

# The opposition to the Brazilian dictatorship abroad through cartoons and caricatures (1964-1979)<sup>1</sup>

A oposição à ditadura brasileira no exterior através de charges e caricaturas (1964-1979)

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**Abstract:** Graphic humor can make a strong contribution to understanding the struggles between the state and other political forces whose words were limited by state repression in times of “emergency”. This struggle was also waged from exile, as cartoons published in international newspapers and magazines became strong weapons to expose crimes perpetrated by the military. Through a selection of satirical cartoons published by *Marcha* and *Front Brésilien d'Information* (FBI), this article examines the contributions of the iconographic analysis of graphic sources to understanding the image of the Brazilian dictatorship that the opposition – specially through the actions of the exiles – struggled to disseminate abroad.

**Keywords:** graphic humor, repression, exile.

**Resumo:** As imagens gráficas de humor podem contribuir sobremaneira para a compreensão do combate travado entre o Estado e as demais forças políticas cuja palavra foi limitada pela repressão estatal em períodos de “exceção”. Esse combate também foi travado no exílio, tornando as charges e caricaturas fortes armas de denúncia dos crimes cometidos pelos militares por meio dos periódicos internacionais. A partir de uma seleção de imagens de humor publicadas em *Marcha* e no *Front Brésilien d'Information* (FBI), o presente artigo busca analisar as contribuições da análise iconográfica de fontes gráficas para a compreensão da imagem da ditadura brasileira que a oposição – sobretudo por meio da ação dos exilados –, buscava divulgar no exterior.

**Palavras-chave:** humor gráfico, repressão, exílio.

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## Introduction

The attack by individuals connected to the Jihadi movement against the cartoonists of the French periodical *Charlie Hebdo* on January 7, 2015 in Paris led to a discussion on the limits of graphic humor and its role as a political weapon. It became clear from the debate that, besides being efficient to quickly convey messages that carry a critical force, cartoons and caricatures can show the social and political conflicts that mark a given society in different historical contexts.

Their importance can be multiplied for researchers who intend to understand historical periods when the state limits access to the documents involved. This is the case of the authoritarian regime that began in Brazil after the 1964 military coup. Little material was produced by the opposition during the period due to state-imposed censorship. Moreover, the authoritarian regime destroyed many of the state documents produced during the period and the rest remained classified as official secrets for decades after the end of the regime.

Censorship and interference in school curriculums tended to produce the estrangement of the “internal enemy”. By controlling the political discourse disseminated by the press, the military aimed at classifying their opponents as “subversive terrorists” in order to combat them more “legitimately”. Thus, besides trying to shut down a large part of the press, the military also managed to obtain the support of a considerable number of the media. According to Beatriz Kuschmir, there was a connection between certain sectors of the media and the military, with the objective of supporting repression and increasing its outreach (Kuschmir, 2004, p. 251).

However, part of the Brazilian press made a remarkable effort to resist authoritarianism. This was the case of the weekly *O Pasquim*, which circulated between 1969 and 1991 and was outstanding among the alternative or counterculture periodicals, challenging the authoritarianism of the military by using humor. Published in Rio de Janeiro, *O Pasquim* became known both for the cartoons, caricatures and photomontages and for the texts of political humor. However, the conditions imposed on the press in Brazil were not at all favorable: the group responsible for the periodical faced bomb attacks on their office in 1970 to the arrest of members of the newspaper editorial staff the same year, which was announced in an ironical tone by the group as “an outbreak of influenza” that infected the team publishing the weekly (Augusto and Jaguar, 2006).

One can thus perceive that internally most of the periodicals were not really able to oppose the arbitrary measures of the Brazilian military regime due to censorship. Besides, several periodicals supported the decisions made by the military rulers (Kuschmir, 2004, p. 251).

Nevertheless, although scarce, the printed productions of the opposition to the dictatorship – whether texts or images – are invaluable historiographic records of the period whose “non-memory” was instituted by the military and by the governments that followed after the negotiated

transition (Padrós, 2009). Cartoons and caricatures can contribute greatly to diminish this “non-memory”, since, by “disguising” their criticism in a humorous popular language, they often managed to get around censorship and bring to the surface the silenced voice of those oppressed by the regime.

