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## The Distorted Truth: Ustra's Legacy in a Bolsonarist Brazil

### Abstract:

This work draws a connection between the authoritarian conservatism of the Brazilian military dictatorship and the ideology present during Jair Bolsonaro's administration, while shedding light on the role of the secretive and feared intelligence and repression apparatus in Brazil during the military regime, known as DOI-CODI. It analyzes the autobiographical work "A Verdade Sufocada" by Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, former commander of DOI-CODI, and its influence on contemporary far-right ideology. Additionally, it addresses the media's contribution to the formation of social memory and forgetting, especially concerning Brazil's dictatorial past. The study demonstrates how certain elements of the dictatorship, such as nationalism, conservatism, and persecution of leftist groups, are still present in the ideological movements of the New Right. The analysis offers a critical perspective on Bolsonarism and its legacy stemming from a period of human rights violations and the suppression of democratic freedoms.

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## Introduction

The aim of this work is to trace a continuum between the authoritarian conservatism that prevailed during the corporate-military dictatorship (1964-1989), as expressed in the Doutrina de Segurança Nacional (National Security Doctrine), also known as DSN, and the ideology of Bolsonarism. To achieve this, we will analyze the autobiographical work "A Verdade Sufocada: a história que a esquerda não quer que o Brasil conheça" ("The Suffocated Truth: The History That the Left-wing Doesn't Want Brazil to Know", in a free translation) by Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, former commander of the Destacamento de Operações de Informações - Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna (Department of Information Operations - Internal Defense Operations Center, in a free translation), also known as DOI-CODI, the agency responsible for repression during the military regime in Brazil. This analysis seeks to understand how these ideas and narratives have influenced Brazilian society up to the present day.

It will be of particular interest to explore the discursive similarities between the political movement led by Jair Bolsonaro and the ideological foundations that characterized the dictatorship era, especially those associated with Ustra, as documented in the military document "Orvil" and disseminated by the organization "Terrorismo Nunca Mais" ("Terrorism Never Again", in a free translation), also known as Ternuma<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, we will analyze the media's role during the dictatorship era, with a specific focus on Brazil's largest and most influential television network, Globo Network (commonly known as Rede Globo), and its affiliated newspaper, O Globo. This examination will explore how these outlets either directly supported the dictatorship or contributed to its agenda through acts of omission.

## The Suffocated Truth

Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra served as a colonel in the Brazilian Army during the military dictatorship and became known for his involvement in torture and political repression organizations during that period (Godoy, 2014). His book "A Verdade Sufocada" (The Suffocated Truth), for many scholars, is regarded as historical revisionism and considered one of the most significant conspiracy theories propagated by Brazilian military figures (Rocha, 2021; Prado, 2021; Lacerda, 2019; Figueiredo, 2009). The work presents a distorted narrative of the military dictatorship in Brazil, portraying it favorably and disputing accusations of human rights violations, torture, and abuses committed during that time. The author seeks to defend the actions of the military and criticize the resistance movement against the dictatorship, positioning himself as a champion of the "truth" that, according to him, had been suppressed by the left. In the preface, Ustra characterizes resistance movements against the dictatorship as "terrorist organizations."

*"In this book, I recount how the Security Agencies defeated [the terrorist organizations]. Regrettably, in the armed struggle, we had around 500 victims on both sides, a relatively small number compared to other countries in Latin America that also faced terrorism. Besides the accounts, I aim to debunk myths, hoaxes, and lies disseminated to manipulate public opinion and to discredit and demoralize those who emerged victorious."<sup>2</sup>*

Previously, in the dedication, Ustra outlines his purpose with the book

*"I dedicate this book to the youth who did not live through those times and who only know the distorted history presented by the losers of yesterday, many of whom hold positions in universities, newspapers, radio and television stations, and relevant positions in public organizations. I dedicate it to those who are the future of the new Brazil. They are pure in spirit and intention, and I often see them exploited in their*

