



**“Novembrada” - Florianópolis, 1979 and the speeches of the military personnel:
discussing the narration about an episode of the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil¹**

A “Novembrada” – Florianópolis, 1979 e as falas de militares:
discutindo a narração sobre um episódio da ditadura civil-militar no Brasil

La “Novembrada” – Florianópolis, 1979 y los discursos de los militares:
discutiendo la narración de un episodio de la dictadura cívico-militar en Brasil

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Resumo

A Novembrada aconteceu em Florianópolis, em 30 de novembro de 1979, envolvendo protestos relacionados à visita do Presidente General Figueiredo. O artigo objetiva analisar as falas de militares sobre a Novembrada. A metodologia utiliza a História Oral, com a realização de entrevistas com quatro oficiais. A narração histórica auxilia na problematização das memórias, trazendo luzes sobre um episódio significativo no declínio do poder ditatorial. Os resultados discutem as memórias que focalizam os conflitos entre o Presidente e sua comitiva e os militantes, destacando o protagonismo do movimento estudantil. As análises consideram a visita fracassada, em função da crise da economia e da homenagem ao Marechal Floriano Peixoto, consideradas como fatores motivadores das insurgências populares. Como exemplo de resistência popular e impedindo o intento de popularizar a imagem de Figueiredo e do regime ditatorial, a Novembrada é um dos marcos no processo histórico de redemocratização do Brasil.

Palavras-chave: Narração histórica. Ditadura. Movimento estudantil. Florianópolis.

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Abstract

Novembrada took place in Florianópolis, on November 30, 1979, involving protests related to the visit of President General Figueiredo. The article aims to analyze the speeches of military personnel about Novembrada. Methodology uses Oral History, with interviews with four officers. The historical narration helps in the problematization of memories, shedding light on a significant episode in the decline of dictatorial power. The results discuss the memories that focus on the conflicts between the President and his entourage and the militants, highlighting the protagonism of the student movement. The analyzes consider the visit to be a failure, due to the economic crisis and the homage to Marshal Floriano Peixoto, considered as motivating factors for popular insurgencies. As an example of popular resistance and preventing the attempt to popularize the image of Figueiredo and the dictatorial regime, Novembrada is one of the milestones in the historic process of redemocratization in Brazil.

Keywords: Historical narration. Dictatorship. Student movement. Florianópolis.

Resumen

La Novembrada tuvo lugar en Florianópolis, el 30 de noviembre de 1979, con protestas relacionadas con la visita del Presidente General Figueiredo. El artículo tiene como objetivo analizar los discursos de los militares sobre la Novembrada. La metodología utiliza la Historia Oral, con entrevistas a cuatro oficiales. La narración histórica ayuda en la problematización de las memorias, arrojando luz sobre un episodio significativo en el declive del poder dictatorial. Los resultados discuten las memorias que se centran en los conflictos entre el Presidente y su séquito y los militantes, destacando el protagonismo del movimiento estudiantil. Los análisis consideran que la visita fue un fracaso, debido a la crisis económica y al homenaje al Mariscal Floriano Peixoto, considerados como factores motivadores de las insurgencias populares. Como ejemplo de resistencia popular y de prevención del intento de popularización de la imagen de Figueiredo y del régimen dictatorial, Novembrada es uno de los hitos del proceso histórico de redemocratización en Brasil.

Palabras clave: Narración histórica. Dictadura. Movimiento estudiantil. Florianópolis.

Introduction

By scrutinizing the set of 424 articles published in the Revista Brasileira de História de Educação in the interval between 2001 and 2018, Santos and Vechia (2019) demonstrate that, among the plurality of theoretical-methodological conceptions adopted by the authors, emerges and has been consolidating the epistemic construction called History of School Institutions, constituent of plural ways of examining schools. Thus, they propose a categorization that classifies 104 of those articles, through what are characterized as a historical writing that scrutinizes a profusion of school institutions, amid which the "social" category is underlined. Moreover, it is shown that this category is the most frequent in the research conducted and that it contemplates the study of the relationships between the various constructing subjects of the school, a context in which the students' actions appear linked to the creation of peaceful relations or conflict, unfolding the struggles for power:

Presenting the highest frequency in the documentary corpus, the social category is conceived as a factor for understanding the processes of development of institutions, uncovering their purposes, contributing to this nature the actions on the school reality that the subjects of the school construct. The teacher, the student, the administrator, as well as the staff, the members of the community – all create harmonious or conflicting relationships with the institution, staging power games on the scene. (SANTOS; VECHIA, 2019, p.5-6).

It means that there is an intimate and inseparable possibility of researching the historical forms of organization of school institutions, unveiling a set of relationships that amalgamate the social and political roles of the subjects living within the institution to the performance of agents outside the school. Based on this premise, this study also seeks to shed light on the students as protagonists, notably considering their performance in the "student movement" and the nature of historically constructed relationships with subjects representing military power.

In the collection Globalizing the student rebellion in the long '68 (PAYÁ RICO et al., 2018), whose title can be translated by "Globalizando a rebelião estudantil no longo 1968", there is a diversified treatment of student protest movements in countries such as Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Italy, France, Mexico, Greece, Slovakia, United States, Hungary, Chile, Israel, Canada and Britain, associated with that emblematic year of student-led rebellions, guiding struggles for social transformation. Thus, it is possible to characterize the youth cries by a leading role that aimed to break with the pre-established standards.