Records of this kind were also produced abroad, where the struggle against the Brazilian military regime continued. The militants forced or motivated to leave the country due to the repression of the military regime became protagonists in this struggle when they sought new ways to fight the military from abroad. By continuing their actions of opposition abroad, they frustrated the expectations of the Brazilian military who instituted exile as a mechanism to fight opposition, with the main function of isolating the militants. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century exile fulfilled this function relatively efficiently (Roniger, 2010). This certainty resulted from the fact that militants were removed from national territory and also from the conditions provided by international law, which determine that exiles cannot carry out political activities abroad.

Due to the limitations of actions by exiles in opposition, the latter dedicated themselves intensively to denouncing the crimes committed by the military. Thus, the international periodicals became an important weapon to denounce those crimes. Theoretically uncensored, the discourses of opposition to the regime which were published in the international press could go beyond the extremely limited space given to them by the state in Brazil. Like the periodicals that insisted on opposing the military regime within the country, externally graphic humor was also used as a form of combat. In this way the cartoons and caricatures are outstanding among the languages used by the press that circulated abroad to discredit the Brazilian military regime (Marques, 2006).

This article<sup>3</sup> emphasizes analyzing the contributions of the iconographic analysis of graphic sources to understand the image of the Brazilian dictatorship that the opposition – mainly through the exiles – sought to disseminate abroad. In other words, the article aims at understanding how graphic humor became a political weapon to be used against the dictatorship by the opposition in exile.

Therefore, the contributions on the use of images as historiographic sources and of the iconographic method to analyze cartoons and caricatures are reviewed. Then we shall analyze cartoons about the military regime published abroad, especially two images of graphic humor published

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by the leftist weekly *Marcha*, in Uruguay, and one published by the *Front Brésilien d'Information* (FBI), one of the publications organized and/or supported by Brazilian exiles in Algeria and in France, countries that immediately welcomed the Brazilian militants exiled by the regime<sup>4</sup>.

## New History and the analysis of graphic humor

In the field of History, the use of analytic resources to understand visual documents has always been a strong tradition among art historians. However, among the historians working exclusively on political topics, for a long time the images were commonly used in their analyses as merely illustrative elements.

The emergence of the new historiographic paradigms, taken on by the “new” political history, by the cultural history, made it possible to use as historical documents sources that were formerly neglected by a large number of researchers. One of the assumptions of these new paradigms is that they allow new historiographic approaches because they go beyond the limits proposed by the traditional paradigm, which saw the official documents as the only legitimate sources (Burke, 1992, p. 13). In this way, letters, photographs, oral sources and graphic images became inexhaustible sources for the historiographic analysis of political topics and phenomena.

The use of graphic humor as a source of historiography is particularly important to analyze historical periods considered as times of “emergency”, i.e. periods when the state limited and controlled the channels of political participation and expression. Since they carry a very strong critical force, the images of graphic humor can provide a great contribution to understanding the *political confrontation*, even in studies that use a historical-institutional approach, i.e. that intend look at the role of political regimes in the forms taken by the confrontation. For Tilly and Tarrow (2008, p. 20), *political confrontation* covers the interactions between the state and a party (that can consist of individuals, institutions or groups) that presents *claims* – that are also of interest to others.

According to Joaquim Fonseca, in contexts of conflict cartoons and caricatures become important weapons for those whose words are limited by state repression:

*A stinging and terror-inspiring weapon, caricature, throughout history, has been a blunt, merciless voice that, even under the most severe conditions of censorship, by using the metaphoric, subversive and veiled language of irony, satire, sarcasm and wordplay, denounces and claims the sufferings of the oppressed. Caricature is, therefore, a sharp weapon that people applaud when they see it ridicule force, despotism, authoritarianism, intolerance, injustice* (Fonseca, 1999, p. 12).

Hence, caricatures and cartoons are attack weapons that seek to act through drawings that reveal or highlight the selected characteristics and details of the target that can be ridiculed. For this cartoonists commonly seek to emphasize and exaggerate in their drawings the features considered salient. The word *caricature*, indeed, is from the Italian verb *caricare*, which means to overload, exaggeratedly (Fonseca, 1999, p. 17). In this sense, it should be noted that generally the reason for laughter lies in the exaggeration of known traits. Thus, when causing laughter, the caricatures and cartoons become dangerous weapons, since they present a given information or viewpoint quickly and with impact.

