Conspiracy 35”, among them the leader of the *Coluna Prestes*, whose abuse suffered in dungeons – with dictatorship features - induced his public defender to invoke the Animal Protection Act to ensure the safety of the “cavaleiro da esperança” (Knight of hope) – Luis Carlos Prestes – and of his fellow prisoners, as the writer Graciliano Ramos, whose literary work with his book *Memórias do Cárcere* thrilled generations of Brazilians.

In turn, the amnesty of 1979 signaled the military dictatorship, triggered by the 1964 coup. Outlined by Geisel and Golbery generals, it will last until the end of the “slow, gradual and safe transition”. So slow and gradual that has become the most lasting, lining the legion of “brethren of Henfil” to sing the most vibrant song in Elis Regina’s album. So safe that comes stretching for more than three decades, raising perplexity whenever new cases appear in the media headlines.

I was a protagonist of the rare cases that were processed by the Amnesty Commission of the Ministry of Justice. Its narrative caught the attention of journalist Rosemeri Laurindo (2014), story book author *AI-5 entry at the Academy: The lead manual used by scammers of 1964 to punish the Journalism school*. The cover page of this work translates to huge confusion of the author: “Half a century later, unpublished documents on the “*the lead manual*” piece denounced by undercover agents at the rectory of USP

[University of São Paulo], which sued the author, José Marques de Melo, unable to act in public universities 1974-1979”.

I confess that I felt like cannon fodder in the struggle between two factions of the self-styled revolution of 1964 that the heralds of national mockery never ceased to satirize, including the chronicler Nelson Rodrigues and the cartoonist Stanislaw Ponte Preta, alternating the epithets “coup” or “military uprising”.

I was sued in 1972 for a lecture given in 1968. Or rather, I was accused of authoring a booklet entitled *The Technical lead*. Product of exercises done in class, that pamphlet took reference to the news published in newspapers (censored) from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, applying “beltraniana pedagogy” of the *Jornal cobraia* and using a Polish epidiascope, scrapped in the warehouse of the rectory, but allowing an educational upgrade, taught by Doris Day in the film *Teacher’s pet* (1958). I have “retired” my *Cordel News* in which the day’s news were glued, to be hung on the wall of the classroom in order to facilitate the teaching-learning process – a kind of modern version of flannel, so widespread the United States Agency for International Development (USAID in its original acronym), used at rural schools – but depending on previous selection, cutting and pasting the explanatory materials.

It was not possible to make slides to design the day’s news, so my students used the old Polish projector before mentioned here, to play the clippings themselves. After class, young students converted the lessons in booklets, which are now coveted by Journalism courses across the country.

Well, the handout on *lead* technique was taken as application model of newsmaking theory in the academic literature, teaching “make” news. But my “uspianos”¹ tormentors accused me of inducing the “seals” (housebroken reporters at the university) to “tarnish” the image of Brazil abroad.

The ground for complaint was opaque until recently. Once documents bundled in the process of the University of São Paulo disappeared, it is plausible that the version of the file relating to the early days of the School of Communications and Arts (ECA) has been incinerated, silent episode that would be repeated, this

¹ N.T.: (people that study at USP – University of São Paulo).

time with the fire that devoured the press museum's collection and later turned into ashes the memory of Brazilian soap opera.

Knowing that the decision making body of my process was located in Brasilia, the Ministry of Education, made informal consultations that resulted in evasive answers. Exercising my reporter's nose, I explored a bureaucratic track, what showed positive signs, namely the National Archives. With the help of the young teacher Guilherme Fernandes, of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), two seemingly similar documents were located, but dated at different times.

The oldest (AC-ACE-58326/72) brings together documents showing my academic performance in the period from June 15th to September 2nd, 1972, showing the process (confidential) established under the National Service of SNI Information for determination of the Minister of Justice, Alfredo Buzaid, and completed on the date that the Official Gazette publishes the act of my acquittal, by the Minister of Education, Jarbas Birdie.

The latest (ASP-ACE-9582/81) was opened in 1981, when I was under effect of the amnesty law, which allowed me to return to the teaching staff of the University of São Paulo, also coinciding with the period when I was called to cooperate with the federal government, acting as a consultant of Higher Education Personnel Training Coordination (Capes).

This process contains parts of my judgment at USP, according to the ritual of Decree-Law 477/69, including the testimonies of teachers, students and staff, ordered to testify in 1972 on the Technical Lead. It is worth documenting the civic courage of those who appeared before the committee to testify, denying the charges that motivating the process:

Egon Schaden – “said to know most of Prof. Marques de Melo publications, in which there is no demonstrations against the current government policy”.