These young people [...] wanted to break the rules of that world established in a growing social and economic well-being, to give way to a freer and less stratified way of life, more focused on the concerns of individuals as subjects of the social group. Among them were the young students of the university, organized in the university student movements that starred in 1968 and which were a significant expression of the expansive wave of the new social protagonism that characterized the entire period. (GÓMEZ et al., 2018, p.10).

Specifically in Brazil, these challenges took momentum with the creation of the National Union of Students (UNE) in 1937, and in their early years the students had as central agendas the opposition to Nazi fascism, pressuring President Getúlio Vargas, who headed the dictatorial regime of the Estado Novo, to position himself during the Second World War that in progress; nevertheless, in 1942, Vargas himself made UNE official as the representative entity of all Brazilian university students, including ceding a building to function as the headquarters of their activities: it was the German club, which was in Flamengo Beach, Rio de Janeiro, regarded as a traditional stronghold of Nazifascist militancy, and which had just been occupied by young militants (UNE, 2021).

Yet, in 1968, when a civil-military dictatorship was underway with the coup of 1964, in a context where repression and violence reached exacerbated levels, the student movement continued combative and effervescent. An example of the clashes at that time was focused on the University Reform imposed by the dictatorial government through Law 5540/68, another of the acts of educational change led by the regime as well as considered the other acts of repression and censorship in vogue. The students joined other social movements and led the Hundred Thousand March on June 26, a response to the violent "bloody Friday" that occurred a few days earlier, the invasion of the UNE Congress in Ibiúna (São Paulo) and the murder of student Edson Luís de Lima Souto, facts that generated traumatic memories and, concomitantly, boosted resistance. We also recall that, in 1966, UNE led meaningful protests against paid education, pleading more places in public universities and opposed to repression in general, known as "Setembrada".

It is also a fact that the dictatorial regime tried to control and weaken the student movement, regarded as a strong antagonist. Through Law 4.464 of November 9, 1964, known as the Suplicy Law, it sought to replace existing student entities, so that they could be controlled by the Ministry of Education. This provision determined that higher education institutions must have at least one "Academic Directory" (DA), and the Central Student Directory (DCE) would be composed of representatives of the various Directories. In the states of the federation, the DAs should come together to form the state directories of students (DEEs), which, in turn, would provide representatives to the National Directory of Students (DNE).

The law ensured the participation of student representatives with the collective deliberation bodies and the departments of higher education institutions, designated by the students. It also answered the former claim of the student movement, making it mandatory to vote for the election of the boards of the DAs. In return, it forbade student representative bodies "any action, manifestation or propaganda of a political-partisan nature, as well as inciting, promoting or supporting collective absences to schoolwork". [...] Contrary to what happened until then, with student entities managing their electoral process, the law determined that elections to the directories should be accompanied by a teacher appointed by the school or university board. [...] In the face of the Suplicy Act, the students were divided. A current was favorable to participation in the "official DAs" whether or not parallel "free" entities. (FGV CPDOC, 2021).

As a matter of course, UNE began to act illegally. Nonetheless, it remained combative, despite the escalation of violence, most notably after the publication of Institutional Act Number 5 in December 1968. Persecutions, tortures and murders of students were recorded in the following years. However, in the late 1970s, in the face of signs of weakening of the regime, its restructuring

began: "**The congress of reconstruction** of the entity took place in Salvador, in 1979, demanding more resources for the university, defense of public and free education, as well as calling for the release of students imprisoned from Brazil" (UNE, 2021, griffin in the original).

Etched in our memories is November 1979. After 15 years of the coup, the elite of the regime sought to ensure its permanence in power, maintained based on legislative provisions that built an imposing legal substrate, seeking to justify the unlimited character of command constantly employed, nuanced by combating any form of opposition. Since, as Bobbio, Matteucci and Pasquino (1998) point out, one of the fundamental characteristics of modern dictatorships is the legitimation of power, marked by the contradictory, which is the intention to present itself as an expression of popular interests and needs, when, in fact, they impose adhering to dictatorial actions, engendering a subversion of democracy. In this sense, it should be said that the government of General João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo (1979-1985), the last of the military to occupy the presidency in the civil-military dictatorship, was quite unpopular, despite his proposed efforts to designate himself as the driver of the process of political openness and democratization. Hence, a visit was planned by President Figueiredo to Florianópolis, capital of Santa Catarina, meeting an economic agenda that included some official commemorative solemnities.

This article intends to bring to light discussions that help scrutinize the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil (1964-1985), collaborating in the reconstruction of memories about the episode of November 30, 1979, when Figueiredo came, named as Novembrada (MIGUEL, 1995; SARMENTO; GREVE, 2014). In this perspective, it contemplates the involvement of several actors in a set of actions located within the framework of the dictatorial regime and analyzes the prospects of redemocratization that emerged, considering a multiplicity of voices, but focusing on the versions of military, since, according to Martins Filho (2002), they have been little addressed in historiography.