The great power of communication that characterizes the images of graphic humor causes them to have a great outreach among different social sectors. Besides reaching the public that funds the media, namely the middle and high strata of society, they also reach the more popular classes. By seeking to convey an idea in a simple and direct way, graphic humor translates into popular language political topics that might be considered difficult for unlettered individuals to understand (Motta, 2007, p. 197). Generally, the simpler the message to be conveyed by the cartoon or caricature, the greater its impact.

However, according to Bergson (1987, p. 14), laughter only exists when it is shared, i.e. “laughter must have social significance”. Therefore, for caricatures to obtain the expected reaction from the reader, they usually follow the ideas presented in other verbal texts. According to Fonseca, “generally a caricature is produced aiming at a publication designed for a public that knows the original model, person or event” (Fonseca, 1999, p. 17).

For this purpose, images of graphic humor, like any visual resource, use different strategies of communication

<sup>4</sup> The images were not chosen randomly: my purpose in using them was to present a view that would represent, although to a limited extent, opposition using humorous images in the two phases of Brazilian exile, the Latin American and the European one. Besides, the periodicals selected are outstanding for the outreach of their publications and by the fact that they were published regularly. *Marcha* was published weekly between 1939 and 1974. In this case, the study covered the period in which Brazilian exiles were mainly in Uruguay: between 1964 and 1968. On the other hand, the *Front Brésilien d'Information* (FBI) was intended to be a monthly, but due to restrictions imposed on militants in exile, it was less regularly published, compared to *Marcha*, which was organized by Uruguayan (and thus local) citizens. Actually, the periodical was created in Algeria, in 1969, by Miguel Arraes and it circulated in several countries during exile, including Chile until 1973. The study of *Front* covered the issues published between 1973 and 1979, a phase in which the Brazilian exiles were mostly in France. A great number of humorous images were published by those periodicals during the period studied, but a small number of images was chosen because of the objective of applying all stages of the methodology adopted to analyze the images.

pertaining to language. Metaphor, metonymy and irony, current verbal type languages, are also commonly used by caricatural images, according to the interpretation of Motta (2007, p. 198). In the case of the political cartoons and caricatures, simple metaphors are often used because they can quickly make the idea conveyed understandable.

*Metaphors help explain the world and make discourses more comprehensible, bringing them to a level that can be understood. According to a classical definition, a metaphor consists of presenting an idea under the sign of another more evident or better known idea. By using familiar and widely known images, metaphors allow making the spectator understand distant and abstract topics. When they are well constructed, metaphors produce messages with a high power of communication, capable of summarizing complex arguments and making them reach the eyes of the public rapidly and efficiently (Motta, 2007, p. 198).*

By reinforcing certain information already shared by society through known metaphors, the graphic images of humor may contribute to constructing memories and stereotypes or even strengthening them. According to Elias Thomé Saliba, humoristic representations play an important role in the process of constructing collective images (Saliba, 2002). Zanker, in turn, emphasizes that images in general play a major role in conveying the values of a society (1992, p. 13).

On the other hand, it should be highlighted that although cartoons and caricatures reveal political confrontation and oppressed voices, they are also rich historical documents. According to Motta (2006, p. 23), the graphic images of humor may “function at the same time as a chronicle and interpretation, because it is not easy to separate the act of informing and the act of interpreting political events”. This means that they represent the view of a given party involved in the political confrontation.

In this sense, it is important to emphasize that there is no type of document that can be taken as an *absolute truth*. Depending on the way the documents are treated and selected (Certeau, 2002), different perspectives of a same topic can be produced (Marques, 2006, p. 36). Therefore, we consider the images discursive practices. Thus, we align ourselves with Regina Beatriz Guimarães Neto when saying that unwritten sources such as oral reports should be analyzed critically, like other discursive practices (Guimarães Neto, 2006, p. 45-56).

For this purpose they must be crossmatched with other documents and specific methodologies must be used for each type of document. Like any document, the images bring to light a certain point of view about a

specific subject. Therefore, regardless of the nature of the source, “it is necessary to read the documents between the lines” (Burke, 1992, p. 25). Hence we use iconographic and iconological analysis of the images to understand what perspective of the Brazilian dictatorship was disseminated by the Brazilian opposition in exile abroad.

Iconography, according to Panokfsky, is an attempt to establish a dialogue between the historian and the icons, the images drawn, painted or printed, architecture, movies and all other forms of visual arts through “image description and classification” (Panokfsky, 1989, p. 31). In this way, iconography is essential for the first level of understanding of the images. In other words, it contributes to knowledge regarding the primary and natural elements of a given image. For this purpose, analysis should be divided into two steps: pre-iconographic analysis and iconographic analysis.