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<sup>1</sup> Ternuma's YouTube Channel. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TERNUMA> . Accessed on July 14, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Ustra, Carlos Alberto Brilhante: A Verdade Sufocada: a história que a esquerda não quer que o Brasil conheça. 6

*good faith. Many were used, manipulated, and radicalised during the dark revolutionary period of urban and rural guerrilla warfare. I am concerned to see them influenced by pamphlets that take on the appearance of contemporary history and are presented to them as the ultimate truth. The future of a country cannot be built on lies.*<sup>3</sup>

During the reading of "A Verdade Sufocada," it's possible to discern Ustra's concern regarding the memory of the military regime era and the reputation of the Brazilian Army. Human rights violations during that period had already been—and continue to be—revealed by numerous historians and intellectuals (Figueiredo, 2009; Arns, 1985; Dreifuss, 1981; Reis, 2014; Godoy, 2014; Gaspari, 2002; Schwarcz, 2015), shedding light on aspects of Brazil's recent history that left an enduring impact on society and politics. However, Ustra's concern is well-founded. French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2007) underscores the uninterrupted relationship between memory, history, and forgetting, emphasizing that we are continually engaged in a clash of narratives over time. It is crucial to understand what is abandoned and what endures. This reflection prompts us to consider how a society shapes its future based on the reality and narratives it reconstructs from the past (RICŒUR, 2007).

We clearly see this attempt in "A Verdade Sufocada." By categorizing the figures of the military dictatorship as "winners" and "losers," Ustra simplifies the layers of impact and meaning of this complex period in Brazil. Suggesting that the official version is distorted by the "losers of yesterday" who hold influential positions in society, he expresses concern about influencing Brazil's future with a narrative based on his perspective, seeking to deny or discredit accounts that contradict his view. Ricoeur (2007) conceptualizes this process as "manipulated memory".

*"The ideologization of memory is facilitated by the diverse tools provided by the process of narrative configuration. Strategies of forgetting are intricately woven into this configurational process, allowing for the possibility of narrating events differently, omitting details, shifting emphases, and reconfiguring the central figures and their roles. What is happening here is a subtle form of forgetfulness, stemming from the disempowerment of social actors in narrating their own stories."*<sup>4</sup>

It is crucial to highlight that Ustra was officially acknowledged as a torturer by the judiciary in 2008<sup>5</sup>. However, he was only convicted for the death of one of his victims in 2012, because of the investigations conducted by the National Truth Commission (Comissão Nacional da Verdade or CNV). The CNV was a government initiative to investigate and elucidate human rights violations that took place during the dictatorship period (Sarkis, 2019).

## DOI-CODI and Project Orvil

Godoy (2014) wrote a biography about the DOI-CODI, describing Ustra's *modus operandi* against those who opposed the military regime:

*"For him, it was not possible to 'fight terrorism within the framework of ordinary laws, which are efficient for the common citizen,' mainly because the 'terrorists were not ordinary citizens.' Consequently, in the so-called revolutionary war, there was no way to win it in a manner consistent with what the military had*

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<sup>3</sup> Ustra, Carlos Alberto Brilhante: A Verdade Sufocada: a história que a esquerda não quer que o Brasil conheça, 2007. 3

<sup>4</sup> RICŒUR, Paul. A memória, a história, o esquecimento. Campinas, 2007 455

<sup>5</sup> As stated in the judgment available on the website of the National Truth Commission of the State of São Paulo. Available, in Portuguese, at: <http://comissaodaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/upload/sentenca-ustra-merlino.pdf> Accessed on July 13, 2023.

*learned from conventional warfare, that is, by adhering to the Geneva Convention and its rules of inviolability and treatment of captured enemies".<sup>6</sup>*

Nevertheless, in his work "A Verdade Sufocada," Ustra never touches upon the subject of torture. He doesn't deny the existence of human rights violations but rather opposes access to documents that provide evidence of these violations, as exemplified by the publication of the book "Brasil: Nunca Mais" (Brazil: Never Again)<sup>7</sup>.