The very purpose is to analyze the speeches of military officers about Novembrada. Regarding the methodology, we used Oral History (ALBERTI, 2005). We also consider a problematization according to which memory may be understood as collective or individual: in the first case, recording events of the life of a group and, in the second, expressing a point of view on collective memory, depending on the place that the subject occupies in group conformation; furthermore, we take into account that this distinctive nature between mnemonic records is not confused, since the memories of an individual or group bring to light facts of a common past only when the thoughts of the members of a group are in agreement with the others, because forgetfulness about a specific time can mean loss of contact with what surrounded them: "[...] the testimony of member data (the testimonies would confirm or deny what is already known [...] can help in remembering forgotten passages, because when they come into contact with each other they are able to identify themselves and thus merge past events (SANTOS; MARRA, 2002, p.4). Interviews were conducted with four military officers, who assist in the constitution of a narrative, through which we also dialogue with Rösen's arguments (2016, 48): "A historical narrative is tied to the mediation of memory. It mobilizes the experience of the past time, which is recorded in the archives of memory [...]"

Structured in three parts, at the very beginning the text presents the statements of the military officers about the preparation of General Figueiredo's visit to Florianópolis and the motivating factors of the manifestations, elaborating an analytical perspective on the construction of historical narrative, which considers symbolic and monumental aspects associated with the conservation of testimonies, assisting in the composition of memories. Following from that, we treat Novembrada as a symbol of resistance and struggles for democracy, reflecting on the actions of some of those involved, particularly the student movement, analyzed in the light of the theoretical framework chosen and outline the narrative. Finally, we present some conclusive considerations.

Honorable tribute? Or about how a peaceful city becomes a symbol of resistance

As Sarmento and Greve (2014) explain, Novembrada was a popular uprising marked by discontent with the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil since the 1964 coup. The emblematic event took place on November 30, 1979 in the central region of Florianópolis, capital of the state of Santa Catarina, when the then President of the Republic of Brazil, General João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo, came to the city to know a steel industry project, which would serve to evaluate the release of resources necessary for the enterprise; they also add that the country was going through political and economic instability, with a large financial deficit and an inflation increase of 75%, which generated a high cost of living. From Schmitz's perspective (2019), Novembrada was the effect of a spectrum of causes, including increases in the price of gasoline and electricity, the maturity of combative student organizations after the period of underground, and collective dissatisfaction with the failure to deliver on promises of the federal government. He considers that the intention to honor Marshal Floriano Peixoto, a character from the early days of the Republic who was not well-liked due to a painful historical memory, was the main reason for popular unrest: "Another version worthy of consideration is that of the tribute that would be made to former President Floriano Peixoto – an iron plaque next to the fig tree of the square – the man who ordered the shooting of hundreds of prominent figures of the city on the island of Anhatomirim in 1894" (SCHMITZ, 2019).

Therefore, the outbreak of conflicts would be the official solemnity of the inauguration of the plaque honoring Floriano, Brazil's second president of the Republican period and military leader accused of ordering a slaughter, but despite this, had the honor of naming that island of Santa Catarina: Floriano + *polis*, the city of Floriano! Let us recall, based on the statements of the military interviewed, the motivating aspects of the demonstrations. Initially, we bring elements related to the preparations, which interfere with the considerations of the respondents, now members of the staff of officers of the reserve of the Military Police of Santa Catarina. The accounts cover what they believe were the causes of Novembrada, but also their experiences and visions as participants in an experience of past time, now seen in the present time.

According to Colonel Nilo Marques de Medeiros Filho, in charge of presidential security, the preparation of the event requested a trip to Brasília.

When the president came, that is, a little earlier, the head of the Military House [...] determined that two officers go to Brasília to deal, with the Presidency of the Republic, with the coming of Figueiredo. [...] And Diniz and I went there. Diniz to take care of all part of the ceremonial and I to take care of the security part of the President, details and such... [...] First thing we heard: The Military Police does not interfere in anything! Whatever happens, the Military Police is out! (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019).

This passage reinforces the perspective that, at that moment, the group established in the Brazilian capital would have disregarded the view of the security body of Santa Catarina to ensure that everything went without agitation. But would the visit of those military been useful to know the intention of installing a plaque honoring Floriano Peixoto in the heart of the city? According to another of the answers: "We didn't know anything. They didn't tell us anything. No, no, no! [...] They reported a few moments before... that was going to have a plaque and that they wanted to inaugurate. And that was to make a small pedestal, that the board measured so much, such. Then we also... did not figure out how to prevent it" (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019). Thus, according to the version presented, no information was

given as to the sayings of the play, it was not even sought to know about the memories that the population of Santa Catarina had of the "Marshal of Iron", a portion of them not very uplifting.

No, also did not. But the problem wasn't, right, them wanting to pay homage. [...] The tribute they did, it's okay. After all, he was a general, President of the Republic, honoring a deceased marshal, a historical figure of the country. Where's the mistake? The problem is, they didn't consult, and they didn't talk to people here. (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019).