Flavio Galvão – “in his view, that teacher has no political role, whether from an ideological point of view or the party point of view”; “It is part of an organization of Catholic journalists, which is also a member [...] his friend [...] the journalist Helio Damante”.

Jaquim Pereira dos Santos – “said he knows Professor José Marques de Melo since joining as a student in 1968 ... and can witness [...] his useful contribution to journalism education. [...] About the publication Technical lead, said [...] from the didactic point of view is justified reprinting in 1972 ... [...] of a publication which reproduces the political events of 1968...”.

Marina Rector – “the impression I have of that teacher is that he is extremely moderate in their attitudes [...] and has collaborated intensely [...] for the journalism course serving as a model for other national or foreign courses”.

Rolando Pinto Morel – “said to know Professor Marques de Melo from the initial operation of the Communications School in 1967 [...] and that can testify [...] an absolutely consistent with the behavior of teachers and direction of School”.

Rui Rebelo Pine – “never, in conversations they had noted any manifestation that could be considered disrespectful to existing institutions”.

Sylvia Ferraz and Francesca Cavalli – “never gave him any show of subversive character”.

Virgilio Noya Pinto – “said it is a weighted and no extremist tendency person”.

Walter Sampaio – “in the direction of the Department of Journalism has been efficient, hardworking and a spirit of organization”.

But the commission of inquiry composed by the teachers Laerte Ramos de Carvalho and Josué Camargo Mendes saw fit to condemn me to five years of deprivation of professorship in national universities. Fortunately, the sentence was within the competence of the Minister of Education. Jarbas Birdie read the case and acquitted me.

Even with “negative certificate of subversion”, embodied in the order that the Minister of Education has published in the Official Gazette, I was discriminated against within the university, prevented from traveling to give lectures and present papers at international conferences.

Ostensibly guarded by security officers stationed at the rectory, I felt that my academic space was reduced substantially

motivated by opportunism of colleagues who feared reprisals from the powers that be in university administration. Above all, the evil personality of those who wanted to climb the academic carries without facing intellectually prepared competitors, but bureaucratically hamstrung.

I became thus in “bargaining chip” in fierce fighting that developed in the barracks, the control of power, between the “hardliners”, led by Silvio Frota, and the “aberturistas”² backed by Ernesto Geisel. Although I was exempted from being subversive (Act published in the Official Gazette), soon after I continued to be treated like one.

As a survival strategy, I decided to be Doctor in Philosophy in the United States. Upon my return, in 1974, was expected to pursue my studies, climbing the top step of the academic career (chair). But the commander of the Second Army, Ednardo D’Avila, stalled this itinerary.

Deciding to confront the hegemonic bloc in the military, he put my name on the top of a list of “subversive” teachers by ordering the “white forfeiture”. Frightened, the rector Orlando M. Paiva, who climbed the post by docility to the military regime immediately fulfill the higher order.

I was so fired summarily, in 1974. The agents of USP persecution acted effectively, shutting me all doors. If it was not the courage of evangelical Methodists educators Dorival Beulke and BP Bittencourt, I would remain the alternative of exile, but I resisted the pressures of the security agencies vigilant in the university sector, welcoming me in the Methodist University of São Paulo, only. I stayed in Sao Bernardo do Campo, from 1975 to 1985. The story of this fruitful experience is noted in the utopian pragmatism book in São Bernardo Republic: Communication Sciences. Brazil, 1964-2014 (MARQUES DE MELO, 2014).

With the political opening in 1979, I was excited to return to USP for the loyalty and solidarity of colleagues who remained there, fighting for the restoration of educational structures destroyed by the successors of the 1964 coup.

² N.T.: People who wanted to flexibility (or “to open”) of military dictatorship in Brazil.

I had been the victim of “white forfeiture”, so the authorities from USP denied support in the Amnesty Law of 1979, tolerating the return of those persecuted by new contracts. Our legal status was like, therefore, to that enjoyed by the hilarious character in the soap opera Dias Gomes –*Roque Santeiro* – the Porcine widow, “that woman who was without ever being”.

So my amnesty trial has handled amnesty process slowly for years anchored in jurisprudence and interpretation of the law, allowing for the joined new documents and relevant and convincing arguments put forward by the legal team formed by Francisco Lúcio France, Alexandre Maciel and Ariel Castro Alves until the sentence was handed down, untying the knot that attached me to this typically Kafkaesque universe (Process 2009.07.635281).

