

Schneider, Nina. *The Forgotten Voices of the Militares Cassados: Reconceptualising "Perpetrators" and "Victims" in Post-1985 Brazil*.

The Forgotten Voices of the *Militares Cassados*: Reconceptualising "Perpetrators" and "Victims" in Post-1985 Brazil

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"Nobody in the entire world, puts up with the cowardice of the torturer. He's a bandit, a wretch, a coward."² (Pennafor, 2013). These were the words of Rui Moreira Lima, a Brazilian Air Force officer celebrated for his heroic missions during the Second World War in Italy, and later among those purged by the military regime in Brazil (1964-1985). They are quoted in the obituary published by the Estado de S. Paulo on the day he passed away aged 94. Only three months before his death, Rui Moreira Lima had been publicly honoured at the first public meeting devoted to *militares cassados* organised by the Brazilian Truth Commission, the *Comissão Nacional da Verdade* (CNV), which has been mandated since May 2012 to clarify systematic human rights violations committed by the Brazilian state from 1946 to 1988. Although Moreira Lima was unable to attend in person, due to health reasons, his testimony was screened via a video-link (Loula, 2013; Oliveira, 2013).

While Rui Moreira Lima was arguably one of the most prominent representatives of the oppressed military officials, his fate was not exceptional. Earlier studies (Alves, 1985: 97; Silva, 1988: 12) had estimated that between 6,592 and 7,500 soldiers were punished under the military regime, but the historian Flavia Burlamaqui Machado has

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² "No mundo inteiro, ninguém atura a covardia do torturador. É um bandido, um desgraçado, um covarde".

more recently calculated the figure to be precisely 7,488 persecuted military personnel (Rocha, 2013). Forty-four per cent of those Brazilian citizens purged immediately after the coup in 1964 were military officials (Pereira, 2005: 67).

A special working group known as *Repression of the military (Repressão aos Militares)* was established in March 2013 as a subgroup of the National Truth Commission (Loula, 2013). With the support of Maria Rosa G. Loula and Vivien Ishaq, it aims to shed light on a group that suffered authoritarian repression, but whose painful experiences have been ignored by the Armed Forces, the state, and the Brazilian public. While many scholars have acknowledged the existence of these purged officials, systematic research into this highly relevant issue has only recently begun. In addition to forced retirement, the withdrawal of political rights (*cassação*), was a common way of disempowering military officials who refused to support the military coup and the ensuing authoritarian regime. For a decade these military officials lost their active and passive voting rights (right to vote and to run for election), were expelled from the Armed Forces and often had their professional lives sabotaged by the Brazilian National Intelligence Service (Serviço Nacional de Informações, SNI).

The article draws attention to this neglected group who were simultaneously victims and protagonists of democratic resistance - the *militares cassados*. It starts by asking why military dissent has previously attracted only minimal attention in both public and especially academic debates, and discusses three possible explanations: first, the Armed Forces perpetuated an image of institutional unity which still impacts on historical narratives and public memory; second, there are few available sources through which to reconstruct military dissent; and third, scholars have appeared hesitant to consider this perspective. The second section comprises case studies of two *militares cassados* – the curious account of Brigadier Rui Moreira Lima, a Second World War hero whose political rights were withdrawn, and the story of Ivan Proença

Cavalcanti, a younger military official, who refused to open fire on students in Rio de Janeiro, thereby courageously preventing an urban massacre. The article aims to spark a discussion about whether the neglect of the *militares cassados* is symptomatic of a historiographical tendency to homogenise the Armed Forces in Brazil - although empirical evidence suggests a spectrum within the army and if so why. As military officials in Brazil were, paradoxically, simultaneously potential oppressors and oppressed, the *militares cassados* constitute an uncomfortable challenge to the prevailing conceptions of "perpetrators" and "victims".

Previous historiography of the military regime has been characterised by an asymmetrical choice of topics; scholars have produced far more studies about left-wing guerrilla groups and cultural resistance than about military personnel (Rollemberg, 2009: 571). While various Brazilian and US-American academics (Stepan, 1973; Bacchus, 1986, 1985; Zaverucha, 1994; among others) have investigated the Armed Forces' role during the coup, military rule and the transition to democracy, they have focused on their activities as "perpetrators" and tended to exclude officials suppressed by the regime. The precious oral history volumes (Castro and Araújo, 1994a, b, 1995) published by researchers at the Centre for Research and Documentation of Contemporary Brazilian History (CPDOC) represented a milestone in documenting the military perspective. At a public hearing between members of the CNV and civil society on 13 August 2012 in Rio, Maria Celina D'Araújo, one of the researchers, revealed that her project had been harshly criticised at the time. Although these volumes have long been out of print, the CPDOC oral history project was still regarded as politically undesirable in the 1990s. Few studies, however, have explored the nuances and frictions within the regime in depth. The Brazilian historian João Martins Reis Filho (1995, 2002, 2009) has been key in pinpointing competing ideological camps and acknowledging the varying degrees of perpetratorship. A recent study by the French historian, Maud Chirio (2012),

elucidates revolts and protests within the Armed Forces, and Flávia Burlamaqui Machado's (2006, 2010) pioneering work examines the role of *militares cassados* during the struggle for amnesty.

With the exception of the author and victim of repression, Hélio Silva (1988), who edited the accounts of selected *militares cassados*, albeit unsystematically, without introducing the individuals concerned, in depth studies that explicitly and analytically investigate the *militares cassados* or forcibly retired military personnel remain scarce, as do studies that thoroughly examine the internal mechanisms used to spy on, manipulate and even threaten military officials.³ Cláudio Beserra Vasconcelos (2009: 72-73, 78, 80) is one of the few scholars to highlight that *militares cassados* have neither been remembered in public memory nor in research. Another noteworthy though little-known study is Andrea Paula dos Santos' Master's Thesis (1998) which brought together oral history interviews with left-wing and nationalist military officials.