And still referring to the context of that journey to Brasília, he ratified the dismay with which the perspective of the Military Police of Santa Catarina was treated regarding the protocols of the presidential visit, pointing him as guilty of the troubled events: "But none of this was possible to be said before. So, at the time he gave what he gave. Their fault!" (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019). In addition to the record of this speech, we heard Colonel Edmundo José de Bastos Júnior, who combines in his curriculum the writing of works on the history of the Military Police of Santa Catarina, the performance as judge auditor of the Military Justice and the activity as a university professor.

I don't know who suggested he pay tribute to Floriano Peixoto. [...] Floriano Peixoto has a quiet sad story in Florianópolis! He's in charge of arrests... by Moreira César, who was directly appointed by him to come here. They took people there to Anhatomirim, there in Fortaleza, they killed all those people. [...] It didn't go peachy, did it? Honor Floriano Peixoto, the guy was responsible for this episode there. Including... of these shootings there in Anhatomirim. [...] There was already a predisposition against the government, against the government itself. So that would be kind of a provocation. (EDMUNDO JOSÉ DE BASTOS JÚNIOR, 2019).

That is, Colonel Edmund also pointed out that the realization of that tribute sat as an affront, intensifying discontent with the government. And Colonel Nile underlined the boldness of honoring a historical character that would bring such sad and doleful memories.

There are families who still resent, that I know. Here, friends of ours, even are our friends, this family. But I know more than one family... [...] They to this day... feel that their relatives have been murdered... in the name of a crazy thing, which was to use or not use the name of Florianópolis! They didn't want to use it! How do you honor Floriano Peixoto who had their relatives killed? (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019).

Directing to meet more elements for the construction of the historical narration, we bring aspects present in the speeches of Colonel Pedro Rohrbacher, who at the time of Novembrada held the rank of lieutenant of the Riot Police. The analysis of such contents allows detecting the organization of an internal unit in relation to the dimensions of continuity of time, indicating that the experience of the past is relevant to the present life, while establishing the identity of the interviewees as authors before the listeners, configuring what Rüsen (2016) calls as "qualities" that constitute the "peculiarity of historical narrative". We have an example when

Colonel Rohrbacher approaches the preparations of that visit, because in the eyes of the local military it was clear the need to take all care.

There was a plan of the General Command to make the security of President João Baptista Figueiredo who came to Florianópolis. I was [sic] assigned security in front of the Cruz e Sousa Palace, that I remember well, I put the men facing the square to keep the people there, the people who came there to applaud, to boo, had all the ideologies had there, for and against. What I remember well is that really when he appeared on the balcony I heard a shouting, an ovation, which for sure many applauded and many, I will not say cursing, but with words of hate, this I remember well. It was fast, because he showed up, said little, came in and we stayed there, I mean, my exercise ended there, he even boarded, and I didn't even see which way he went.

[...] Yes, we were prepared, the military police must have policing tactics, everyone has, and everyone does. Within a structure, each is within its structure. And today is quite different the structure of policing, techniques and tactics, than it was in one thousand nine hundred and seventy-nine. Each age has its own way of acting, of the people and of the state. It is bound to be so [...] (PEDRO ROHRBACHER, 2019).

In addition, he emphasizes the utmost attention to prevent anything from normality: "Yes, I kept an eye on the population, which was my obligation, monitoring so that there was no invasion, right in front of the Palace, at XV Square, Cruz and Sousa Palace. And on the other hand, I also paid attention in the Palace" (PEDRO ROHRBACHER, 2019). And there were several security agents: "Look, up ahead, where I was there were about thirty men, but of course there were others. It had traffic policing, mounted policing, all forms of policing, after all it was the security of a President, there is no doubt, whatsoever" (PEDRO ROHRBACHER, 2019). Asked about the use of force, he emphasized the denial, while mentioning the specific roles of each of the sectors. "Not there, no. Some of them came like this, but not there at that moment. If then they arrested, if someone was arrested, if he was assaulted, then it is another sector" (PEDRO ROHRBACHER, 2019). In this case, we understand that the discourse highlights the collective identity of the military in the composition of the narrative.

But how the supposedly quiet Florianópolis was transformed into the stage of a political protest that "[...] it entered the history of the country because it became a symbol of resistance and confrontation with the military dictatorship"? (SINTRAFESC, 2018). Let us note a little more for the occurrences that distanced the moments of the General and his delegation in Florianópolis from a quiet stay. For Colonel Itamar Farias Diniz, in charge of the ceremonial at the Cruz e Sousa Palace, there were problems in the execution of the agenda: "For us in the Palace, quiet. Obeying what they said! [...] The schedule: he arrives, he goes through reviewing the troop. Then, how did they accept [...] Before, going through the troop, go there in the Senadinho [...]" (ITAMAR FARIAS DINIZ, 2019). Therefore, the president's visit to a traditional café in the city center, the Senadinho, contributed to the dynamics of the visit being changed.

And there was something that Figueiredo was invited to have a cup of coffee [...] And I was accompanying [Governor of the state] Jorge Bornhausen and his wife, eyeing because, right, you know, there always comes one to ask the governor for a little money, there comes one for any nonsense ... nothing violent. Floripa never had this characteristic of violence. But a slam-dunk could come. So, my mission was... Hey, man! Or one of those who like to appear in the picture. [...] Boy, but there was no time! There was no time to get here, for the Governor get there, in the Senadinho (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019).