*"The team behind the book "Brasil: Nunca Mais," armed with this valuable documentation, conducted their own screening, selectively emphasizing what suited their agenda, publishing what interested them, distorting facts, and conveniently disregarding what didn't align with their narrative. They chose not to acknowledge acts of terrorism, extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, and murders committed by the left. These deliberate omissions were made to prevent the nation from learning about the atrocities committed by those who took up arms with the aim of imposing a communist dictatorship in Brazil. Today, despite their defeat, they portray themselves as "heroes," with many holding influential positions in the government. A mere glance at the work of D. Evaristo Arns reveals his assertion that the left's radicalism simply did not exist".<sup>8</sup>*

The work "Brasil Nunca Mais" (Brazil: Never Again) was the result of a research effort involving members of the Archdiocese of São Paulo and the Federal Justice system, led by Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns. It consists of a compilation of documents and reports produced by defense lawyers during the dictatorship era, detailing cases of human rights violations and torture committed by the military regime against political prisoners. These documents were part of a clandestinely gathered archive, as the military regime censored and persecuted any evidence of abuses committed by its agents. The book played an essential role in Brazil's democratization process, encouraging the pursuit of justice and reparations for regime victims. It also served as a reference for other initiatives aimed at denouncing and investigating human rights violations in the country, marking a milestone in the fight for justice and the fundamental rights of citizens (Arns, 1985; Figueiredo, 2009; Rocha, 2021).

On the other hand, Ustra's attempt to alter the narrative of the dictatorship's horrors relies on repetitive arguments without solid data to support his claims. To strengthen his argument of holding "terrorists" responsible for the regime's misfortunes, Ustra invariably resorts to a single source, a compilation of military documents spanning over a thousand pages, known as Orvil. The Orvil project, a play on the word "livro" (book) spelled backwards, is described by Ustra as "a meticulous work in which legal proceedings, inquiries, and documents were studied and analyzed" by the military.

Indeed, Orvil represents a document crafted by the Brazilian Armed Forces, serving the purpose of justifying the 1964 military coup. Although the project was formulated between 1985 and 1988, its publication was prohibited at that time. It saw the light of day more than two decades later, coinciding with the ascendance of the New Right in Brazil (Pedreti, 2021; Figueiredo, 2009). This extensive work, organized into two volumes and divided into four segments, delves into various periods during which the left purportedly aimed to seize power. Under the broad label of "communists," it indiscriminately encompasses a range of groups and social movements that resisted the authoritarian rule of the Armed Forces, often suspected of aligning with significant

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<sup>6</sup> GODOY, Marcelo. A Casa da Vovó: Uma Biografia do Doi-Codi (1969-1991), o Centro de Sequestro, Tortura e Morte da Ditadura Militar. São Paulo : Alameda, 2014. 101

<sup>7</sup> "Brasil: Nunca Mais" (Brazil: Never Again) stands as a seminal work and human rights initiative in Brazil. Published in 1985 during the nation's shift from military dictatorship to democracy, the book holds significant importance for its pivotal role in unveiling human rights violations and illuminating the atrocities committed throughout the military regime's reign (1964-1985). At the forefront of this critical endeavor was Dom Evaristo Arns, the Archbishop of São Paulo, who emerged as a prominent champion of human rights during the oppressive military rule.

<sup>8</sup> Ustra, Carlos Alberto Brilhante: A Verdade Sufocada: a história que a esquerda não quer que o Brasil conheça, 2007. 10

capital interests. Orvil meticulously details information about these groups, offering a perspective characterized by military, ideological, and historical revisionism (Figueiredo, 2009; Rocha, 2021).