A new systematic research project spearheaded by Paulo Ribeiro da Cunha, an expert on left-wing political thought within the Armed Forces, and researcher at the Centro de Documentação e Memória (CEDEM) within the Regional State University of São Paulo "Júlio de Mesquita Filho" (Unesp) is currently being undertaken. An advisor to the CNV's working group on military repression, Paulo Ribeiro da Cunha, is creating an archive comprised of extensive material donated by the ADNAM (Associação Democrática e Nacionalista dos Militares), a well-organised association of *militares cassados*, many of whom belong to the so-called nationalist left-wing of the Armed Forces (Rocha, 2013). The CNV's special working group has recently announced incentives for academic research on the *militares cassados*, to help reconstruct the

³ Apart from Chirio's work, threats have been noted by Martins Filho (1995: 171-172), who refers to several episodes of threats against hardliners, while Fico (2004a: 76) mentions that one propaganda strategy involved asserting that there was 'dissatisfaction within the Armed Forces', and argues that it is impossible to establish whether the majority approved of repression/hardliners.

biographies of officials who suffered repression, and support the creation of an oral history archive at the CEDEM UNESP (Celso, 2013). Currently, the CNV is planning to collect testimonies from 50 *militares cassados*. This ties in with the CNV's general stimulus for new research about formerly neglected types of repression (indigenous, universities, etc.).

Three reasons for the lack of studies

A possible explanation for the lack of public attention and focused research on intra-military repression lies in the Armed Forces' effective propagation of an image of institutional harmony which arguably continues to influence historical narratives today. From 1964 onwards, army leaders persistently promoted the notion of military cohesion in key speeches, interviews and articles, while simultaneously censuring frictions between different military camps, most notably the so-called hardliners (*linha dura*) and moderates (sometimes referred to as "softliners" or "Sorbonne"). Although the terms "hardliners" and "moderates" represent highly problematic heuristic categories (Couto, 2003: 59 fn; Fico, 2004b: 23; Pereira, 2005: 69), they are the only ones currently available. The term "hardliners" denotes those who supported violent repression and favoured the continuation of military rule (Stepan, 1973: 18; Fico 2004b: 23). They believed that Brazil was engaged in a kind of civil war and needed to eliminate alleged communists by any means available, in order to preserve national security. The label "moderates" is applied to individuals who were authoritarian, but nonetheless rejected repression "in principle", justifying it only in exceptional cases.⁴ Moderates furthermore regarded military rule as a transitional phase, with their ultimate goal being the handing over of

⁴ That this categorization is a simplification is best illustrated by Geisel's famous justification of torture in D'Araújo and Castro 1997: 224-55.

power to civilians. Anne-Marie Smith (1997: 32) has rightly observed that the "moderates" were defined only in contrast to the "hardliners", not because of their benevolent actions.

One strategy for promoting military identity and unity was to claim that the Armed Forces acted in the name of the nation. This vision was most prominently constructed in the preamble to the first Institutional Act (AI 1) which refers to a "civic-military movement", and an "authentic revolution".⁵ The main military newsletter at the time, *News of the Army (Noticiário do Exército, NdE)*, frequently reprinted speeches emphasising the bond between the Armed Forces and the people (NdE, no. 2119, 1966: 2).⁶ While the newsletter was addressed to both the army and the general public, and appears to reflect internal military debates only to a limited extent, it nonetheless represents an important military source available to researchers. While it is historically correct that the press initially supported the coup, and it was celebrated by many Brazilians, it is also true that the regime not only purged thousands of Brazilian citizens but also started torturing them immediately after the coup. Closer analysis suggests that one of this publication's intentions was to create unity by strategically silencing intra-military conflicts. Military personnel facing charges in front of military tribunals were only mentioned in brief, factual notes without specifying what they were accused of, and in later editions they disappeared altogether (NdE, no. 2121, 1966: 2). The same holds true for military personnel who lost their political rights.⁷ It appears that the editors preferred to conceal this kind of information to prevent criticism from within the

⁵ The second frase of the AI; "O que houve e continuará a haver neste momento, não só no espírito e no comportamento das classes armadas, como na opinião pública, é uma autêntica revolução". The AI 1 and further documents of the regime are reprinted in Fico (2004a: 339).

⁶ I copied the *Noticiário do Exército* from the Historical Archive of the Armed Forces (Arquivo Histórico do Exército, Ahex) of the Tiradentes Palace in Rio de Janeiro.

⁷ See NdE, no. 1642 (11 April 1964), p. 1; no. 1644 (15 April 1964).

army. The 1966 bomb attack on an SNI office in Recife by military personnel received only one mention, while other dissident acts were censored altogether; neither were they explained nor discussed⁸ (NdE, no. 2121, 1966: 1.). The dismissal of Army Minister Sylvio Frota in 1977, which represented a key conflict between hardliners and moderates, was completely censored, despite, or possibly because of, its potential to overthrow the regime. A special edition merely announced that General Bethlem was the new War Minister (NdE, no. 42927, 1977; no. 4928, 1977; Special Edition, 1977).

While the military institution successfully concealed internal frictions from the public, documentation from the former intelligence service SNI provides clues about military dissatisfaction. Some SNI documents, for example, mention breakaway groups within the Armed Forces (SNI Chefia do Gabinete, 1974: 3; *Apreciação sumária*, 1978: 5). An SNI file from 1974 analysed the election results which embarrassed the pro-regime party, National Renewal Alliance (ARENA), and made a surprising claim: numerous military officials voted for the opposition party, Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB) (SNI Chefia do Gabinete, 1974: 1). These secret intelligence files prove that military personnel were subjected to internal surveillance. The military leaders feared that critical military minds might pose an internal threat to the regime.