In turn, the following excerpt, located in the testimony of the main local responsible for the development of the official programming, ratifies the versions on some of the unexpected conflicts that emerged, nuanced the scenario with colors different from those predicted by those involved, either among the allies of the dictatorial government, or by the contesting collectives.

Violence exploded and there was no way. There was no way. Me, when there was that situation of the Governor over there, who started fighting... I pulled the governor; we threw the governor in a car. Because Figueiredo had lunch there in Palhoça. So, the whole schedule, it was all mixed up, it was all reversed, and the Governor was sent to Palhoça. (ITAMAR FARIAS DINIZ, 2019).

Thus, a somewhat inaccurate narrative about the denomination of one of the visitors who composed the presidential entourage, the Minister of Mines and Energy César Cals, would have been the pivot of a fight, since his presence had provoked the fury of taxi drivers unhappy with the increases in fuel prices, which may be seen as a reaction to the economic difficulties that hit Brazilians at the time. That is, the citizens were not so peaceful, not even the city of Florianópolis!

Before the governor got there, he had a serious fight between a... Now what the guy's name was... he was Minister of Industry. He gave the guys a gas raise that wiped out the guys! And the taxi drivers were, as the television says, "fed up" with that minister [sic]! What about this Minister, César Cals? [...] He went with Figueiredo there too. Only when he passed, the taxi drivers saw that went there to confront him. And they put their hands on Caesar Cals' face. [...] I took the governor, with madam Déa [...] and removed them away. [...] And I don't even know what happened to Figueiredo. I went to take care of my part, which was the Governor. (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019).

In another statement there is reference to the plentiful banquet offered to the presidential entourage, also considered an affront to the population oppressed by the economic crisis: "I remember this until today, that I was going to have a lunch, a big lunch, this lunch was then sponsored by... Who was a farmer, that class in São Joaquim. They offered meat, they organized themselves [...]" (ITAMAR FARIAS DINIZ, 2019).

Therefore, whether in the interviewees' statements, in the press records or in several memorialist studies that have Novembrada as their object, there appears a succession of frictions and confrontations between the presidential entourage and the crowd, with a corollary of expletives and, notably, highlighting obscene gestures attributed to General Figueiredo. We have an example in the article "Novembrada, the day that Santa Catarina's folks 'slag off' the dictator Figueiredo", between the testimonies of protesters present in scenes taken as emblematic:

When slowly the sentences leaped from the posters to the screams, from the balcony behind the Governor, Figueiredo made an ambiguous gesture, which for some was understood as an offensive swear word. [...] "I understood that the gesture meant that we were nothing, other people understood that he had been sending the people to that place", Rosângela says. "Neither Figueiredo did not expect nor the governor. Santa Catarina was the ideal place to receive the President of Brazil in the period of democratic transition appointed of freedom with responsibility", she points out. (NOVEMBRADA..., 2018).

According to this testimony, Figueiredo's appearance aroused a shout: "By the script it seemed that everything would go well until the unelected governor of Santa Catarina, Jorge Bornhausen, said: "The people of Santa Catarina have the joy of receiving the President of Brazil, João Figueiredo". Among the crowd someone breaks the silence with the shout: 'liar'" (NOVEMBRADA..., 2018). Given the elements pointed out, our analyses characterize Novembrada as a mobilization that involved, in one pole, the then leader of the civil-military dictatorship and its accomplices, and, in another, bystanders and belligerent's student groups. And regarding its causes, we ratified the synthesis of the historical-contextual determinants of Novembrada pointed out by Dotti (2004): the aversion to the commemorative plaque, the increase in the price of fuels as well as the indignation before the banquet offered.

What about the commemorative plaque? We bring something more about this object, which we can consider as a "monument" due to the ability to conserve and address diverse testimonies, as well as by integrating a collective memory (LE GOFF, 1990). According to Colonel Nilo, after being affixed to a pedestal at XV of November square, the plaque suffered the furor of the population present: it was burned, dragged through the streets of the vicinity and even "runned over" by vehicles of protesters (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019). The content of the commemorative plaque brought together two purposes, as it honored Floriano Peixoto and referred to the 90th anniversary of the Proclamation of the Republic (Figure 1).

1889 – 1979

TRIBUTE OF PRESIDENT JOÃO FIGUEIREDO A
MARECHAL FLORIANO VIEIRA PEIXOTO
ON THE 90TH. ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPUBLIC.

BRASÍLIA, ON NOVEMBER 15, 1979.

JOAO FIGUEIREDO

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC (MONUMENTOS... 2021).

Figure 1 - Demonstrators hold the plaque with Figueiredo's tribute to Floriano Peixoto



Source: <https://www.memoriaedireitoshumanos.ufsc.br/files/show/119>

The most unusual is that the bronze plaque remained under the guard of the former head of the Military House of the state government of Santa Catarina for 30 years, hidden in his residence! A trajectory that, according to reports, began on the date of Novembrada, when it was thrown, still hot, against the heavy doors of the Cruz e Sousa Palace.