The commission in charge of applying the law of amnesty to citizens penalized by the dictatorship began in 1964, at the Ministry of Justice in Brasília, in a meeting on July 13, 2015, dedicated to pending cases, unanimously approved the opinion of the director Manoel Severino Moraes Almeida, motivating the statement recorded by its chairman, Paul Abraham: “At this time, the Brazilian State apologizes for persecution, the prison, the time he was away from his job and all the reflexes also caused to his family”.

Disclosed the news of the amnesty, I received numerous messages which I selected and reproduced here, then, those that best reflect the cognitive bewilderment that process the contents of which could perfectly fit fictional cast of stories of inexplicable debut book of my grandson Gabriel Zerbinato Marques de Melo in Brazilian literature. But as it is circumscribed facts to real, they could be naturally ordered, to generate another manual (psychographic), entitled *The secret of the inverted pyramid, including the subtitle: Elements for a conspiracy theory of cultivated Journalism at Lácio last flower*”. Giving wings to the imagination: this dream edition could be enriched with an insert of string literature, whose title could be: *The meeting of Luiz Beltrão, master of folk communication with Doris Day, the beloved teacher of Hollywood Journalism School*.

Amazement evidence: saga of a persecuted journalist

I formally declare Mr. José Marques de Melo Brazilian political amnesty by unanimous decision of the Amnesty Commission. At this time, the Brazilian State formalizes the apology by persecution, the prison, the time he was away from his job and all the reflexes also caused (to) his family (Paul Abraham, president of the National Amnesty Commission).

With this statement, made on 07.13.2015 by Paul Abraham, president of the National Amnesty Commission, representing the act of the Brazilian State and the Ministry of Justice, came to an end the saga of political persecution of one of the most important scientists and thinkers of Brazilian Journalism, José Marques de Melo, co-founder of ECA-USP, Intercom and Orbicom, first PhD in Journalism from Brazil and holder 20 years ago, the UNESCO Chair in Communication at the Methodist University of São Paulo. At the sitting, which was unable to attend for health reasons, he was represented by his son Marcelo Briseno Marques de Melo and the daughter Priscilla Zerbinato Marques de Melo. The records of the amnesty process will now be sent on the recommendation of rapporteur Manuel Severino Moraes de Almeida, to the Truth Commission at USP, in order to “contribute to the development of the work and access to the right to memory and truth of that institution [...]”.

Retrospect - Marques de Melo began his intellectual career as a journalist in the early 1960s, engaging in the student movement in Recife, Pernambuco, joined the delegation that attended the UNE Congress in the historic Hotel Quitandinha (Petrópolis). He was protagonist of episodes as the mobilization of the press to cover the Celia Guevara and Joffre Dumazedier visit to the Northeast.

He joined the Miguel Arraes Government team, working in the areas of education and culture. Arrested and prosecuted by the 1964 coup, he moved to São Paulo, hired as a professor of Journalism at Casper Libero College. Still in São Paulo he passed the contest USP to join the faculty founder of the School of Cultural Communications. In both institutions, he faced resistance and suffered persecutions, heading the list of the persecuted by

the dictatorship. Anticipating the historic decision of the National Amnesty Commission of the Ministry of Justice, the Brazilian Society of Interdisciplinary Studies of Communication – Intercom welcomed proposal to honor the founder of the entity publishing the collection *Critical Fortune José Marques de Melo* (São Paulo, Intercom), which brings together exegetical texts of his academic work, written by more than a hundred colleagues and disciples, in four volumes: 1 – *Journalism and Media*; 2 – *Theory Education and Communication*; 3 – *Communication, University and Society*; and 4 – *Leadership and Vanguardism*. The organization fell to Osvando J. de Moraes, Sônia Jaconi, Eduardo Amaral Gurgel, Iury Parente Aragon and Clarissa Josgrilberg Pereira.

The collection is being donated to libraries and research centers in Communication throughout the country, symbolizing the fighting spirit of the media Warrior (as featured Professor Marques de Melo by his biographer Sergio Mattos)³.

Swept atrocities on the national scene

“Words are few to show my joy in seeing, even belatedly, that these atrocities are being wiped from the national scene” (José Fontes Malta Neto, Portal Maltanet, AL).