In the first stage of interpretation, the pre-iconographic one, the person who receives the image uses the knowledge acquired in their everyday experiences. Based on this everyday knowledge, the image must be described: colors, lines, scenarios and characters must be identified in the image. Later, in the iconographic stage of analysis, the recipient must go beyond the description of the images and, based on the totality of the pre-iconographic elements, identify thematic or allegorical elements of the image that is being analyzed. In this way, iconography helps identify the main references that have influenced the conception of a given image of graphic humor.

Iconography is also the way to get to iconology, which in turn pays more attention to interpretation than to description (Panokfsky, 1989, p. 34). In this stage of interpretation, differently from the previous ones, the recipient must have other sources of knowledge besides everyday life. Thus, based on the iconological analysis the recipient must be able to locate the image in time, socially, politically and philosophically. In other words, the image must be understood as a unique historical and social source. For this purpose, iconological analysis requires previously acquired knowledge that will enable finding collective elements that help identify the historical and political context of the image and its source. Therefore, in this way iconology is the last stage of the classical analysis proposed by Panokfsky for image comprehension.

As already mentioned, in the case of the graphic images of humor, the more direct their message, the greater their impact and, consequently, the faster they will reach their goal: to cause laughter. In this sense, the laughter expected for a cartoon or caricature does not always require the recipient to conclude all stages of image analysis proposed by Panokfsky. The metaphors and other artifices used by the cartoonists seek to make it

easier to understand the message. On the other hand, by advancing to the final stage of the analysis, the secondary meanings present in the images can be deciphered. This advance can potentiate the role of the graphic images as historiographic sources for the understanding of certain political events, since they can make it easier to understand secondary meanings.

In this sense, the analysis of other sources is essential to understand images according to the methodology proposed by Panofsky. The analysis of periodicals, interviews and other sources may contribute decisively to the better understanding of the historical and political moment referred to by a graphic humor image. Only on the basis of knowledge is it possible for the recipient to identify and analyze the country, the ideologies, the time and even the characters in an image.

The use of this methodology, together with the analysis of other primary and secondary sources, allows understanding the primary, secondary and intrinsic meanings in the images selected. In the next topic we shall attempt to analyze the main characteristics of the graphic humor images published in the countries where a large number of Brazilian exiles lived, especially Uruguay and France.

## Opposition to the Brazilian dictatorship abroad through laughter

In any society, the production and dissemination of all and any type of discourse, spoken or written, are controlled somehow, according to Michel Foucault. The main purpose of this control, according to Foucault, is to “conjure its powers and dangers, rein in its random occurrence, avoid its heavy and feared materiality” (Foucault, 1996, p. 8-9).

However, as already discussed, during the Brazilian military regime controlling discourse was considered a priority action of the authoritarian state. The limitations imposed on the media were part of a series of measures that aimed at extinguishing the channels of political participation. At this time marked by censorship, the alternative press played a major role as a space for denunciation. It provided a privileged space for cartoons and caricatures, because of the speed at which they managed to reach the public and convey messages of opposition to the government.

Abroad, besides the alternative press created by the exiled opponents to the regime themselves, a few local periodicals also offered space for the exiles to denounce the Brazilian political regime. Several periodicals in those countries, interested in the domestic situation of the coun-

try from which these migrants came, received and tried to disseminate the exiles' denunciations through newspaper reports, publishing the stories of exiles and graphic images.

In this way, the exiles sought to make use of the projection of their actions to the transnational sphere enabled by political exile. According to Roniger, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as new players emerged on the international scene giving rise to the transnational society and the universalization of values such as democracy and human rights, exile became a *transnational* political sphere. Whereas formerly exile had been an efficient mechanism for political exclusion, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through the networks of militants established after forced migration, it became a *transnational* political sphere, capable of projecting the outreach of the political actions of exiles (Roniger, 2010, p. 104-105). Therefore the Brazilian exiles not only continued their militancy, but they also managed to extend the reach of their actions.