My chief, Colonel Decio, of the Military House, said: - Nile, you go there to the Palace and be responsible for the Palace. [...] I told them to close the doors and I stayed inside, awaiting. That's why, when they threw the plaque, the people threw the plaque at the door. Was me who had told them to open the palace door! And we found the plaque, hot yet! With bang. Boom! Pick up. Grab it... A soldier. He took a newspaper because it was still hot. Then he took a newspaper, put it in. I said, "Put, put it here" (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019).

We interviewed Colonel Nile in his own home, at which point he confirmed: "So much that it stayed here, in the lining of my house. I've got a... a passage up. The plaque spent 30 years in custody there" (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019). We also asked about the feelings that had had on keeping with him that object, which was taken as disappeared for three decades. His arguments provide justifications for the preservation of the plaque, in a situation in which the members of the military corps themselves are represented as responsible for the preservation of historical memory. This is a trajectory that blends protagonist and disappearance leading the plate of Novembrada to be signified as what Le Goff (1990) called the material of memory.

Don't let anyone destroy it! Safeguard [...] I did not steal the plaque! A lot of people have that idea. [...] No, no! The plaque was given to me, that it was in my closet. [...] And this plaque I asked Colonel Saulo for.

[...] I said, Colonel, there's this plaque here, but I suspect that shortly this plaque will disappear. - Ah, why do you think that? No, because, you know, Mr. You know, there are interests, all sort of interests. And there may be someone that want to destroy it. This is a document that belongs to our..., to our state, that's a fact of history. "Oh, all right, take it! It's been up here for 30 years. (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019).

The deponent also presented to us the original writing of the speech he gave at the City Hall on November 23, 2009, when he handed the plaque to the municipality of Florianópolis, from which we extracted excerpts that emphasize the historical judgment on Floriano Peixoto promoted by the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), where the piece was used as proof of accusation as to the unpopularity of the tribute performed in 1979. It should be noted that, in the initial part of the speech, Colonel Nilo classifies the making of the plaque as something inconsequential. Next, he associates the adoption of the name Florianópolis with the humiliation of the population. And finally, adds a list of adjectives that underline his conception of the tributes made to Floriano Peixoto, questioning the position of the military government.

Thus, inconsequentially, a bronze plaque was forged in Brasília, to be fixed at XV of November square, to honor the patron of this city.

[...] after a public trial held inside the premises of the Rectory of UFSC, in the presence of authorities and notables of Santa Catarina and Alagoas, co-state, therefore, from Floriano, it was reached the consensus that the exchange of the name of our city to Florianópolis, [...] is considered by our people as a humiliation.

The historical truth shows Governor Hercílio Luz and our Legislative Assembly changing the name of our city in the sole intention of placating the republican wrath of the central power. It wasn't a spontaneous, consented attitude. Although it came from the government of Santa Catarina, the homage to Floriano was never popular, it did not come from the heart of the people, it was only a mere and cold political accommodation.

[...] The negative feeling is still very strong and alive. Only the federal government in the years 1979, still did not know that? Or decide to challenge the nobility of the feelings of the locals? (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019).

We continue to establish some reflections, moving through an analytical-interpretative dynamic that, as Nora (1993) warns, is nourished in the clash between memory and history, since the former remains alive, subject to the resumption of its strength and subject to various uses, whilst history is marked by incompleteness and the problematization of the past. We confirm that "Memory is an ever-present phenomenon, a link lived in the eternal present; history, a representation of the past" (NORA, 1993, p.9).

In view of this, we move on to the discussion of Novembrada as a symbol of resistance and the search for democracy, focusing on the militancy of actors involved, particularly the student movement.

Novembrada as a symbol of resistance and struggles for democracy

Through their interviews, the military presented us with various elements for the composition of a historical narrative, configuring a web of relations. We believe that it is significant to situate the points of the discourses that outline the places of confrontation that the various constructing subjects of Novembrada occupy, according to those who elaborate their memories. We approach statements in which they report their own actions, as well as those where the other historical subjects present, nonetheless. An example of this is Colonel Diniz's approach to the military government's intelligence service, which mentions the presence of protesters from the university student environment and adds the perspective that the confrontation was a concrete fact.

The service [...] of information that is present [...] because they start much earlier, even by the media being informing something or people they know. I was sure, I even commented, that within the University already had a group, or several groups manifesting and that they were going to have a confrontation... (ITAMAR FARIAS DINIZ, 2019).

In other words, the security forces considered that there would be confrontations and demonstrations against Figueiredo and everything he represented as a participant in the dictatorial elite. More than that, it was estimated that, in the case of conflicts, students would be protagonists: "The movement is... We knew, but then we are prepared for everything, because it is something that we do not know what will happen, and that incident really happened" (ITAMAR FARIAS DINIZ, 2019). We realized that the military nourishes a speech in which the students were, unfailingly, in a position of "left". The narrative of the military is marked by an interpretation that, in a generalizing way, understands the activity of student movements as unfailingly combative and used to contest. But we know that during the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil was also constituted a student movement of "right", which had as antagonistic reference for its actions the activity of those considered as typically aligned to the left, as shown by the research of Braghini and Comeski (2015).

We also realized that the interviewees construct memories according to their individual references and the relationships they established with other subjects. The memories of Colonel Edmundo, for example, reveal details about his conviviality, as a professor at UFSC, with two law students, stressing that they were leaders involved in the demonstrations against the dictatorship, "left-wing".

