

Memórias Reveladas, the Reference Center on Political Struggles in Brazil
(1964-1985)

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On May 13, 2009, the Brazilian government created the Reference Center on Political Struggles in Brazil (1964-1985) – *Memórias Reveladas* (Revealed Memories) in order to encourage conservation and promote the dissemination of information contained in records referring to the political struggles waged in the country during the military dictatorship period.

During the period in which it lasted (21 years), the Brazilian dictatorship established lasting directions and administrative procedures for the performance of the Brazilian State and its forms of decision. In the same way, it strictly delimited the actions of the Brazilian society, formed cadres in the academy and established procedures for the bureaucracy and for the country's security forces. Its marks are mostly visible in large infrastructure projects, but also in less ostensible elements, such as the conformation of the Brazilian public service, in the highly concentrate spectrum of the Brazilian media and in the way the State produces and manages the information produced or accumulated by it.

Memórias Reveladas emerged from the realization that memory is a public good, which constitutes the basis of the process of social political and cultural identity building of a country. Currently, the right to memory and truth is recognized by experts and multilateral organizations as an integral part of human rights and thus the state must ensure the

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preservation and sharing of archival heritage of public interest, which implies also in identify and protect sets of records currently unknown.

Administered by the Arquivo Nacional (National Archives – Brazil), the central body of the Records Management System (SIGA) and subordinated to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Memórias Reveladas has enabled, in a pioneer way in the Brazilian archives administration area, the establishment of links between individuals, institutions and entities, public and private, integrated through a data exchange network, information and digital representations of records relevant to study of the military dictatorship period. This network, called "National Network of Cooperation and Archival Information – Memórias Reveladas", already has 178 entities and partner institutions throughout Brazil and even abroad. In the United States, we supported Brown University in the development of the Opening the Archives project.

Currently, the holdings of the military dictatorship period under the guard of the Arquivo Nacional, both at the headquarters of the institution in Rio de Janeiro and as at its Regional Coordination in the Federal District, is constituted of about 13 million sheets of textual records, 1 million and 200 thousand photographs, 220 thousand microfiches and 110 rolls of microfilms, beyond others record types as, for example, maps and film records. From January 2006 to June 2017, the Arquivo Nacional attended to 23.200 requests to consult the holdings of dictatorship's records that resulted in hundreds of thousands of copies of records delivered to applicants (STAMPA; RODRIGUES, 2020a).

That impressive documental volume includes the official records produced and accumulated by several bodies and participating agencies of the National System of Information and Counter Information (SISNI), as for example the holdings of the National Intelligence Service of Brazil (SNI) – the Brazilian dictatorship “CIA”-, the National Security Council (CSN), the General Committee of Investigation (CGI), the Center of Foreign Information (CIEX/Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the Air Force Information Center (CISA) and the Division of Intelligence of the Federal Police (Brazilian Federal District, Minas Gerais and Paraná).

Document example - National Information Service (SNI)

SC-1 - 1231/83

CONFIDENCIAL

032290 83

INFORME Nº **1236** /30 / AC / 83

DATA : 30 MAR 83

ASSUNTO : ESQUEMA DE IMPRENSA DE LEONEL BRIZOLA.

REFERÊNCIA: INFE Nº 1231/30/AC/83 SE 15

AVALIAÇÃO : B-3

DIFUSÃO : SC-1 - SE-08

ORIGEM : SC-3

ANEXO : "PASQUIM", NÚMERO ESPECIAL (PARA A SC-1).

A typical confidential document header produced by SNI. In this case, the SNI was investigating the connection of opposition leader Leonel Brizola with journalists. (Archival Notation: BR_DFANBSB_V8_MIC_GNC_AAA_83032290_d0001de0001)

This is a unique set of documents in South America, both for its enormous length and also for its content, which allows us today a glimpse on the behavior of the immense machine of internal surveillance and repression put into operation by the Brazilian military dictatorship. In recognition of the importance of this documentation, in May 2011, the project “Information and Counter-Information Network of the Military Regime in Brazil (1964-1985)”, which comprised this documentation and was presented by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was approved by the Unesco’s International Advisory Committee of the Memory of the World Program – MoW (STAMPA; RODRIGUES, 2020b).

These archives are available for consultation, taking as parameters the release of records after some period of time after what the information was declassified and also in accordance with the Brazilian law on access to information (Lei 12.527/2011).

Currently, all the textual documentations is digitized and with optical character recognition (OCR) available for public access at the Memórias Reveladas portal <www.memoriasreveladas.gov.br> or directly at <<http://pesquisa.memoriasreveladas.gov.br>>. It is only necessary to make a brief registration in the Revealed Memories Database or use your National Archives of Brazil user information (username and password).