*"Viewed through a powerful magnifying lens, the reality was distorted and transformed into a frightening specter that haunted history, dragging along four chains: 1) Anyone who had been against the military regime was leftist; 2) Leftists are communists; 3) Communists are dangerous; 4) Through the International Communist Movement (better known as ICM), Moscow, Beijing, and Cuba would never cease in their efforts to lay their hairy hands on Brazil. With anti-communism as its backdrop, Orvil ventured into misguided definitions. For instance, the 1964 coup was not a coup but rather a "democratic revolution" (FIGUEIREDO, 2009, p. 78)".<sup>9</sup>*

The apprehension of communist advancement may have held significance during the 1960s. The post-war era had cemented the rivalry between two major powers with contrasting ideologies: the United States and the Soviet Union, propelling both sides into an arms race and a pursuit of international alliances. However, in contemporary times, following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, amidst a technological and informational revolution, the emergence of the information society, and the indisputable triumph of capitalism as an ideological-economic system, invoking the specter of the "Red terror" is no longer coherent as a real threat. Nevertheless, anti-communism continues to be a prominent tool in the rhetoric of the global far-right, which deploys this narrative to mobilize followers and secure popular backing. One potential explanation for this phenomenon can also be found in Ricœur (2007), within the context of what he terms the "dispossession of social actors."

*"This dispossession does not exist without a secret complicity, which turns forgetting into a semi-passive and semi-active behavior, as seen in the act of forgetful flight, an expression of bad faith, and its avoidance strategy driven by an obscure desire not to be informed, not to investigate the wrongs committed by the environment surrounding the citizen, in short, a willful ignorance (RICŒUR, 2007, p. 455, emphasis added)".<sup>10</sup>*

## The Involvement of Globo Network

This process of forgetting, driven by the desire not to know, involves various social mechanisms, with a key emphasis on the significant role played by the Brazilian press in fostering a form of collective amnesia about the dictatorship. A particularly noteworthy example is the Globo Television Network, a company that gained nationwide recognition during the dictatorship and became the voice of the military regime, as analyzed by Bolaño and Melo (2015):

*"The political and cultural roles of Jornal Nacional in Brazilian television are evident. Politically, it served as the starting point for the broadcaster's project to establish itself as hegemonic in the television market and as the primary news program responsible for disseminating official information during the military regime. Culturally, it introduced a new temporality into everyday life, as from that point on, Brazilian viewers came to expect daily, at the same time, information and images about events in Brazil and the world".<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Figueiredo, Lucas. Olho por olho: Os livros secretos da ditadura. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2009. 78

<sup>10</sup> RICŒUR, Paul. A memória, a história, o esquecimento. Campinas, 2007. 455

<sup>11</sup> BOLAÑO, César; MELO, Paulo Victor. Luz, câmera, concentração: 50 anos da Rede Globo e a hegemonia no Mercado Brasileiro de Televisão. In: XXXVIII Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação - INTERCOM, 37, 2015, Rio de Janeiro. Anais do Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação. Rio de Janeiro. Proceedings of the Brazilian Congress of Communication Sciences. Rio de Janeiro. Available at: <https://www.portalintercom.org.br/anais/nacional2015/resumos/R10-4005-1.pdf> Accessed on August 17, 2023.

It is essential to remember the editorial written by Roberto Marinho, the founder and owner of the Globo Organization, which praised the military dictatorship and was published in the newspaper *O Globo*<sup>12</sup>. Just before the reopening in 1984, the company reiterated its support and lauded supposed economic and social achievements of the regime:

*"There is no memory that here, or in any other country, a regime of force, consolidated for more than ten years, has used its own discretion to self-limit, extinguishing exceptional powers, granting amnesty to adversaries, fostering new party frameworks, in full freedom of the press. Undoubtedly, this is the greatest achievement of the 1964 Revolution".<sup>13</sup>*

Only 30 years later, driven by the wave of protests that swept across the country in 2013, the company publicly acknowledged that its support for the dictatorship had been a mistake. Despite this belated apology, one must question the genuine commitment of Rede Globo – and the overwhelming majority of media outlets that endorsed the 1964 coup – to rectify the collective memory of a nation during a period marked by such grave violations. Considering the erosion of collective memory during the dictatorship, Orlandi (2020) suggests that the process of forgetting was both compulsory and meticulously orchestrated:

*"These excluded, silenced meanings could not and cannot acquire significance to the extent that our entire history does not correspond to a possible discourse. They were not socially constructed in a way that would allow us to identify with our positions. Similarly, the acts of torture and their political consequences remain politically unacknowledged. Every time we vote, even if we don't consciously think about it, the fact that Brazil is a country that tortures political dissidents is part of our memory and our political actions. Yet, it has not yet received its political articulation. It remains outside of memory, like a border that confines us within the limits of these meanings".<sup>14</sup>*

Sarkis (2019) investigates the sources of information and the journalistic apparatus employed in covering the National Truth Commission (CNV) and is taken aback by the deliberate process of suppression used to prevent the media from disseminating the findings of the investigation, particularly amidst the country's upheaval during the establishment of the CNV:

*"Throughout the investigation, the disputes surrounding forgetfulness in all its dimensions become glaringly clear. A forgetfulness aimed at silencing voices capable of questioning the terms of the agreement surrounding the approval of the Amnesty Law. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the backdrop of political and social chaos that erupted in Brazil following the protests of June 2013, a period during which the CNV was in operation. Since then, we have seen the 2016 impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, the controversial judicial process resulting in the imprisonment of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as part of the Lava Jato Operation, both from the Workers' Party, the largest representative of the Brazilian left in the present day. This process culminated in the election of Jair Bolsonaro as President of the Republic, an extreme-right politician who glorifies the '64 Revolution and hails torturers as national heroes".<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> As seen in this facsimile of the newspaper cover dated April 2, 1964. Available, in Portuguese, at <https://memoria.oglobo.globo.com/erros-e-acusacoes-falsas/apoio-ao-golpe-de-64-foi-um-erro-12695226> Accessed on August 15, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> As seen in this facsimile of the newspaper cover from October 7, 1984. Available at: <https://memoria.oglobo.globo.com/erros-e-acusacoes-falsas/apoio-ao-golpe-de-64-foi-um-erro-12695226> Accessed on August 15, 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Orlandi, Eni Pulcinelli. Maio de 1968: Os silêncios da memória. In: ACHARD, P. et al. Papel da memória. Campinas, São Paulo: Pontes Editores, 2007. 63

<sup>15</sup> SARKIS, Fernanda. "As marcas da tortura sou eu" – Análise das fontes de informação na cobertura jornalística da Comissão Nacional da Verdade pela Folha de São Paulo. Dissertation (Master's in Communication Sciences). Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto. Porto. 2019. 115

Sarkis (2019) emphasizes that the attention given by the press to the work of the National Truth Commission was often insufficient and selective, which contributed to obscuring some of the relevant findings and discussions about Brazil's authoritarian past:

*"The different aspects of a truth commission were not communicated to the population in a balanced manner, where the right to memory was guaranteed, but the issues related to the restructuring of state institutions inherited from the dictatorial era, as outlined in the "recommendations" within the CNV's final report, received minimal coverage".<sup>16</sup>*

The deliberate omission of media coverage on issues related to the military dictatorship, combined with an inadequately resolved amnesty process, allowed Ustra's ideology and that of other proponents of the dictatorship to persist within Brazilian society. This distorted narrative found a foothold in shaping collective memory, thereby helping the rise of the far-right over the past decade. Figures like Bolsonaro have glorified the nation's authoritarian history. Jair Bolsonaro, a former military officer who positioned himself as anti-establishment, capitalized on widespread anti-PT sentiment and, through an extensive disinformation campaign<sup>17</sup>, emerged victorious in the 2018 presidential elections (Santos, 2018).