The "fashioning" of military unity, however, was not solely practiced during the military regime. Following Brazil's return to civilian rule in 1985, the military institution continued to conceal military frictions by refusing to issue any official statements on the military regime. Heloiza Matos' (2004: 117, 121) study on the post-1985 institutional discourse of the Armed Forces found that the 1,400 television broadcasts transmitted between 1985 and 1998 deliberately omitted the arbitrary military past. Instead, the most

⁸ See also the minimal coverage of military dissidents in Southern Brazil in 1965 in *NdE*, no. 1876 (30 March 1965), p. 1.

frequent topics featured were national security, the official function of military institutions, assistance programmes, and most importantly, the history of the corporations correlated to patriotism and heroism.

One of the few key public statements by the military institution about the authoritarian regime is a fifteen-volume edition of oral history interviews published in 2003 (Biblioteca do Exército, 2003: 147-72). Its close proximity in terms of time and the justification offered in its preface suggest (at least in the author's view) that it was published as a counterweight to military interviews published by the CPDOC in the 1990s (Biblioteca do Exército, 2003: 9, 15). This valuable publication, hereafter called the Bibliex edition, can be regarded as a comment on how the institution wants to be remembered. The editors conducted 250 interviews with the stated intention to record the narratives of those involved in the "revolution", to "recover information" on Brazilian history, and establish a research collection (Biblioteca do Exército, 2003: 9, 15-17, 21). Questionnaires were distributed in advance, the interviewees were encouraged to speak freely, and the transcripts were later corrected by the interviewees. As well as the period of military rule, the edition also covers the experiences of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB) which fought against the fascists and Nazis in Italy at the end of the Second World War.

The introduction and the book covers are particularly enlightening about which aspects the institution wishes to remember and which it prefers to forget. The editors accuse the media, teachers and historians - arguably alluding to the CPDOC editions - of falsifying history and openly practicing "revanchism" (*revanchismo*) (Biblioteca do Exército, 2003: 9). Revanchism - a key term in the Armed Forces' (and civilian) memory discourse - accuses the press and intellectuals of regarding the regime as wholly negative. This politically prejudiced word is commonly used to refute criticism or calls for punishment, enabling them to be dismissed as personal revenge rather than treated

as affairs of general public interest (Greco, 2009: 532-533). Paradoxically, given the omission of the topic from their own public relations work, as shown by Matos, the Bibliex editors (2003: 10) complain that the military institution has been denied a voice, implying that military statements were censored by the media.⁹ To counter this, they proudly declare that they protected Brazil from communism and achieved unprecedented economic development (Biblioteca do Exército, 2003: 9-10, 25, 397, and the back covers of volumes 9 and 11). Information about human rights violations and censorship is deliberately withheld; the publication mentions neither assassinations nor torture nor *cassações*. With a complete lack of self-criticism, the editors fervently defend the military regime including its violent practices. By printing a press quote praising the notorious hardliner, General Muricy, they indicate their approval of radical officers, implying that the majority of the Armed Forces admired him (see volumes thirteen and fourteen). Again, the Bibliex editors, speaking for the military institution, attempt to disseminate a picture of a homogeneous military institution which *unisono* supported violent repression and continues to back hardliners. Evidence from interviews and intelligence files, however, unmasks such claims as tactical propaganda. By contrast, the CPDOC edition starts by explaining the ways in which repression was enacted under military rule, estimates the number of victims, and reveals that thirty-nine per cent of the assassinated and twenty-six per cent of the torture victims were young students (Castro and Araújo, 1994a: 7, 10, 13, 20, 22).

Overall, the memory discourse of the military institution in present-day Brazil is characterised either by silence or, on rare occasions such as the Bibliex edition, attempts to justify the use of torture under authoritarian rule by blaming the "communist" threat,

⁹ "Vetoed the access and channels of free expression". "Vedados os acessos e canais da livre expressão". (2003: 10)

accusing teachers and the press of "revanchism", and rejecting any form of repentance.¹⁰ In an article about military memory, Maria Celina D'Araújo (1998: 147) accordingly emphasises the silence of the military institution and concludes that conflicts are apparent from the interviews. It is important, however, to note that since 1964 the Armed Forces have not only tried to censor information about internal frictions, but actively perpetuated an image of military harmony through speeches, military journals or publications like the *Bibliex* edition. This deliberately promoted image of military homogeneity, which although acknowledged by the academic community has not yet been comprehensively deconstructed, may still shape the way in which the history of the regime is publicly narrated.

An alternative explanation for the lack of historiographical interest in oppressed military officials is the alleged scarcity of concrete evidence for intra-military frictions. The most significant sources, namely files from the military intelligence organs, are currently unavailable to researchers.¹¹ A perusal of the range of material available, however, reveals that sources cannot explain why intra-military dissent has previously been side-lined. Although oral history interviews and memoirs are problematic (they contradict each other, self-servingly justify the past retrospectively, and are informed by the present), they can be triangulated with further interviews or documentation. Besides the CPDOC oral history collection and the *Bibliex* edition, accessible documents include: the Ernesto Geisel Archives hosted by the CPDOC, SNI files held in the National Archives in Brasília, and the DEOPS and DOPS files kept in the regional archives, most

¹⁰ Similar aspects have been emphasised by Martins Filho 2002: 179, 187 and 2009: 89-107, and Araújo 1998: 147-72.

¹¹ As the intelligence organs circulated their reports, some files from the CIE, CISA, and CENIMAR can be found in regional archives and the SNI archive.

importantly in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.¹² Brazilian intelligence files, however, need to be treated cautiously, as they were often written by radical officials who may have manipulated the reports. Evidence shows how hardliners used SNI reports to perpetuate rumours of military discontent and threaten governments, including Geisel's, making it difficult to assess the validity of their claims.¹³ As shown previously, official statements from the Armed Forces are also unreliable, as they portray a misleading picture of military unity.