The international periodicals were very important in this process, since the distance from the national territory prevented any kind of action in opposition to the government. Therefore, denouncing the crimes committed by the authoritarian regime was seen by the enemies of the Brazilian dictatorship as a priority: it was believed that it could become one of the strongest weapons to be used against the military from abroad. According to José Maria Rabêlo, who lived in Chile during most of his exile,

*The dictatorship was right in attributing a campaign abroad against the regime to the exiles. 'They are denigrating the image of Brazil', was the shopworn discourse of the military and their servants, including the press. Actually, what we did was to denounce the crimes committed by the dictatorship, which could not be divulged within the country (Rabêlo e Rabêlo, 2001, p. 194).*

Several periodicals in other countries directed part of their pages to the Brazilian military regime. Outstanding in Uruguay, for instance, is *Marcha*, a weekly left-wing publication. The first generation of Brazilian exiles expelled from the country by the 1964 coup and whose political action was marked by the forms of participation considered legal until the coup, such as political party and workers' union militancy, were concentrated in this country (see Rollemberg, 1999).

After the deposed president João Goulart and Leonel Brizola, former governor of Rio Grande do Sul, landed there – as well as other important figures of the Brazilian political scene, among whom we may mention Darcy Ribeiro – the attentions of that weekly turned to analyses of the coup in Brazil. Thus, the point of view of



the exiles regarding the Brazilian military regime gained a certain relevance for the publication.

*Marcha* became internationally known, since it began in 1939, because it discussed political topics that were of interest to the entire continent. Among those who offered contributions to the periodical are some of the most influential personalities connected to left-wing movements in the Latin American scene (Moraña and Machín, 2003, p. 9). Among them we should cite one of the leaders of the Cuban Revolution, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, author of the text “El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba” [Socialism and man in Cuba], considered his most important written work, published for the first time in *Marcha*, in 1965.

Criticism was present in different parts of the magazine: in the editorials, in the analyses written by Brazilian exiles and Uruguayan journalists, and also in the cartoons and caricatures of the humor section. The images ridiculed and discredited the political adversaries of the João Goulart Administration. Thus, this Uruguayan publication took a position of disagreement with the discourse of the conservative politicians who were in control in the Brazilian state. The elites who took power in Brazil after the coup saw themselves as heroes who had used the strategy of “the coup as a saving intervention to defend democracy and Christian civilization, against atheist communism, commotion and corruption” (Reis Filho, 2004, p. 39).

In the light of this effort by the military to determine that the movement of March 31 had a “revolutionary nature”, the sudden change of political regime became a recurrent theme in the humor sections of *Marcha*. In most of the humoristic images, the military were portrayed as gorillas. This representation began in Argentina and became one of the main discursive weapons of the left (Motta, 2007, p. 198). According to Motta,

*The construction of a gorilla fits perfectly into the classical theorizations of laughter, since it tried to make fun of the other by grotesque abasement, in this case representing the political enemy as an animal. And the beast was not chosen randomly: the gorilla suggests a being endowed with massive, brutal strength, but at the same time, and therein lies part of the comic effect, the animal evokes the idea of grossness, ignorance. The gorilla was supposed to be a synthesis of brutality and stupidity, that is, the animal was as strong as it was stupid. And this is a current image in progressive and leftist thinking, the perception that to the right are the forces of backwardness, ignorance and repression (Motta, 2007, p. 198).*

As a left-wing publication, *Marcha* took a negative perspective both regarding the military and the right-wing political forces. It should be emphasized that the military institution was always seen by the left as a right-wing institution. In Uruguay the contempt for the military was even stronger – compared to Brazil – because of their lack of importance in the political decisions to be taken in the country.

In order to understand how the Uruguayan army was marginalized, it is important to take into account the fact that this was not a national army, but rather the army of a political party, submitted to the Colorados, a party that polarized the Uruguayan political scene with the Blancos. This tendency was even further strengthened during the administrations of José Batlle y Ordóñez, who was president of Uruguay from 1903 to 1907 and from 1911 to 1915. To ensure that this army, whose formation he had encouraged, would be subordinated to civilian power, Batlle implemented a number of measures that became known as the “pulverization of the army”: he multiplied the number and diminished the size of the military units and also dispersed them throughout the country (López Chirico, 2000, p. 183). The guidelines of the Uruguayan foreign policy also automatically excluded the military factor from the international decisions of this country. The geographic nature of the country – characterized by the small size of its territory and its location between two powers – made it unnecessary for the military to participate in the government decisions and privileged a foreign policy turned to a peaceful resolution of problems (López Chirico, 2000, p. 180).