## Ustra and Bolsonarism

The connection between these two historical figures – Bolsonaro and Ustra – is not unwarranted nor superficial. Bolsonaro honored the colonel at a pivotal moment in Brazilian politics: the impeachment vote of then-President Dilma Rousseff:

*"They lost in '64, they lost again in 2016. For the family and the innocence of children in the classroom, which the PT [Workers' Party] never had. Against communism, for our freedom, against the Forum of São Paulo, in memory of Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, the fear of Dilma Rousseff. [...] For a Brazil above all and for God above all, my vote is yes".<sup>18</sup>*

Unsurprisingly, the book "Suffocated Truth" foreshadows Bolsonaro's actions and intentions. The concluding passage of the book unequivocally underscores the ideological affinity between these two military figures:

*"Unfortunately, it has been an uphill battle, ignored by the media and unknown to society. And in the National Congress, who remembered our deceased? Who raised their voice to advocate for equal treatment of the deceased on both sides? As far as I know, only two deputies had the courage to do so. Congressman Jair Bolsonaro and Congressman Wilson Leite Passos. [...] We will continue to honor them and fight to ensure that their names are respected".<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> SARKIS, Fernanda. "As marcas da tortura sou eu" – Análise das fontes de informação na cobertura jornalística da Comissão Nacional da Verdade pela Folha de São Paulo. Dissertation (Master's in Communication Sciences). Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto. Porto. 2019. 113

<sup>17</sup> As seen in articles from The Guardian and The New York Times. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/18/brazil-jair-bolsonaro-whatsapp-fake-news-campaign> and <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/19/technology/whatsapp-brazil-presidential-election.html> Accessed on May 22, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Text excerpted from the report on the Poder 360 portal. Available at: <https://www.poder360.com.br/governo/ha-5-anos-camara-abria-impeachment-de-dilma-e-bolsonaro-louvava-ustra/> Accessed on July 13, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Ustra, Carlos Alberto Brilhante: A Verdade Sufocada: a história que a esquerda não quer que o Brasil conheça, 2007. 523



Entre várias personalidades presentes, destacam-se, ao centro, os deputados federais **Jair Bolsonaro** (RJ) e **Alberto Fraga** (DF)

Figure 1 - Picture extracted from "A Verdade Sufocada" shows Jair Bolsonaro

Consequently, the lineage of Brazilian authoritarianism becomes strikingly evident, propelled by a deliberate system of forgetfulness echoing the ideology of the Brazilian Armed Forces. This lineage extends from the start of the National Security Doctrine (DSN)<sup>20</sup> and the consolidation of Orvil to the political platform championed by Jair Bolsonaro. Rocha (2021) takes this connection a step further by directly tying the DSN and Orvil to the political ideology of Bolsonarism. The author references Bolsonaro's declaration that there was a need to undertake "a task that the military regime failed to do: the elimination of about 30,000 individuals, starting with FHC," in reference to former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso<sup>21</sup>.

*"The words loosely arranged by the retired captain, in a syntax that wavers but doesn't collapse, embody a draconian doctrine and a delirious interpretation of Brazilian history: on one side, the National Security Doctrine (NSD), on the other, the Orvil. As one can discern, these are distinct elements of the Bolsonaro-led cultural war. Whether knowingly or not, the ascent of a right-wing youth movement in Brazil has embraced both the NSD and the conspiratorial foundation of the Orvil".<sup>22</sup>*

This ideological connection between an authoritarian past and the rise of conservatism and the far right in the present becomes even clearer when we analyze the non-governmental organization "Terrorismo Nunca Mais" (Terrorism Never Again), or Ternuma:

*"In the 1990s, Ustra joined other military and civilian sympathizers of the regime established in 1964 in the non-governmental organization "Terrorism Never Again," or Ternuma. This was a response to one of the most prominent human rights organizations in the country, the 'Tortura Nunca Mais' [Torture Never Again Group] ".<sup>23</sup>*

Upon the establishment of a website<sup>24</sup>, the group started "the publication of pro-dictatorship and anti-left articles" (Figueiredo, 2009, p. 117). According to Rocha (2019, p. 247), they also made public a digital copy of

<sup>20</sup> The National Security Doctrine (DSN) was a military and political strategy developed by the Brazilian Armed Forces during the period of military dictatorship, which commenced in 1964 and persisted until 1985. This doctrine was rooted in the belief that the nation faced internal threats from supposed communist elements seeking to undermine the country's social and political order.