A key archive for researching the *militares cassados* is the Brasil Nunca Mais Archive (Brazil Never More, BNM) which is now accessible online.¹⁴ The BNM holds secretly copied documents pertaining to military trials, including those of dissenting military officials. Moreover, editions of the military newsletter *Noticiário do Exército* and the *Diário Oficial*, both of which are accessible at the Palácio Duque de Caxias in Rio, mention the names of *militares cassados* and occasionally subtly allude to military frictions and their censorship. Scholars can furthermore request access to the files on survivors of repression held by the Amnesty Commission, in case the victim has requested political amnesty. By 2010, nearly 60,000 amnesty cases had been decided (Abrão and Torelly, 2011b: 443-85), providing a file of documents for each case.

¹² Some years ago it was still possible to research the personal files on military officials held within the Centre of Military Documentation (CDOCex) in the Military Urban Sector in Brasília. According to a military expert, however, the CDOCex was closed in 2011, leaving the author wondering what happened to the aforementioned files. Evidence can also be found in archives outside Brazil. The US National Archives at College Park holds documentation on the Brazilian military including many declassified biographical files on officers who participated in the regime. The author suspects that other countries' intelligence and international relations records (if declassified), will similarly provide clues in the future.

¹³ Wilfred A. Bacchus (1985: 110) has noted that military subordinates had threatened their leaders before (1954, 1964) with public statements and manifestos. Hence this type of threat seems to have formed part of military tradition in Brazil.

¹⁴ Available online at <http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/> (accessed 10 August 2013).

Moreover, the files of many military officials whose rights were withdrawn are held by the ADNAM, mentioned previously. These files are currently being organised and catalogued at the CEDEM, with a view to digitalising the material (Celso, 2013). The ADNAM, a good starting point for making contacts with *militares cassados* for interview purposes, was founded by three hundred *militares cassados* in 1980 and resides in the Brazilian Press Association (ABI) building in Rio de Janeiro. Its roots go back further, however, to the antecedent organ Associação dos Militares Cassados (AMIC), which was founded in 1964. The ADNAM has been fighting for the return to democracy and full amnesty for the military officials whose rights were withdrawn. Following the 1979 Amnesty Law, the *militares cassados* were prohibited from resuming their former positions and remained disadvantaged in relation to their pension payments. Apart from its lobby work prior to the 1988 Constitution, the ADNAM has also played a key role in questioning the 1979 Amnesty Law. In 2008, it supported the Brazilian Lawyers’ Association’s (OAB) appeal to the Brazilian Supreme Court against the 1979 Amnesty Law by means of a so-called *amicus curiae* (when a third party supports the appealing organisation in a judicial process (OAB, 2011)). To conclude, although oral history interviews require careful interpretation, a variety of sources are available for triangulation including intelligence files and documents from numerous archives, the most important being the BNM archive and, in the immediate future, the CEDEM collection. Thus, disinterest in the *militares cassados* is not due to a lack of sources.

Finally, a third hypothesis for this research omission is that scholars have avoided a more nuanced investigation of the military institution for reasons which the author will categorise under the headings of: a “lack of understanding” of internal divisions (associated with a knowledge gap), on the one hand; and a research agenda, on the other hand (associated with the importance placed upon a topic and the scholar’s role as an engaged intellectual). Scholars still struggle to comprehend the internal

divisions among the military institution. As mentioned previously, the division between hardliners and moderates (or softliners) is highly problematic. The fact that (to the author's knowledge) entries under these terms remain absent from dictionaries reinforces the core claim of this article – the subject is under-researched. Apart from the difficulty involved in defining existing categories, let alone introducing more nuanced ones, the question of whether these definitions changed as the regime evolved must be raised: Does "hardliner" mean the same in 1964 as it does in 1969, following the installation of a systematic network of repression?¹⁵ Moreover, there is no single monograph that explores the internal division that existed from 1964 to 1985. This need to clarify the terms used, however, merely describes a symptom, but fails to satisfactorily explain why the subject has escaped greater scrutiny.

Does the research agenda pursued by scholars provide a more convincing explanation? The Brazilian historian, Denise Rollemberg (2009: 571), has observed and criticised the disproportionate number of studies on left-wing groups compared to those investigating military personnel. Similarly, Gláucio Soares (1994: 3), a CPDOC researcher, has criticised the fact that most researchers who write about the regime do so without directly contacting military personnel. While the author agrees that, at least until recently, the topic was under-explored, she also maintains that this limited interest should be placed within its historical context, as it may relate to the comparatively lengthy and moderate process of remembering and critically reviewing the military regime. In contrast to other South American countries, Brazil has only just started to thoroughly investigate the human rights crimes that occurred between 1964 and 1985; in May 2012, 27 years after the formal return to democracy, it instated a Truth Commission. Despite repeated demands from the United Nations and other human

¹⁵ The author tried to reconstruct the origins of the terms 'hardliners' and 'moderates', but neither military dictionaries, nor documents, nor interviews with military officials provided any substantial etymological information.

rights organisations, and disregarding the condemnation from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) in December 2010, Brazil has yet to hold military officials involved in these crimes accountable. Public opinion surveys showed that many Brazilians do not condemn the military dictatorship and its human rights abuses, in contrast to Argentina (Schneider, 2011: 204). On the contrary, a proportion of Brazilians are apparently disinterested in the military regime, a situation that seems to be slowly changing due to Brazil's youthful population and a heightened public awareness about the dictatorship with the advent of the National Truth Commission (Schneider, 2013: 149, 154, 158). Overall, as Glenda Mezarobba (2009), Paulo Abrão, and Marcelo D. Torelly (2011a) have shown, the route towards a committed reckoning with the dictatorship in Brazil has been much slower and received less public attention than in its neighbouring countries (with the possible exception of Uruguay).