Thus, there was a negative opinion of the military, whether Brazilian, Uruguayan or of any other country, and they were portrayed as gorillas in the humor section of *Marcha*. Among the illustrations that portrayed them as gorillas, we will take as an example an untitled figure, which was presented in various editions of this left-wing publication to illustrate different stories about the new authoritarian regime of Brazil.

In Figure 1 we see armed gorillas occupying the Planalto Palace in Brasília. With an angry expression on its face and dressed in military uniform, one of the gorillas stands guard before the Palace, while the other walks stealthily on the building roof, in the right corner of the cartoon. It is clear that the image is making an effort to present the idea that the change of political regime which occurred in Brazil in March 1964 was the result of a coup d'état sponsored by the military against the constitutional powers. In this way it tried to deconstruct the idea of “revolution” propagated by the military, besides associating the military and the March 31 coup to the brutality considered natural in gorillas.



**Figure 1.** The coup represented by *Marcha*.

Source: Untitled. Unknown author. Extracted from Galeano (1964). Archive: Programa de Documentación en Literaturas Uruguayas y Latinoamericana – Universidad de Montevideo.

In other images, the main objective was to associate the military to another characteristic attributed to gorillas: stupidity. As an example of this one can also highlight the figure published in the September 2, 1966 edition, under the title “Brasil bicheiro”. The image shows a dialogue between a pig and a parrot. When the dialogue begins, the pig refers to the parrot as José Carioca, the known Walt Disney character. The character appeared in the film *Saludos Amigos!* (1943) and became famous in Brazil in the film *Você já foi à Bahia?* [Have you been to Bahia?] (1945), representing the country. In these films, José Carioca often was portrayed in a white suit and tie, straw hat and umbrella in his hands. His cleverness always allowed him to escape the consequences of his mischief, imparting the idea that he was “an inoffensive rascal” (Ramone, 2003).

However, in Figure 2 José Carioca appears small, with a naïve look and without his traditional clothes, like a normal parrot. The pig, an animal whose image is generally linked to the dirt in which it is used to living, besides being much larger than the parrot, calls attention because it is wearing spectacles, which are commonly used by cartoonists to distinguish characters that are to look intelligent. In the dialogue, the pig tries to warn José Carioca that it is important to defeat the gorillas because they are “the dirtiest animals in creation”. Behind them passes an absent-minded gorilla with a military officer’s cap, on which is written “Castelo”.

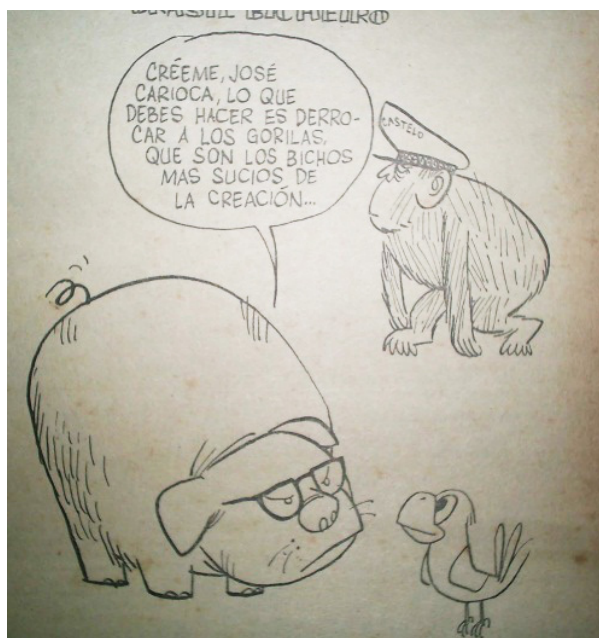
The objective of this image is clear: to ridicule the military and in particular General Castelo Branco, presenting him as an absent-minded gorilla that is less

intelligent and dirtier than a pig. It also shows criticism of the Brazilian people, since José Carioca, who is supposed to represent our population, is presented as a naïve character. In this way, the image can also be seen as a call to mobilize against the true enemies, the military.

Another form of image referring to the Brazilian military often published in *Marcha* was caricature. Poking fun at the adversaries is also a form of attack, and precisely for this reason caricatures are generally not used as defensive weapons. Since Antiquity laughter has been used as a political weapon against rulers: “Presenting a leader with ridiculous features to the public is a way of discrediting and demoralizing him” (Motta, 2004, p. 181). Thus, the caricaturists’ target are their adversaries, such as the Brazilian military.