Pride academic

“Justice has been made, albeit belatedly. We are proud of the path he built, still in Recife, as a student at the Catholic University of Pernambuco. His journey as a student and then as a professional magnify the history of our journalism course” (Aline Greek Unicap, PE).

Wounds and scars

“Although the official apology from the Brazilian State persecution imposed on you not cease to be a form of reparation, certainly it does not remove the scars left” (Ana Silvia Médola, UNESP, SP).

Democracy signal

“The repair of injustice is vital sign of democracy that your struggle and your pains helped build. In there repair, therefore, an emotion and a victory meaning” (Manuel Carlos Chaparro, ECA-USP, SP).

³ Part of the text published in the website *Portal dos Jornalistas*. Available at: <http://www.portaldosjornalistas.com.br/noticia/jose-marques-melo-retrospectiva-homenagens-ao-mestre-varias-geracoes>. Access on: August, 16, 2015.

MEMORY FRAGMENTS OF A PROFESSOR OF JOURNALISM: THE EVIDENT
PERPLEXITY IN THE LATE ITINERARY OF THE POLITICAL AMNESTY

Not everything is lost

“It’s never too late for justice to be done. To all the generation that, like us, fought against the military dictatorship and was a victim of imprisonment, torture and exile, this fact is sure to reason that all is not lost” (Ricardo Viveiros, SP).

Although late

“Fair attitude, even though late. Big hug, my dear master” (Juçara Brittes, Ufop, MG).

Emotion and admiration

“Finally, justice has been done. I was thrilled with the news. Receive my hug and my great admiration” (Zélia Leal Adghirni, UNB, DF).

Persecution and injustice

“The text of this amnesty, beyond recognition of the atrocious persecution and suffered injustice, show us the historical context of his work” (ImmacolataVassallo Maria Lopes, ECA-USP, SP).

Never give up!

“For those who never ceases to fight sooner or later, the conquest arrives. I also speak on behalf of the board of Fenaj, which is also celebrating the news. finally have been done justice to one of the our journalists reference and great fighter in defense of journalists and journalism” (Valci Zucoloto, Fenaj, DF).

Patience and perseverance

“For a justice, that is often slow and late, patience and perseverance are necessary. You had them and in the end of the way we see the light” (Delia Crovi, Unam / Alaic, Mexico).

Integrity

“Although it took a while to get this done it is a new recognition of your integrity, fair and deserved, which only confirms your personal and professional worth” (Erick Torrico, Andean University, Bolivia).

Just and deserved

“Just and deserved Repair” (Berenice Maria Machado, UFRGS, RS).

Respected work

“My compliments and admiration for the historic and respected work over the past decades of military rule” (Sergio Gadini, UEPG, PR).

Great values

“The hardest part of any project is the first step, take the first decision. This is the time we live now: the celebration of the time since the first step. Because each of us has a flame in the heart for any purpose. It is our constant goal to find it and keep it on. So are you. And the transmission of the flame is his greatest legacy. The apology, though he bear long, makes this momentary pause a new look. Possible stumbling of the past, a dance step; the fear generated and maintained long ago, a ladder; and dream that it remained, and remains, a bridge between times. And demand – this yes, endless – a meeting of your great values, which are many” (Scarleth Yone O’Hara, UFPA, PA).

Warrior accompanying

“Dear Professor José Marques has left us an immense work of writing and has shown us that it is possible to combine, communication, academic, institutional, research, management, networks, international recognition, promotion of new generations of communicators and researchers. We hope this amnesty episode that we share encourages us to be steadfast in our purpose and tireless struggle for democratic communication. He has been a committed intellectual in the great causes of humanity and the remains. Recognition also to Dona Silvia Briseno Marques de Melo, the warrior that has accompanied the teacher throughout this journey of life” (Esmeralda Villegas, Universidad de Bucaramanga / ALAIC, Colombia).

Cocked hat

“It is never too late so there is a formal and official response around everything that made demeaning and disrespectful in relation to your person and your work. But in fact, never you needed it, no one ever asked for or charged thee this because we respect you and wanted you for what you are, in fact, for what you do and have done, and still thou shalt surely. Where could I leave head up the street. Now more. And we, your disciples and loving admirers, along with you” (Antonio Hohlfeldt, PUCRS, RS).

Non-fading

“Justice made, yet it delayed. Very happy for his ever battle for communication and their non weakening face of adversity” (Maria Cristina Gobbi, UNESP, SP).

Exalt deserved

“I join others to exalt the more than deserved recognition” (Marialva Barbosa, UFRJ / Intercom, RJ).