<sup>21</sup> The interview, given by Bolsonaro on a TV channel in May 1999, is available at the following YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-tkPPwT9Xw> Accessed on July 13, 2023.

<sup>22</sup> ROCHA, J. C. C. Guerra cultural e retórica do ódio: crônicas de um Brasil pós-político. 1ª Edição. Goiânia: Editora e Livraria Caminhos, 2021. 225

<sup>23</sup> GODOY, Marcelo. A Casa da Vovó: Uma Biografia do Doi-Codi (1969-1991), o Centro de Sequestro, Tortura e Morte da Ditadura Militar. São Paulo : Alameda, 2014. 102

<sup>24</sup> The website is no longer available on the internet, but the group has created a YouTube channel. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TERNUMA> Accessed on July 14, 2023.



*Orvil* for the first time. Officially published in 2012 under the title "Orvil: Tentativas de Tomada do Poder" (Orvil: Attempts to Seize Power), this marked the book's inaugural circulation among the general public. Olavo de Carvalho, a central figure in Bolsonarism and in Brazilian conservatism (Teitelbaum, 2020), enthusiastically celebrated the launch of the portal:

*"Ternuma's website is more than just the reconstruction of omitted details by the media. It is a precious contribution to the recovery of the true historical perspective, stolen from Brazilian memory by Machiavellian manipulators, frivolous opportunists, and conscienceless chatterers. You might ask me if this contribution comes from the military? Well, from whom else could it come?"*<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusion

This work has presented an analysis of the historical evolution of reactionary discourse in Brazil. It has traced a connecting thread between a dark period in Brazilian history, marked by the military-corporate dictatorship, and the metamorphosis of this discourse, which has endured and reemerged with renewed vigor even in the post-democratization era. Throughout this article, we have delved into the ideological underpinnings of Bolsonarism, revealing its profound connections with elements of authoritarian conservatism, notably the National Security Doctrine and the prominent figure of Ustra.

Upon closer examination of the discursive parallels, including the glorification of a particular brand of nationalism (in reality, subservient to the United States), the staunch defense of conservative values, and a confrontational rhetoric against leftist ideologies, it becomes evident that these ideas continue to exert a significant influence on Brazil's current political landscape. Drawing inspiration from Ricoeur's theories, we've come to recognize the pivotal role played by Brazil's collective memory in shaping these enduring authoritarian narratives, whose roots can be unequivocally traced back to the nation's dictatorial past.

By analyzing Ustra's narratives, scrutinizing the propagation of these ideologies through various ideological conduits like Ternuma, and assessing the inadequacies of mainstream media in effectively countering these authoritarian narratives and ideas originating from the dictatorial era, it becomes starkly apparent just how enduring this ideological influence remains in the collective consciousness. Consequently, it is of paramount importance to alert society to the perils of authoritarianism and the manipulation of historical memory, while striving to glean valuable lessons from past mistakes—provided there is still time.

When faced with the problematic origins of authoritarian discourse, we must muster unwavering determination to avert the repetition of history's darkest chapters. Charting a course towards a just and inclusive future needs an enlightened collective memory—one capable of steering us toward a fairer, more equitable society. The time has come for us to scrutinize our past through a critical lens, thereby enabling us to stride forward with confidence and resolve in the construction of a genuinely democratic Brazil.

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<sup>25</sup> CARVALHO, Olavo de. *Militares e a Memória Nacional*, 2000. Available, in Portuguese, at: <https://olavodecarvalho.org/tag/ternuma/> . Accessed on July 13, 2023. Online.

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