The caricatures of the Brazilian military published in *Marcha* sought simply to depreciate the new leaders of the country. In some images they were portrayed as gorillas, and in others certain physical traits of the Brazilian military presidents were exaggerated or highlighted in order to ridicule them and thus make people laugh. Thus, some caricatures of Brazilian presidents were not dealing with a special fact, rather they were only meant to ridicule the character.

The military presidents were among the favorite targets of the caricaturists of this periodical, since, as mentioned, the military were already naturally despised in Uruguay because they represented an institution that was ineffective in that country (López Chirico, 2000, p. 181). According to Fonseca, a personal caricature “does



**Figure 2.** The Brazilian people and the military coup.

Source: Brasil Bicheiro. Author unknown. Extracted from *Marcha* (1966). Archive: Programa de Documentación en Literaturas Uruguayas y Latinoamericana, Universidad de Montevideo.

not necessarily have satirical or social commentary content and may appear only as an artistic or amusing expression” (Fonseca, 1999, p. 28). The purpose, therefore, was to have fun with characters that were seen contemptuously for the function they performed in the state and criticized for the political positions taken in the neighboring country. Thus, in the case of Castelo Branco it was generally his high facial wrinkles that were highlighted, and in the case of Costa e Silva his thick eyebrows.

In Europe, where the Brazilians concentrated after the 1973 coup in Chile, graphic humor continued to be used as a weapon to denounce the crimes committed by the dictatorship. It was mainly the second generation that took refuge there. They had left the country after the Institutional Act 5 was decreed in 1968 and were marked by their political activities through the students’ movement and clandestine armed actions (Rollemberg, 1999).

As occurred in Chile, and differently from what occurred in Uruguay, these denunciations were not limited to the already existing periodicals. In order to have greater independence for their publications, many newsletters were established by the Brazilian exiles themselves, aiming to cover exclusively the actions of denunciation and in some cases defend the ideas of political organizations.

The main objective of the exiles with denunciations abroad was to sensitize the public opinion in the host countries in their favor. They also hoped to obtain

support for their political struggle, besides impairing the image of the Brazilian military regime on the international scene (Marques, 2011). Approximately 40 titles were created by the exiles in different countries, according to Denise Rollemberg. This production was concentrated and most regular in Chile and France (Rollemberg, 2002, p. 455), two countries where many of the exiles gathered.

Among them we highlight the *Front Brésilienne d’Information* (FBI) – or *Frente Brasileira de Informações* [Brazilian Front of Information]. This publication appeared in 1969 in Algeria, on the initiative of nationally well-known Brazilian politicians, among whom we can underscore Miguel Arraes, former governor of Pernambuco, and Marcio Moreira Alves, former congressman. The FBI was a group for denunciation that acted in various countries, such as Algeria, England, Italy, Mexico, United States, Germany, Chile, Holland and France (Chirio, 2006, p. 79).

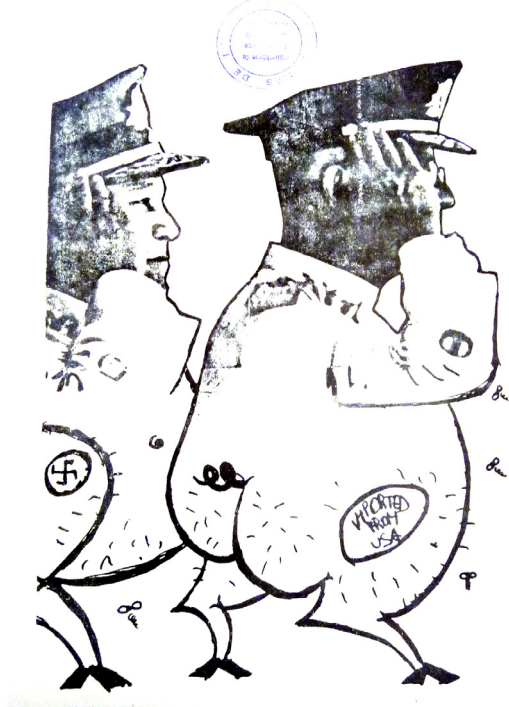
While periodicals connected to specific clandestine organizations divided their efforts between defending their political strategies and denunciations, the *Front* dedicated itself almost exclusively to denouncing the atrocities committed by the military in Brazil and to the consequences of the economic measures they adopted. It was therefore not directly connected to any political group. This characteristic ensured a difference for the *Front* in that it could have the participation of exiles connected to different organizations, and in some countries, such as Chile and France, it allowed a rare contact and dialogue between the two generations of Brazilian exiles.