It’s never late

“It’s never too late to the justice makes your route. Congratulations to all Agacom” (Margarita Ledo Andión, Agacom, Spain).

MEMORY FRAGMENTS OF A PROFESSOR OF JOURNALISM: THE EVIDENT
PERPLEXITY IN THE LATE ITINERARY OF THE POLITICAL AMNESTY

Example fight

"Justice is slow but takes place. This will be another chapter in his biography. Congratulations friend. Big hug and continue as an example of struggle and determination to us all" (Sergio Mattos, UFRB, BA).

Faith in justice

"So we can believe in the justice of this country" (Nair Silver, Ufop, MG).

Main driver

"Finally, justice has been done in this respect to the principal promoter of communication research in the country" (Luiz Artur Ferraretto, UFRGS, RS).

Fight, honesty

"I'm glad for the recognition, at last, of his struggle, honesty and success in the construction of the Brazilian communicational thought" (Joan Puntel, Sepac, SP).

Injustice

"I hope that the act has minimally cherished the wrongs" (Maria Ataíde Malcher, UFPA, PA).

Worthy trajectory

"We are all rewarded by official recognition of the injustice that was his pursuit, the paths that you went through and the support that you gave to who accompanied you during that period. The amnesty that reaches its culmination worthy trajectory" (J.S. Faro, Umesp, SP).

Fair

"As they say, 'justice is slow, but does not fail'. Fair recognition" (Fernando Ferreira de Almeida, Umesp / Intercom, SP).

Recognition

"I am very happy in my name and ECA-USP, for the completion of the process and the deserved recognition of justice for all that you went through at the time, your family and friends" (Daisy Kunsch, ECA-USP, SP).

Victims of the dictatorships

"I think it is fundamental to repair serious wounds that mark to fire the face of our South American societies symbolic acts like this that you repair it features. For a Latin America that did not give in to his thirst for seeking justice for all the victims of the dictatorships!" (Luis A. Alborno, ULEPICC, Espanha).

We must continue

“When we hit a weariness, a new example of our beloved master to tell us that we must pursue” (Rosemeri Laurindo, FURB, SC).

Pedagogy of the *lead*⁴

I learned from Nabantino Ramos (1970, p.156) that *lead*, word with Brazilian aspect in Portuguese used in newspaper offices (as *lide*) means “command” or “introduction”, becoming in mechanism to facilitate the reading of the press, in short “in terms clear, provocative, simple, direct” the articles published daily.

Also noted the timely contribution of Juarez Bahia (2010, p.229.), Clarifying generally: “Among us, acquires the meaning of the first paragraph and head”. However, the most important in this concept is its specification, “it is the beginning of the text, its opening, the initial core of a news report, article, comment and even interview when it is presented with an introduction that precedes the questions and answers, written in a concise, clear, substantive and as much as possible, thought-provoking, as to create a *climate* for the rest of the text”. It ends with a given historical in nature, “their use in Journalism retires nose wax, adjectives and long and ornamental phrases”.

Seminal sources

My teaching strategy, way back in 1960 when I entered the university teaching, rested in the lesson disseminated by Luiz Beltrão (1969, p.110): “To Compose the head of the news is undoubtedly the most important newsreader’s job, considering that must be made up as a decoy, that holds the reader’s attention, drawing him and leading him to the following paragraphs. To this end, the master enunciated an ‘algebraic formula’ for the synthetic news”.

⁴The next three topics consist of the author’s testimony excerpts sent to Rosemeri Laurindo, during the preparation of book *AI-5 entry at the Academy*, already mentioned here.

Didactically, Beltran led his students in class, to apply that formula to reach the “analytical news”: $3Q + CO + PQ$. The method used to transmit this knowledge was the “guinea pig newspaper”, described as follows: “it is a particular edition of the daily of our city, which all students must acquire ... [...] Throughout the school year, that paper will serve as a guinea pig to cover the exercises and writing” (BELTRÃO, 1969, p.20-23).

To be faithful to the process begotten to give Journalism lessons, I must say I used to *beltraniana* methodology (from Beltrão), nevertheless included a technique I learned from Doris Day or rather, with the character she represents: A Journalism professor leading its classes using a slide projector. Because this type of teaching and learning additional resource was not feasible at that time, I turned to a mammoth apparatus – the epidiascope – that allowed the projection of images “gross”, that is, typescripts or printed, arranged on the metal surface. They were captured by a lens and readily reflected on the screen to reach the students.