Adolfo was even my student. He was President of the Academic Center. [...] He was one of the leaders of that [...] That other one, I think it's Rosana... Rosana, I guess. From Law. [...] He was a good (student) [...] he was already a leader. [...] They were bratty, you know, impish. That one, I remember a lot about her. [...] Was Rosana her name? But it was a German name. [...] You know, I always have a comfortable relation along anyone. Because, already at the time, I already had a thing with tolerance and such [...] At that time the law course had optional subjects. And one of the optional subjects was Military Criminal Law... So... Imagine... [...] And they both did. [...] The class there was the class on the left. No, I think that was even a spontaneous manifestation. [...] the President came, they made a demonstration, a goofing... The one hovering in front of the palace, the one he gave the banana up there... I

don't know if that was organized, or if it was a question. They gather themselves. You know what I think. That law school has always been very conservative. [...] The left was more in the Center for Humanities, there it was. (EDMUNDO JOSÉ DE BASTOS JÚNIOR, 2019).

If, on the one hand, some considerations underline the opposition to the dictatorship, we detected statements in which the image of the islets, as well as the folks of the state of Santa Catarina in general, is associated with peacefully: "They could not imagine that Florianópolis, peaceful city, [...] at that time, how much would it have... 150 thousand people, give or take... on the island all over and over the part of the continent [...] A tiny minority, a little something of nothing. How am I going to do it? But they did, they did! And disturbed [...]" (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019).

Nonetheless, above all, student arrests must be considered. According to Schmitz (2021), this fact fanned the flames in the days following Novembrada, and with the arrest of the ringleader students Adolfo Luiz Dias, Rosângela Koerich de Souza, Geraldo Barbosa, Marize Lippel, Newton Vasconcelos Jr., Lígia Giovanella and Amilton Alexandre, the Mosquito, then framed in the National Security Law, "[...] the steep protests once again "shake up" the Center of Florianópolis in the days following the clashes of November 30."

This perception appears in the continuity of the speech of Colonel Diniz, who also cited the arrest of one of the student leaders: "[...] there with the arrest also of the staff, then began a lot of "was arrested so and so", I think she is Rosângela, the one they call Rô. Three or four more, "look, they will be arrested and go there to Curitiba to respond" (Itamar Farias Diniz, 2019). That is, the student protagonism in Novembrada is present in military memories. And it assists in the composition of the historical narrative that highlights the leadership of Adolfo Dias in the Central Directory of Students of UFSC, understood as an expression of the revitalization of student resistance movements that occurred in the late 1970s.

Therefore, Novembrada did not come "out of nowhere", it was the culmination of a movement that had been organized since 1977 and rebuilt UNE two years later. The protest against General President João Figueiredo began to draw in the academic centers and in the DCE (Central Directory of Students) of UFSC. [...] The leadership of Adolfo Dias, DCE President was strong and decisive for the organization of the act, with a team of volunteer auxiliaries. (SINTRAFESC, 2018).

In this exercise of conjugation of memories, we bring one of the narratives collected in a meeting promoted by the group Jornalistas Livres, in November 2018, which brought together four participants of Novembrada. From this significant record we extracted part of the testimony of one of the students who was arrested due to participation in that demonstration in the central region of Florianópolis, Rosângela Koerich de Souza, currently part of the collective "Memory, Truth and Justice", working as a lawyer. The report presents a ruse used by the students to circumvent the security measures, serving to expand the protests: an ally of the protesters, *en bourgeoisie mode*, opened wings between the guard and facilitated the approach of where the president and his entourage were.

Upon arriving at the square, an isolation cordon prevented the students from approaching. Maria Amelia, who was a representative of high society and had presented himself as an ally, hours earlier at the DCE meeting, was the one who paved the way. The gambit had a political motivation. Wearing quality footwear and *tailleur*, the spruce lassie, whose sister was married to

a general friend of Figueiredo's, told one of the guards: "you guard, I wanted to give the President a hug." Sensitive to the simple request, the guard shot to the "cordon keepers": "open the isolation cord for this young lady to pass." At the command of "class, come!" given by her, a passageway was opened to a more than 100 flocking students.

Quietly, gradually, the isolation cords were being raised. "No more suffering the people want to eat", "enough cannon, people want beans", "less luxury, more beans, more money for education". (NOVEMBRADA..., 2018).

Let us remember that Colonel Rohrbacher told us that the appearance of President Figueiredo on one of the balconies of the Cruz e Souza Palace was a moment of intensification of popular protests. Already according to the memories of Colonel Diniz, the presence of protest groups can be understood as natural and proper to democracy: "Yes, yes because I did the programming, and I was watching closely. Ok, then in the window, waved [the President] for some, there were many people, but also had groups of contestations, this is a natural thing, in a democracy anything goes" (ITAMAR FARIAS DINIZ, 2019). But according to our analysis, this association of Novembrada with a democratic moment reveals a denial of the temporal location of historical experience, ratifying a function of narration that is characterized by the attempt to understand the past considering the experience of present time. And, regarding the consequences of the Novembrada, this deponent stressed the repercussion that he estimates had had in the country.