Revealed Memories Database

The screenshot shows the website for 'Banco de Dados Memórias Reveladas' (Revealed Memories Database) under the 'Arquivo Nacional' (National Archives) and 'Ministério da Justiça' (Ministry of Justice). The page features a search bar with 'Termo:' and 'Fundo:' fields, a 'Pesquisar' button, and a grid of document thumbnails. Below the thumbnails, there is a descriptive paragraph in Portuguese and four specific document examples with their respective fund names: 'Fundo Serviço Nacional de Informações - SNI', 'Fundo Serviço de Censura de Diversões Públicas - RJ', 'Fundo Arquivo Público do Rio Grande do Norte', and 'Fundo Arquivo Público do Ceará'. The footer includes the 'Arquivo Nacional' logo and 'GOVERNO FEDERAL'.

Available at <http://pesquisa.memoriasreveladas.gov.br>

The Revealed Memories Database is one of the main tools of integration of the Brazilian National Networking of Cooperation and Archival Information – Revealed Memories. The Database also provides information on other public and private holdings relating to the military regime and, in many cases, the digital copy of the records.

Agreements were signed between the Union and state governments, custodians of the holdings of the military period, seeking to integrate these documents to the Revealed Memories Database. In order to support these activities, the Cultural Association of the Arquivo Nacional (ACAN) obtained approval under the National Commission on Cultural Incentives (CNIC) of the Ministry of Culture of Brazil, “Pronac 07-6040 – Memórias Reveladas”, a project encouraged by Rouanet Law in the patronage mode. The project has the technical management of the Arquivo Nacional and allowed the raising of funds to support the preservation, organization and dissemination of holdings of the Internal Security Agency (DOPS) in the states of Alagoas, Ceará, Maranhão, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte, Sergipe, Goiás, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul.

Many other digitization projects have been carried out from 2009 and 2016 and recently, in 2018, more than one million pages of textual documents from the Brazilian states of Pernambuco and Goiás were scanned and fed into the database. It was the last major digitization project before the current Brazilian government withdrew all financial resources for these activities.

As we pointed out before, the size of these collections are huge, however, these collections are also notable for its gaps, especially with regards to documents that may lead to the clarification of serious human rights violations practiced during the dictatorship period, such as torture, murder and forced disappearances.

We cannot characterize these gaps as coincidences or accidents. As the French historian Le Goff (1988) once said, more than impartial records of time, archival documents are a selection, not random, of traces of the past. In this sense, subjective criteria and political conveniences guide not only their production and accumulation, but also their destruction or concealment.

In order to discuss this and other topics *Memórias Reveladas* also promoted or supported dozens of events that involved discussion and reflection on human rights and access to public information in Brazil, as are examples the National Seminar Archives of Dictatorship and Democracy and the International Seminar on Access to Information, both in 2010. In 2011 were organized the Seminar “The Importance of POLOP in the Contemporary History of Brazil” and the “International Seminar The World of Workers and their Archives – Memory and Resistance”. The purpose of these events was to discuss how to expand access to documents of the military dictatorship in the custody of public and private institutions.

The Reference Center was also invited by the Institute of Support to the Peoples of the Araguaia (Instituto de Apoio aos Povos do Araguaia – IAPA) to attend the III Latin-American Seminar of Amnesty and Human Rights – Manoel da Conceição, which occurred in Brasília in 2009. On that occasion, was signed a partnership between the Arquivo Nacional and IAPA to record testimonies of peasants who live in the region of Araguaia Guerrilla. In all, 16 interviews were recorded by the Arquivo Nacional totaling over 20 hours of testimony. The resulting material is an impressive and moving record about the Araguaia Guerrilla movement and political repression in Brazil.

Another initiative of *Memórias Reveladas* was to enhance the production of studies, researches and reflections on topics of interest to the Reference Center. To this end, it was created the *Memórias Reveladas* Research Award, a biennial competition of monographs that use documentary sources relating to the military dictatorship period in Brazil and in which the winners had their works published by the Brazilian National Archives. The

Memórias Reveladas Award, however, was finalized by the current Brazilian government, which did not renew its public notice.

Example of books published by Memórias Reveladas



Available to buy at www.arquivonacional.gov.br (Portuguese Only)

All these initiatives and actions helped to consolidate between 2009 and 2019 the position of Memórias Reveladas as a milestone in the process of recovery and democratization of public archival heritage in Brazil.

The Reference Center promoted the strengthening of public and private archival institutions, transforming them into spaces of citizenship, able to receive and disseminate the official and private records of public interest on the repressive action of the Brazilian State in the 1980s and 1990s. In this sense, it is worth highlighting that the right to access public information, as a rule, is one of the major mechanisms of consolidation of democratic regimes and preventing the recurrence of massive violations of human rights, in accordance with the slogan of the Memórias Reveladas – “in order to not forget, so that it never happens again”.

We also cannot forget the observation by Marx and Engels (1998), originally written in 1846, that the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual

force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production. In the same sense, the memory of an epoch tends to be the memory of the class that has the economic, military and political power - hence the need to protect original documentary sources from any attempt at concealment or destruction.

PS: We'd love to help you with your inquiries and queries. Our contact information is below.

Site: www.memoriasreveladas.gov.br

E-mail: memoriasreveladas@an.gov.br

Postal Address: Praça da República ,173, Zip code: 20211-350, Rio de Janeiro – RJ, Brazil

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