In this way, I managed to motivate my students of the first journalism classes at ECA-USP, introducing two innovations in the setting process of the transmitted content. The *Jornal Cabaia* ceased to be a kind of corpse removed from the morgue every day of school, being dissected by the end of the semester. We experience the daily *Jornal Cabaia*, compromising the teacher and the students to buy copies for each school day. Completing the flow of learning with the clipping of the information units published that day, allowing students to glue on white paper, is to design them in the next class, allowing for comparisons, either at the end of each class, justifying empirical interpretations.

Lead technique

This methodology was tested in 1967 during the first year of Journalism school operating in the School of Cultural Communications, to be implemented in 1968.

The lesson on the lead technique, a key part of the investigation was given on March 28th, 1968, with the background

of the events that took place the day before, in Rio de Janeiro, in the Dungeon student restaurant, resulting in one death and numerous injuries of the clash between students and police. Remember that the national press was in prior censorship regime, since the edition of 1964 institutional acts.

It was the custom, the students sought examples of lead in the newspapers of the day, they cut out, glued and composed a booklet which was printed by the Academic Board and distributed to interested parties. It is a rudimentary editing, according to the technology available at the time, the texts were typed on stencil, shot in bond paper and distributed among the students enrolled.

Note that this lesson on the lead technique resonated strongly in the national academic community, appearing as a reference source for students and teachers, after recommended by experts, as it was the case of Luiz Amaral (1969), who used this experience to encourage the improvement of Journalism education methodology. In view of this pedagogical acceptance, the booklet was reprinted by the graphics of ECA-USP, in 1968 and 1972. But in the face of the complaint made by the security forces operating in the university space and proceedings in 1972, the booklet was taken from movement, even of university libraries.

‘White forfeiture’

An interview with Vera Rodrigues⁵, in 2003, recalls in detail the events that occurred around the process of “white forfeiture” that culminated in the amnesty recently granted to the author. It is worth reproduce this content in full, so bundling reports and testimony highlighted here.

VR – When and in what circumstances did occur your? departure from USP? Was it due to the Institutional Act number 5?

JMM – I was the victim of “white forfeiture” in 1974, being

⁵ Interview with Vera Rodrigues, on May 20, 2003, published in the book *Midiologia for beginners: a colloquial to the media world trip* (MARQUES DE MELO, 2005, p. 118-123).

prevented from teaching and research in the institution to the political amnesty of 1979, when I was reinstated in my academic functions. The process was Kafkaesque profile, starting in 1972, based on exceptional laws enacted by the AI-5, derived from the military junta that took power after the constitutional disability of the President Costa e Silva. My process was based on Decree-Law 477, issued to punish teachers and college students. The charge was that I had published a “subversive” handout, which urged my students to oppose the military government. The handout, which circulated in various Brazilian universities and gained international prominence for its pedagogical innovation, was entitled Technical lead. It contained classes of notes recorded by students. The authorities claimed that circulating outside the country, those news “denigrated” the international image of our government. The process was initiated by the rector of USP, that recommended my punishment. But the Minister of Education, General Jarbas Passarinho, who deserved the final decision, finding that the complaint was unfounded, I was free. Those were troubled times in the lower courts which do not always obey the superior decisions. In Sao Paulo, security agents linked to the so-called “hard-line” disdained the regulations of the Government installed in Brasilia. Covered up by the Fourth Army command, they acted in the dictatorship of the basements, with the connivance of the civil authorities, intimidated, frightened, cowed. So it was that in 1974, two years after acquitted by the Minister of Education, I was surprised with the act signed by the then president of USP, Professor Dr. Orlando Marques de Paiva, clearing the term of my employment contract at the university. This was useless, the appeals filed. Other colleagues of the institution were similar victims of arbitrariness without right to defense, monetary reparations and compensation for the workers concept. Periodically, rights, circulated in USP lists of “undesirable” that the rector, candidly, interrupted or fired. This situation lasted until 1979, when the Act of amnesty was passed. Colleagues from the Journalism Department made a petition addressed to the rector of USP, demanding the reinstatement of

the deposed teachers. I was reinstated in the first batch, along with Jair Borin and Thomaz Farkas. They were later reinstated Sival Medina and José de Freitas Nobre.

VR – What was your situation at the USP at the time? Had You already deployed the structure of ECA courses? Was there some specific project?