The research gap needs to be placed in the historical context of struggle over how the military regime is remembered. Do scholars fear that research into repression within the military institution may blur the picture and "un-demonize" the military institution, at a time when some Brazilians still believe that the dictatorship was "not that bad" after all? Some scholars may assume – perhaps even unconsciously – that the construction of a clearly categorised military institution better serves the purpose of condemning the military dictatorship than a fragmented and nuanced representation. Researchers may prefer to investigate more politically convenient topics like victims of human rights abuses or guerrilla groups, or, if they do choose to cover the military perspective, prefer to underscore the military involvement in systematic torture which is often still denied, although the CNV is trying to rectify this situation (Pineiro, 2013). The choice of research topic inevitably has ethical implications and a direct impact on the politics of memory. In many other post-dictatorial societies, where the battle over memory was fiercely contested and opinions on the past diverged, it has taken several decades before

researchers "dared" to investigate the nuances and overlap between "perpetrator" and "victim" groups, post-war Germany and France being two examples. If researchers differentiate between degrees of perpetratorship, there is a danger that right-wing revisionists may use this as an excuse to defend the dictatorship, claiming that only a few military officials behaved indefensibly and that overall it was relatively benign. Yet, conducting nuanced research based on sound empirical evidence is not just a matter of professional practice, but a precondition for truly comprehending the military regime, with all its ambivalences. The final section addresses these paradoxes. It starts by providing a brief biography of Brigadier Rui Moreira Lima, and proceeds with the story of another militar cassado, Ivan Cavalcanti Proença.

Rui Moreira Lima and Ivan Cavalcanti Proença

Rui Moreira Lima is a key representative of the militares cassados who had a high public profile and played a leading role in their struggle for full amnesty and democratisation. An Air Force hero in the Second World War, he belonged to the nationalist, left-wing and legalist camp. Like many of his colleagues in "Senta a Pua" Air Force unit, he was expelled from the army immediately after the coup, had his political rights withdrawn, and faced imprisonment in 1964, 1967, and 1969.¹⁶ An SNI file reports that his aircraft came under fire in Italy, he was captured by German forces, and managed to escape despite being injured (National Archives Brasília, p. 21.). He is the only purged military official invited to give an interview for the Bibliex edition, probably because the interviews on the Second World War and the military regime were

¹⁶ Another well-known member of the same unit who faced a similar fate was Brigadeiro Francisco Teixeira. The purged military official and historian General Nelson Werneck Sodré, who belonged to the army not the Air Force, is another famous *militar cassado*, see for example Cunha and Cabral 2006.

conducted simultaneously, and the editors did not want to miss out on his account of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB). Like the interviews that the author conducted with Lima (2009a, b; 2012), his Bibliex interview reveals a paradoxical situation. On one hand, he strongly identifies with the Armed Forces to the extent that he attempts to defend their reputation. On the other hand, he severely criticises the illegal coup and the humiliation they inflicted during the regime. As a committed constitutionalist, Moreira Lima (2003: 40) rejected the coup: "All my military life I kept my promise to defend the constitution. The revolution [...] violated my rights. They withdrew my rights [...]".¹⁷ His legalist conviction was inspired by his father, a lawyer, as well as by his aversion to the Brazilian dictator Getúlio Vargas (1937-1945), and was strengthened by his experiences during the Second World War: "I was against it [coup], in reality, I never stopped defending democracy. I voluntarily fought for her [democracy] in the Second World War"¹⁸ (Moreira Lima, 2003: 55). Conceivably, Moreira Lima could have stopped Olympio Mourão Filho, the military commander whose troops eventually launched the coup. On 31 March 1964, the day the military seized power, Moreira Lima was sent to fly over Filho's troops and observe his movements. However, he received no orders to stop him, and nor did he choose to, because his father had taught him to use weapons with caution (Moreira Lima, 2003: 58-59; Interviews 2009a, b).

Immediately after the coup, Moreira Lima was imprisoned for forty-seven days. In the Bibliex interview, he candidly describes the terrible conditions under which he was incarcerated: first he was imprisoned in a dilapidated ship - "cockroaches, rats, extremely dirty"- where for three weeks he saw no sunlight and was unable to shower.

¹⁷ "Em toda minha vida militar, mantive o compromisso de defender a Constituição. A Revolução de 31 de Março violentou meus direitos. Cassaram-me até o direito de trabalhar [...]."

¹⁸ "Fui contra [o golpe], na realidade nunca deixei de defender a democracia, por ela, lutei voluntariamente na Segunda Guerra Mundial."

He went on hunger strike and was subsequently moved to another ship and held with three other brigadiers, two marines, and two generals. Here he received slightly better treatment, because he knew the officer in charge (Moreira Lima, 2003: 67-68, 71). After seven weeks, he was transferred to the military branch of the Air Force in which he was serving.

His military tribunal in Santa Cruz was presided over by the radical hardliner, Brigadier João Paulo Burnier, a notoriously sadistic torturer from the Brazilian Air Force who embraced institutionalised repression and who attempted to hurl his enemies into the open sea from a helicopter.¹⁹ Yet, this exceptionally radical official, Burnier (who was forcibly retired himself in 1972), was also his personal antagonist. Moreira Lima (2003: 76-79) thought the tribunal was a "farce" and accused his interrogator (Burnier) of being the subversive rather than himself.

Following his first imprisonment and tribunal, Moreira Lima was not only expelled from the Armed Forces, but also had to contend with sabotage in his professional life. His permission to fly was withdrawn (this was common among purged Air Force officers) and he was rapidly dismissed from every company he worked for, because the SNI threatened to withdraw state subsidies (Moreira Lima, 2003: 79-82). Intelligence files confirm that, under the SNI's orders, Moreira Lima was denied a bank loan necessary for the business that he eventually started, as nobody would employ him (National Archives Brasília, p. 21).