I was all the time following the situation. But then, I evaluate that I, in the middle there, of course, it's not normal a mad dash, a vandalism and such, you worry about it. But then, in the end, everything goes back to normal. [...] Yes, it has had repercussions in the country, rebound [...] especially in Rio de Janeiro, which they even set 'came to Santa Catarina and the President was...'. But it's not a spontaneous thing, it was more organization, throwing in the press, but there was, repercussion all over the country. (ITAMAR FARIAS DINIZ, 2019).

We evaluate that the combination of these different memories with the analyses performed helps on the exercise to envisage the complexity that characterizes both individual actions and the attitudes of human collectives. Equally likely, it leads to understanding the role of historical narration, which, according to Rüsen (2016, 48-49), "[...] its general function is to guide practical life in time, by mobilizing the memory of temporal experience, by the development of a concept of continuity and by the stabilization of identity", or, in additional terms, which admits the historical narrative as "tied to the mediation of memory", as something that "organizes the internal unity" of the dimensions of the past times, present and future, and as an element that "serves to establish the identity of its authors and listeners."

Considerações finais

On that morning of November 30, 1979, began the execution of everything that had been carefully planned for the visit of President João Baptista Figueiredo to our Florianópolis. Each item of programming, so accurately assembled, discussed and revised, was on the verge of being fulfilled. Nothing should and can fail, after all the maximum ruler of the people of Santa Catarina will receive the head of the Federal Government. The intention is that everything flows in a festive atmosphere. (NILO MARQUES DE MEDEIROS FILHO, 2019).

Here is an excerpt read during the interview by Colonel Nilo, component of the speech given at the City Hall of Florianópolis in November 2009, on the occasion of the delivery of the bronze plaque of "Novembrada" that, as we saw, was secretly kept in his guard. Therefore, we corroborate Rüsen's statement (2016) according to which historical narrative is a process of attribution of meaning to the experience of time, which impels us to understand it as a constant exercise of collaborating in the constitution of historical knowledge. When we elect Novembrada as an object, we add to the elaboration of the narrative the essential mediation of several memories, which when triggered mobilized experiences of the past time, which were connected to the experience of the present time. Through the interviews of four military personnel, we brought up a set of versions about their own actions and views on the protests based in Florianópolis during the visit of President General Figueiredo in 1979.

As for the preparations for the president's arrival, we found that there was no alignment between the planning carried out in Brasília and the perspectives of the local security body. The protests that broke out had as one of its causes the growing dissatisfaction with the national economy, which penalized the population with inflation and high cost of living. But, specifically in the case of Novembrada, the inclusion in the official program of the tribute to Marechal Floriano Peixoto, through the display of the commemorative plaque at XV de Novembro square, located in the city center of Florianópolis and in the vicinity of the Cruz e Sousa Palace, it was the trigger of a popular uprising in which groups of students were protagonists. The leaders of the dictatorship despised the fact that Floriano is a dislike character, on which they weigh painful memories for having ordered the slaughter of members of several local families. It would also be unfair to honor someone whose name had been imposed to name the capital of Santa Catarina.

Our analyses also confirm that Novembrada symbolizes the permanence of resistance to undemocratic governments and the regenerating possibility of struggles for popular sovereignty. Embedded in the complex, troubled and oppressive context of the civil-military dictatorship, which sought, between 1964 and 1985, to lead Brazil under the sign of authoritarianism, the popular manifestations of Florianópolis had repercussions on political openness.

The leading role of the students, combined with the militancy of other left-wing groups, was at the heart of the protests against General Figueiredo, evidencing the reinvigoration of the student movement that occurred throughout the 1970s. In this sense, the analyses of the historical narrative on Novembrada, also make possible to establish relationships between the memory and the actions of young people at the time of the civil-military dictatorship, mainly by focusing on aspects of engagement, militancy, politicization and consciousness (FIALHO; FREIRE, 2018).

In this sense, we align ourselves with the perspective that draws attention so that we are not mistaken about the need to add to the field of historical-educational research, especially in relation to the unveiling of the phenomena that involved the students' struggles. That is, if the vast research on the student movement, which originates a solid narrative in the social imaginary, as well as the constant militant reverence about their (dis)paths in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, especially in 1968, they can infer a misleading exhaustion of studies on the subject, let us remember what Napolitano tells us (2016, p.13): "[...] and particularly the student movement, which shook Brazil and the world, so remembered, worshiped and commented on, give the false impression that they are exhausted for historical analysis" (NAPOLITANO, 2016, p. 13). As a result, we link our findings to Paiva's research (2021), whose analyses allow us to know both the historical forms of student mobilization in the field of higher education in Santa Catarina and its agendas and claims, through which we also identify the diversity of political spectrums and student organizations, the clashes over social purposes, policies and educational activities of the student movement and the repercussions of its performance.

Finally, we consider that this historical narration of Novembrada, nourished by evocative speeches of memories, can help in the exercise of problematization of the past. And as we shed light on an influential episode in the fall of dictatorial power in Brazil, we estimate that they also enhance debates about the historical processes that scrutinize dictatorships in Latin America, as well as demarcation the paths of redemocratization that we have built and that, above all, we intend to preserve.

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