JMM – My situation at USP at that time was as follows: I wielded the conductor function of the Chair of the Technical Journal and Journal. Until 1972, occupied the post of Director of the Department of Journalism, but according to the established process, based on Decree-Law 477, the director at the time, Prof. Dr. Antonio Guimarães Ferri, found it “prudent” I did not remain in function leader. As he was running for chancellor and did not want complications with the dignitaries of the military regime, he opted for my departure from the academic leadership at the Department of Journalism. As I had already deployed the course of Journalism and concluded the initial stage of installation of the course of Publishing, I began to worry about the development of the undergraduate course. Presented a project in that sense, the governing bodies of the university, getting the green light. The Fapesp also supported the initiative, granting me postdoctorate fellowship at the University of Wisconsin (USA), where I remained studying the US model of teaching and research in journalism. But when I returned in 1974, I was surprised by my resignation of the university staff. My Journalism graduate project was shelved.

VR –When were you out of USP and how long were you there?

JMM – I started working at USP in 1966. Initially, I collaborated as a volunteer. As soon as the ECA was established, opening their first public tender for admission of teachers, I applied and was approved. The first director of ECA, Dr. Julio García Morejón, then called me to collaborate with the institution, asking me to do a newspaper-lab project, and then to redesign the Journalism course curriculum, with a view to

effective new guidelines issued by the MEC . My appointment, however, only occurred at the beginning of 1967, since the processes went through a rigorous verification with the security agencies. I feared for my initial impediment, for it was processed before in Pernambuco, in view of my role as a member of the impeached governor team, Miguel Arraes. But there was still no computerized system in public administration, freeing me at that time to be embarrassed. Soon after I took office, I was asked by the principal to take the first chair of journalism, which forced me to Exclusive Dedication scheme for Teaching and Research (RDIDP). When the Department of Journalism was created, I had the pleasure of even being the youngest lecturer, being nominated for its direction. Remain in that position until 1972, when, processed by 477, I started to figure as *persona non grata* at the upper echelons of the university. I dedicated myself then to complete my PhD thesis. As I was the first doctor in the country's journalism, the news got great repercussion in the national press. This upset the so-called "third stage" (police informants who worked in the wings of the rectory). I was advised to stay out of the country for some time to not be pursued ostensibly. It was then that I decided to do a postdoctoral research. But the security team did not lose sight of those people who do not have lowered their heads. Therefore, to return to the country in 1974, I was a victim of the fatal blow. Dismissed summarily. And watched ostensibly every time attended the campus.

VR – How was your removal informed?

JMM – Upon returning from the postdoctorate program, attended journalism Department, presenting my trip report. As it was the second half, took one discipline in the course of undergraduate and started working with my students. In fine day, I am summoned to the office of the principal school, Prof. Dr. Manuel Nunes Dias, who presents me an act published in the Official Gazette that day, determining my brief departure from the institution. I was upset because, as (I) was acquitted in the process regularly introduced two years ago, I considered myself

immune to such situations. I asked for explanations. Nothing me were given by the director, who told me to be fulfilling orders from above. I asked an audience to the rector, I was granted but there was difficult. He told me he had had no alternative but to lower the act of my resignation along with other teachers included in a list drawn up by the security agencies. And so was the situation. After seven years of service to the university, did not receive any compensation. I had to restart my academic career outside the public system.

VR – Were other teachers dismissed at the same time? Did they claim with the same reasons?

JMM – In the Department of Journalism, five teachers were victims of political persecution during the military regime: José de Freitas Nobre, Jair Borin, Thomaz Farkas, then Sinval Medina and I. Each had a different charge. But the processes were similar. Summary dismissal without the right to defense or indemnification of damages.

VR – How was the atmosphere at USP, when it gave its remoteness? The situation was still tension and fear wasn't it? Is it possible to compare to the first purges accruing at university, when teachers began to be removed?

JMM – The Brazilian university was frightened from 1964, when there were the first removals, supported in AI-1. From 1968, came the terror period. New removals, based on I-5. The third phase was the “white forfeiture”, motivated by the secret proceedings brought in security and existing information machinery in each university. Throughout the 1970s, it dominated a system marked by denunciations, investigations, witch hunts. There were isolated cases that spread small mouth. But in USP, they always had repercussions. Sometimes they overflowed to the press. But the internal reactions were soon stifled under the threat that their leaders were to appear in the next list. In the case of ECA, the culmination of this process occurred when students revolted by so many cassation and persecution of their teachers decided to strike

against the management of Dias Nunes director, who attributed the intellectual authorship of arbitrariness. Although with the stop of the school for several months, losing the school year, students were able to do nothing. The change would only come at the end of the political opening, when the military government agreed to grant amnesty to the disenfranchised.