¹⁹ Burnier was a member of an elite parachute regiment of the Air Force, the Para-Sar troops. In April 1968, Captain Sérgio Ribeiro Miranda de Carvalho (also known as Macaco), refused to obey Burnier's orders to throw opponents into the open sea. The list of Brazilians intended to be killed included the ex-Presidents Juscelino Kubitschek and Jânio Quadros, the politician Carlos Lacerda and the Catholic Bishop Dom Hélder Câmara. Macaco was later severely punished; he faced a military trial, lost his political rights, received death threats, and his professional life was sabotaged. Leading military figures, most notably Eduardo Gomes, unsuccessfully tried to restore Macaco's rights. Only in 1992, shortly before his death, did Macaco regain his political rights. For a short summary of the Para-Sar case, consult Couto (2003: 90-91).

In 1970, Moreira Lima was imprisoned for the second time, even more violently on this occasion. In 1969, the so-called Operation Bandeirantes (OBAN) was launched in São Paulo, which marked the inception of the systematic repressive organ, Department of Information Operations - Centre of Internal Defense Operations (Destacamento de Operações de Informações - Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna, DOI-CODI). Although torture had been used against Brazilians before it had never been systematic. Eight DOI-CODI officials arrested Moreira Lima (2003: 83-86) in front of his family, threw a hood over his head, locked him in a room with just a broken mattress and intimidated his son, Pedro. This coincided with the so-called *Operation Gaiola* (Cage Operation) which involved a systematic screening of presumed "subversives". Prisoners were interrogated and an evaluation report recommended whether they should be cleared. As these documents were retained, it is possible to review the entire transcript of Moreira Lima's responses to his interrogators.

Asked about his "ideological position", Moreira Lima declared: "[...] I consider myself a liberal, a democrat, who is incapable of living under a regime where the people cannot participate through the ballot, in direct and free elections"²⁰ (National Archives Brasília, p. 3). He admitted that he had maintained contact with those *cassados* who were his long-time friends, and confirmed:

"Concerning relations with subversive elements, I don't have any. Like I said before, I am completely distanced from any political or even professional (military) activities, [I am] concentrating on translating books for different publishing companies, a job that enables me to earn

²⁰ "[...] considero-me um liberal, democrata, incapaz de viver num regime no qual o povo não possa participar através das urnas, em votação direta e livre."

just enough to make ends meet, given that the retirement allowance is insufficient.”²¹ (National Archives Brasília, p. 3)

This excerpt corroborates Moreira Lima’s difficulty earning a living (mentioned in the interviews), due to the SNI’s sabotage tactics. Asked his opinion on terrorism (alluding to a series of kidnappings of foreign ambassadors by guerrilla groups), he replied: “I always spoke out against terrorism. [...] My ‘leftwingness’ has nothing to do with Marxism. I am affiliated to social democracy, I was even a founding member of the Socialist Party in Brazil, so fiercely attacked and falsely accused by Brazilian communism.”²² (National Archives Brasília, p. 3). In a remarkable statement, given as Moreira Lima was being held by the repressive organs, he made his feelings about the regime clear:

“The criticism that I can, first, level against the first two governments of the Revolution is the same that I level against the current government [1970], and it is based exclusively on my belief that every government should have popular endorsement, through free elections – the essence of democracy. The very fact that I, a poor man, who has nothing to do with subversion or corruption, have already been imprisoned three times by order of the government makes it clear that this government still has not understood the profound difference between ‘opposition’

²¹ “Quanto a [sic] ligações com elementos subversivos, não tenho nenhuma. Como disse, estou inteiramente afastado de quaisquer atividades políticas o mesmo profissionais, limitando-me a traduções de livros, para as mais diferentes editoras, com o que ganho o mínimo suficiente para viver, já que o que percebo como aposentado é insuficiente.”

²² “Sempre me manifestei contra o terrorismo. [...] Meu ‘esquerdismo’ nada tem de marxista. Filio-me ao socialismo democrático, e fui mesmo um dos fundadores, no Brasil, do Partido Socialista Brasileiro, tão duramente atacado e caluniado pelo comunismo brasileiro.”

and 'subversion', in the precise sense of the terms."²³ (National Archives Brasília, p. 4)

The official who evaluated these answers, Colonel Mario Ribeiro Sampaio, concluded on 6 November 1970: "the name of Ex-Air Force Colonel Rui Barbosa Moreira Lima should be removed from the current list of individuals to be imprisoned during the next operation similar to 'Gaiola'." (National Archives Brasília, p. 21) Sampaio had also contacted the SNI about the withheld licence, to discover that "nothing had been registered" in Moreira Lima's file since 1964. In the author's view, this incident shows how SNI officials had abused their power simply to harass him. Sampaio succeeded in clearing his name with the SNI and Moreira Lima finally got the licence he needed for his company ((National Archives Brasília, p. 21). In a later interview reflecting on his 1970 imprisonment, Moreira Lima (2003: 86) emphasised his sorrow and disappointment on discovering that the military colleague who had betrayed him was his companion from the Second World War.²⁴ In his view, the DOI-CODI were instructed to use violence: "[...] the order given was to be violent".²⁵

Fascinatingly, Moreira Lima strongly identifies with the Armed Forces despite the humiliation he suffered. Drawing a clear distinction between torturers and the military institution itself, Moreira Lima (2003: 86) regards those involved in repression like Burnier as violent by nature:

²³ "A crítica que, do início, eu possa fazer aos dois governos iniciais da Revolução [Castello Branco e Costa e Silva] é a mesma que faço do atual [Médici], e que se baseia exclusivamente na minha crença de que todo o governo deve ter o endosso popular, expresso através de eleições livres – essência da Democracia. O fato de eu, homen pobre, que nada tem de subversivo o corrupto, já ter sido prêso três vezes por ordem do Gôverno, deixa claro que o referido Gôverno ainda não percebeu, na exatidão do termo, a profunda diferença que existe entre 'oposição' e 'subversão'."

²⁴ The author tried to find out who "betrayed" him (Lima, 2009b), but he refused to reveal any names and I was unable to reconstruct the case.