The periodical also has a very clear Marxist perspective; it underscored the interest of the bourgeois class in continuing to exploit the working class. The stories aimed at the argument that the repressive apparatus of the dictatorship in Brazil had been set up for this objective. Thus, in analyses on the Brazilian foreign policy the military government was accused of taking an imperialist position in its economic agreements and exporting the methods of repression to the neighboring countries. As to the domestic policy, greater importance was assigned to the social inequality in the country and to the concentration of income in favor of the dominant classes (Marques, 2011). Issues concerning the legal Amazon region also called the attention of the FBI. Besides accusing the Brazilian government of delivering the Amazon to North American investors, it denounced the massacre of indigenous peoples, which for a long time had been ignored by most of the Brazilian population.

The images published by the magazine showed this criticism of the economic model adopted by the military in Brazil, as we can see in Figure 3.



## FRONT BRÉSILIEN D'INFORMATION



**Figure 3.** Critique of the Brazilian economic model.

Source: Author unknown. No title. Extracted from *Front Brésilien d'Information* (1971). Archive: BDIC - Archives: 4P 8029.

This image is the result of a technique that was often used by the alternative press in Brazil during that period: the appropriation of photographs to resignify them through procedures such as collage and montage. It presents a collage made in 1971 with the photos of the heads of General Emilio Garrastazu Médici, then president of Brazil, and Richard Nixon, then president of the United States. They are shown as anthropomorphic beings, with a human head and the body of a pig, an animal associated with dirt, as already mentioned. Besides being shown with a military cap, Richard Nixon is also “branded by iron” showing a clockwise oriented swastika, that is, the Nazi symbol. Médici, in turn, is branded with the expression “imported from USA”.

In this way, besides ridiculing the presidents, the image attempted to accuse the Brazilian military government of being submissive to the interests of North American imperialism, which was conniving with the Brazilian military. Furthermore, it tried to associate the North American government with Nazism, the German ideology that preached the superiority of the German race and used unbridled violence to achieve economic and political superiority. In other words, it presented North American imperialism as a threat that was as violent against Brazil as Nazism had been for the rest of Europe.

We agree with David Freedberg in saying that undeniable power is exerted by the images on the mindset of individuals, regardless of their age, nationality or social class (Freedberg, 1992, p. 23). In this way, we argue that the images published in periodicals abroad, produced or not by Brazilian exiles, as well as news stories and other denunciations helped form negative views with regard to the new Brazilian government on the international scene. This negative view was strengthened as the struggle against the Brazilian military dictatorship abroad obtained greater support from the international community, which began to organize in favor of the cause by establishing a transnational political solidarity network (cf. Devin, 2004). Thus, international organizations such as Amnesty International became part of this network. In this way, the struggle against the Brazilian military dictatorship became transnational, in other words, it now had the support of the civilian population of other countries.

We cannot say that international pressure was responsible for the political re-opening in Brazil, because this occurred as a result of various factors (see Arturi, 2001). Nevertheless, the images helped to diminish the success of the campaign that the Brazilian government had been promoting both domestically and abroad, trying to point at the groups opposing the new regime as the great “enemies” of the country’s development.

## Conclusion

Every graphic image has a great power of communication, since the information it conveys reaches the public at which it is aimed faster and with greater impact. Caricatures and cartoons, besides presenting this characteristic, also have the particularity that they can count on humor as one more element in their favor, rendering the reception of information even more effective (Motta, 2004, p. 181). They are thus a very important media and therefore invaluable for historiographic production.

The caricatures and cartoons published in the periodicals that circulated abroad were a form of attack on the military, ridiculing the new leaders who had carried out the coup d’état and accusing the new regime of being unconstitutional, authoritarian and interventionist. Thus, through the lines of their caricaturists, they enabled other analyses of the Brazilian military regime and its foreign policy to circulate through the international scene, projecting the actions of the exiled left wing.

Exile, therefore, really became a strategy for the transnational projection of the actions implemented by the opposition abroad. The effectiveness of the images of graphic humor in terms of conveying messages may have been potentiated by this platform, insofar as it reached

a larger public than it would have if it had only been published domestically. It is thus evident that the images of graphic humor can represent weapons to be used by opponents against the state, even when the political confrontation occurs in the specific arena of exile.

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