VR – Today, how do you analyze those difficult times?

JMM – With great sadness. My generation wasted much of productive intellectual life, having to defend themselves up to avoid being a victim of arbitrariness. But it was also a period rich in human solidarity. Many people have preserved the dignity that characterized, helping persecuted, supporting convicted or accepting organs and widows, despite the horror in general. Others, opted for voluntary exile to live a less oppressive way.

VR – Have You got some kind of militancy or political action that would serve as a pretext for your removal?

JMM – In my youth, I had operations in the student movement. I participated in the political struggles of the time, aligning me left and worked with the first popular government of this country, led by Miguel Arraes in the state of Pernambuco. Always we have kept open and frank dialogue with my colleagues from the Communist and Catholic youths. But by opting for the academic career in the field of journalism, I thought it was not compatible exert political militancy. Abide, of course, true to the ideals of my youth, but away of party or community chores. I never hesitated, however, as a citizen, to defend frankly what I wanted for my company and for my people. All this is contained in the books I wrote. Consequently, I think I was unjustly persecuted by the military government as it ever did proselytizing in the classroom, or induce my students to think the same way I did. I always respect the thoughts of others, even if they disagreed with them head-on.

VR – What was, in its assessment, the biggest loss suffered by the USP with the removal / purge of the 1960s?

JMM – The largest losses were determined by the spacing of great thinkers such as Florestan Fernandes, who failed to daily contribute to the formation of new intellectuals. But it was also a period that tested the third generation of thinkers inside USP who were forced to build new horizons without denying the legacy of the masters who preceded them.

VR – In personal terms, how did you face the period in which you needed to leave an activity to which dedicated much of yourself?

JMM – Really, when I opted for work in RDIDP at USP, I made a conscious choice of academic life. Stop it abruptly, when I was in full intellectual maturity (ph D), was dramatic. But as I come from a rustic culture (Northeastern), soon learned to generate resistance mechanisms to survive with dignity. Therefore, endeavored to me to found a scientific society – INTERCOM – where I could continue the interrupted projects in USP, they add other colleagues, who had also lost their workspaces in their home institutions.

VR – After leaving USP, did you left the country?

JMM – Despite being invited to work in other countries, thanks to the international solidarity of colleagues and friends, I decided to resist peacefully staying here. Trailed by the exile of the way in my own land.

VR – How Did you survive these difficult years?

JMM – I went to work in private universities and returned to the practice of journalism.

VR – How was your return?

JMM – My return happened after the amnesty of 1979. A movement led by Prof. Maria do Socorro Nobrega brought back the disenfranchised of the Department of Journalism. Our workspace had been practically dismantled, for here remained heroically only school alumni, still inexperienced from an

academic point of view. But they were acquiring their own skills and preserving the initial guidelines of Journalism and Publishing courses, which mingled empiricism and criticism. After my return, then I was summoned by my colleagues to resume the leadership of the Department in an attempt to rebuild our identity and recreate working conditions that resented students. It was a very rich period in which we operate in intellectual joint effort regime in a climate of great debates, but very productive endeavor. At the end of the 1980s, I was received by colleagues throughout the unit I apply a director of ECA. Even it having been outside the university throughout the election year (1988) because he was conducting research in Europe, I accepted the challenge and I have gained a great victory, I was voted by the vast majority of teachers and students. I was the ECA director with the mandate for the quadrennium 1989-1992, performing an educational upgrade project and investigative internationalization and creating channels of dialogue with society, including professional corporations. After this mission, I realized that it was time to leave for new intellectual adventures, after 34 years of public service. I retired in 1993, at the invitation of the Methodist University of São Paulo and at the same time, encouraged by UNESCO to deploy there a Chair of Communication, which I remain up to this day.

VR – Is it possible to do an analysis of what were those years for you and your colleagues also hit by acts of exception? What were your biggest personal injury? And professionals?

JMM – I am an optimistic person who holds no grudges, grievances or put in the refrigerator. Therefore, those moments of embarrassment are the past. I hope they do not happen again in any ideological sign. Brazil has experienced a rich democratic strengthening period of which I have been participating with enthusiasm and hope. So, what happened, happened. The lessons of the past can not be forgotten. But should not function as handbrake able to prevent advances and achievements. Then I had losses, also I had gains. To live is to fight. The Good Fight is precisely in building utopias.

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