²⁵ "E isso aí, a ordem era para fazer violência".

"I am offended by the cruelty and this revolution has nothing to do with that. The revolution for me is part of the past and my philosophy is to accept the revolution, because those who tortured and who committed this violence [...] would do the same in any other place, because it is in their nature, they are people designed for that."²⁶

The claim that he "accept[ed] the revolution" appears to testify to an inner quest to make peace with the oppression suffered while simultaneously feeling compelled to continue identifying with the military institution. While his pride in the Armed Forces is understandable given his youthful affiliation to the corps and his experience in Italy, it is at the same time illogical. By rationalising military oppression as a form of "exceptionalism", he seems to deny the fact that the military leaders deliberately ordered a systematic apparatus of repression, based on violence, to be constructed. His pride in the military institution is evident within the first minute of the Bibliex account, in which he emphasises how willing he – the ostracised – is to be interviewed (Moreira Lima, 2003: 40). He does not denounce the Armed Forces as such: "So, this is sad [...] but you never found me speaking ill of the Air Force, speaking ill of the Armed Forces, speaking ill of our Armed Forces [...]. The Air Force is my life!"²⁷ Moreira Lima, 2003: 87). Even as a victim, he tries to defend the Armed Forces' reputation, and thus became what may be called a victim with no voice or someone who has twice been silenced and

²⁶ "Estou magoado com essa crueldade e a Revolução não tem nada a ver com isso. A Revolução para mim é uma página virada e tomei, como minha filosofia, de assumir a Revolução, pois que as pessoas que torturaram, que fizeram violência, esses em qualquer lugar, fariam a mesma coisa, porque está na índole deles, são pessoas desenhadas para isso".

²⁷ "Então, isso é triste, é triste, mas vocês nunca me encontraram em lugar nenhum falando mal da Aeronáutica, falando mal do Exército, falando mal das nossas Forças Armadas. [...] A Aeronáutica é a minha vida!"

victimised. He cannot openly accuse the people who humiliated him, because he wants to prevent any allegations of "revanchism". Thus, he claims that he does not want to divide the Armed Forces; on the contrary, he demands a united defence "against the USA" (Moreira Lima, 2003: 40, 89). Paradoxically, his "voice" was not only silenced "from the outside" by the state or society, but also "from the inside" by himself, in a desperate attempt to cling to a more positive image of the Armed Forces which he finds easier to reconcile in his mind.

While neither the Armed Forces nor the public nor (at least to a limited extent) scholars have given a voice to oppressed military officials like Moreira Lima, the Truth Commission is now offering them a public platform. On 4 May 2013 the first public meeting with 16 *militares cassados* was held, during which Rui Moreira Lima was publicly honoured. Although he was unable to attend in person, his testimony was screened via video-link, telling the story of his father's letter, imploring him never to conspire against the constitutional oath and never to use violence against innocent people (Oliveira, 2013). At a second public meeting held on 14 June 2013, five further *militares cassados* gave their testimonies, including Colonel Ivan Cavalcanti Proença, an ex-cavalry official. Proença (2004) published an autobiography that provides critical insights into the suppression of critical thought within the Armed Forces – an arena systematically censored by military spokesmen and official publications. Like Moreira Lima, though of a younger generation, Proença (2004: 18, 62) was a legalist and honoured his oath to defend the constitution. In 1964, he refused to open fire on students in Rio de Janeiro, thereby preventing an urban massacre.²⁸ Now a journalist, writer and teacher, Proença was only granted amnesty on 29 May 2010, after a long struggle (ABI, 2011).

²⁸ In Recife, by contrast, two students were shot in the first few days after the coup.

After the 1979 Amnesty Law and even after return to formal democracy in 1985, many *militares cassados* continued to struggle for their full military rights. Over time new laws (1985, 1988) gradually led to military officers being granted more rights, but the exact individual rights of each *militar cassado* depended on various criteria including the manner in which the official was purged, the military branch with which he served, and his rank at the time (Machado, 2010; Cunha, 2010: 10-16). As Burlamaqui Machado (2010: 118) explains, many *militares cassados* felt disadvantaged by the 1979 Amnesty Law, publicly considered it a farce ("A anistias foi uma farsa", 1985), and continued fighting for a "real amnesty". Unlike previous amnesties in Brazilian history, the military officials were not reintegrated into their respective military careers and were only reinstated at the military rank they had held at the time of their expulsion, while their comrades had long since been promoted (Machado, 2010: 119-20). Moreover, most purged military officials were denied the opportunity to resume their active military service by the claim that there were no vacancies available (*não há interesse da administração*). While they were entitled to pension payments (even for the years during which they were forcibly retired – 1964 to 1979), these were comparatively meagre because they were calculated based on the officials' original rank. Furthermore, only those military officials who were purged by institutional or complementary acts were allowed to formally apply for reintegration (the need to *apply* in itself was a form of humiliation), thereby disadvantaging the lower ranks who were officially purged on the basis of alleged misconduct. The Constitution of 1988 first established the possibility of economic reparation, although this was restricted to a very limited group of Air Force officials purged by secret decrees (*portarias secretas*). Only in 2002, with the establishment of the Amnesty Commission, were military officials in general allowed to apply for political amnesty and reparation payments (Machado, 2010: 137-38). Ivan

Cavalcanti Proença was granted amnesty on 29 May 2010, more than three decades after the 1979 Amnesty Law.

In Proença's view (2003: 67, 71), many soldiers were legalists at the time and could have prevented the coup, had they organised themselves. Wilfred A. Bacchus (1986: 406, 411) has similarly argued that so-called "legalists" or "leftist nationalists" were significant prior to 1964, and, although they were repressed after the coup, legalist positions continued to be reflected in numerous military publications. Unlike Moreira Lima, Proença does not explicitly describe the humiliation he faced. Readers of his autobiography can imagine the nature of his experience, for he describes these memories as "unpleasant" (2003: 14). He recounts the sabotage tactics used by the DOPS, how he was denounced, and refers to torture only occasionally. Even Proença's wife experienced sabotage; she was put under surveillance by security organs and barred from both teaching at university and working within academic administration (Proença, 2003: ix, x, 18-19, 98).

Yet, despite this humiliation, Proença (2003: ix, 11, 13) also still strongly identifies with the Armed Forces as an institution. The son of a general, he was educated at military schools and like Moreira Lima speaks of "our" Armed Forces. This identification explains why he explicitly aspires to write a "balanced" rather than a "revanchist" book, in a similar manner to Moreira Lima, and with military readers in mind (Proença, 2003: 14). Overall, his autobiography reads like a highly critical account that offers substantiated arguments instead of mere allegations. For example, Proença (2003: 16, 35, 38) exposes official military claims perpetuated by the Bibliex Edition; he deconstructs the notion that the coup was a "counter-coup", often defended by military officials, and repeatedly calls the alleged communist peril a "farce". Like Moreira Lima, Proença (2003: 15-16) was accused of being a communist and a "subversive", although both were clearly anti-communist and nationalist. The anti-communist "hysteria"

described by many military officials was used as a pretext even against fellow comrades, as in the case of Moreira Lima (Castro and Soares, 1995: 120, 132; Costa 2003: 68, 85).

Proença's critique (2003: 3, 39, 91), however, does not only address the Armed Forces. He also accuses the Brazilian middle classes and intellectuals along with government officials and business personnel of being "opportunists", attacks the press for their "hypocrisy", and describes 1964 as a "military-civilian coup". Here Proença concurs with historians such as René A. Dreifuss (1981), Daniel Aarão Reis (2000), and Denise Rollemberg (2009: 569-77), all of whom have drawn attention to the previously neglected but now increasingly discussed role of civilians in co-operating with the coup, and subsequently with the regime.

The cases of both Proença and Moreira Lima serve as a reminder that a significant number of military personnel held "democratic" and "legalist" ideals. Many officials had opposed Vargas and voluntarily fought in the Second World War. Between 1964 and 1985 the institution broke with its military tradition in many ways: it violated the ideals of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB) (25,000 Brazilian soldiers fought against the Nazi dictatorship in Europe and 1,000 lost their lives); it partially violated the rules of hierarchy through the unorthodox way in which leading positions were distributed and critical military officials expelled; and it abandoned the ideal of honour by humiliating respectable military officials.

To summarise, despite experiencing a decade of repression, Moreira Lima and Proença strongly identify with the military institution. The *militares cassados*, in particular, seem to be in a double-bind: on one hand, they have been ill-treated and marginalised by the military institution itself; on the other, they object to the stigmatisation of all military men as "torturers" without any differentiation, continuing to identify with what they perceive as the traditional values of the Armed Forces. While scholars and the CNV have shown that the regime systematically repressed opponents

including military staff, they tend to explain the regime's trajectory towards violence by reference to "extremists" in the repressive organs, incompetent military commanders, and opportunism within the army.

Recognition at last? Comprehending internal divisions

This article has identified a need to publicly recognise and systematically research the *militares cassados* in particular and the internal division within the armed forces in general. Some researchers such as Martins Filho, Chirio, Burlamaqui Machado, and Paulo da Cunha Ribeiro have made inroads into the task of creating a more subtle and nuanced historiography: Martins Filho (2002: 188-193), for example, who usefully illustrates the variety of military voices that existed, ranging from officials who glorified and practiced torture such as Colonel Brilhante Ustra, head of the DOI-CODI in São Paulo between 1970 and 1974, to those who condemned it in principle such as General Ivan de Souza Mendesa. The joint efforts of Ribeiro's research group, which aims to produce a four-volume edition (UNESP, 2013), and the CNV may play a vital role in recognising, documenting, and researching the *militares cassados* and bringing their stories to wider public and scholarly attention.

The internal military division was arguably one of the Brazilian dictatorship's key characteristics, and nearly fifty years after the coup there still remains a lack of appropriate categories with which to describe let alone explain it. A large body of source material is available. What this article refers to as the "myth of military unity", together with a lack of knowledge about internal frictions, describes rather than explains this research gap. While our limited understanding (and the dearth of both time and resources for research) may partially explain this phenomenon, the main reason may ultimately lie in scholars' research agendas and the fear that a more nuanced portrait of

the spectrum of military officers, ranging from the oppressed to human rights transgressors, may be abused by “revisionists” who continue to downplay the systematic state violence committed under the military regime. The stories of *militares cassados* like Rui Moreira Lima and Ivan Proença challenge our notions of “perpetrator” and “victim”, and thus ultimately our understanding of “right” and “wrong”.²⁹ Engaged evidence-based scholarship may, however, complexify concepts, denounce all forms of human rights abuses, and, at the same time, contest revisionist denials.

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²⁹ It would have been interesting to investigate the relation between the *militares cassados* who were organised in associations like the ADNAM and other victim associations related to the armed struggle. The author received contradictory informal comments on this rapport ranging from acts and statements of solidarity by some associations to claims that the *militares cassados* were fighting a separate battle by others. These relations also appear to have changed over time. Burlamaqui Machado’s (2010: 119, 133, 138) work suggests that the *militares cassados* aligned with other groups during the struggle for amnesty prior to 1979 and again in 1985 as part of the Federação de Defesa de Anistia (FADA), lobbying for a revision of the Amnesty Law in the run-up to the *Constituinte*, but that activism and solidarity subsequently declined when the *militares cassados*’ demands for full rehabilitation were not met. According to the current President of Tortura Nunca Mais in Rio de Janeiro, Victória Grabois, these relations have been marked by outright solidarity. The author wishes to thank Victória Grabois and her further informants for their kind support.

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