

When attack is the best defense: Political interrogations of Oban and DOI-CODI*

Quando o ataque é a melhor defesa: interrogatórios políticos da Oban e do DOI-CODI

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ABSTRACT

In the 60s and 70s in Brazil, the Armed Forces were involved in the political repression under the inspiration of the National Security doctrine and the French military thought about Revolutionary War. According to these theories, this new kind of war, which combined military operations and political propaganda, required a strong intervention of the armed forces and the police, as well as the full knowledge of the techniques and tactics of the enemy, which was done by means of a strict information control. Much of this information was obtained through interrogation under torture of political prisoners. This article is about the themes of these interrogations, and the likely use of the collected information. Broadly, they were used in three fronts: Finding the enemy, knowing the structure and procedures of their organizations, and evaluating the militants' degree of involvement in political activities.

KEYWORDS: military dictatorship, DOI-CODI; repressive organs; political police; interrogatories; Brazil.

RESUMO

Nos anos 1960 e 1970, no Brasil, as Forças Armadas envolveram-se na repressão política sob inspiração da doutrina de Segurança Nacional e do pensamento militar francês sobre a Guerra Revolucionária. Segundo essas teorias, o novo tipo de guerra, que combinava operações bélicas e propaganda política, exigia não apenas um firme combate das Forças Armadas e da polícia, como o pleno conhecimento das técnicas e táticas do inimigo, o que se fazia por meio de rigoroso controle de informações. Grande parte dessas informações foi obtida através de interrogatórios, sob tortura, de presos políticos. A problemática desse artigo gira em torno dos temas desses interrogatórios, bem como do uso provável dos dados recolhidos. Pode-se dizer, grosso modo, que serviram em três frentes de atuação: localizar o inimigo, conhecer a Estrutura e *modus operandi* de suas organizações e avaliar o grau de envolvimento dos militantes em atividades de cunho político.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: ditadura militar, DOI-CODI, órgãos repressivos, polícia política, interrogatórios; Brasil.

Coronel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, former commander of the *Destacamento de Operações de Informações* (Department of Information Operations - DOI), in his memoirs, makes a description of the “enemy” that carries the main elements of political repression in the 1960s and 1970s:

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In this context, he militates in the realm of a clandestine organization; is ideologically prepared; receives material resources from a foreign power; is instructed in courses in these countries that are interested in supporting this War; receives fake names and aliases; lives in absolute clandestinity; has highly efficient safety mechanisms, where fragmentation isolates him from most of his comrades; lives infiltrated into the heart of the population; does not wear uniforms; always attacks by surprise; kidnaps, kills, robs and steals in name of his revolutionary ideal; lives in “hideouts;” combats in the heart of the society he intends to destroy; lives under wage from an Organization to which he dedicates every day of his life. (USTRA, 1987: 157).

This excerpt outlines the way of acting of the opponent who, in DOI’s former chief’s view, implied a need for adapting the Armed Forces and reformulating the combat actions whenever necessary due to the empirical experience and methods developed by the guerrilla organizations. In the portayed scenario, we can find implicit the French-inspired theory of a revolutionary war, the military thinking guiding the combat against left-wing groups. According to this theory, the new kind of war – which combined military and ideological operations, concrete actions, and political propaganda – demanded not only resolute combat by police and armed forces, but also full knowledge of the enemy’s techniques and tactics, which was made through a powerful information control system. (MARTINS FILHO, 2009).

Since the early days of the military regime, there was an important focus on political repression translated by a series of laws whose social control aspect grew at each new writing.¹ One of the most relevant aspects of the repressive legislation concerned the notion of political crime, which – in contrast to ordinary crimes whose misdeeds threatened the public order – affected the national security. The difference lay on the reasons that took the individual to practice the crime: Were the motivation political, then the offense would have the same nature (SILVA, 2007: 248). During the military dictatorship (1964-1985), political crimes grew to overwhelming importance and, consequently, the “political criminals” received an extremely rigorous treatment since they were considered not only a domestic enemy, but because they had become the main enemy of the nation (SILVA, 2007: 269). Such phenomenon took place as a consequence of the notion established by the National Security Doctrine, according to which the western State needed to be protected from the

¹ There were several initiatives aiming at creating a structure of laws that backed the new institutionality: The *Atos Institucionais* (Institutional Acts), the 1967 Constitution, the Homeland Security Laws, the Military Penal Code and the Military Penal Trial Code.

communist threat and, for that, it seemed necessary to suppress certain civil rights (ALVES, 2005; COMBLIN, 1978; OLIVEIRA, 1976).

With the goal of facing what was considered a great threat, a network of coercive organs was created which, in parallel with the reformulation of existing structures, made up an ample information and security system.² Its architecture was in great part due to the officers that soon after the 1964 coup, defending stricter social control over dissident opinions, filed a series of military-political inquests (IPM) and proceeded to cleansing several sectors of the Brazilian society: Armed Forces, public administration, unions (FICO, 2001: 150).

In the repressive system, the Armed Forces, particularly the Army, played a prominent role of coordinating and carrying out the political repression. The strategy focused on collecting information which to a great extent meant the arrest and interrogation under torture of the suspects of “subversive” activities. The existing literature on the military dictatorship, regarding the repressive system, focuses preferably on its structure (FICO, 2001; GASPARI: 2002; ALVES, 2005) and on the speeches of servicemen (D’ARAÚJO et al., 1994b; HUGGINS, 1998; MARTINS FILHO, 2009). The contribution of this article is exploring one of the key elements of the political repression activity, i.e., the interrogation of left-wing militants. Its analysis is a privileged source for understanding the meanders of how the coercive organs worked and also the point of view of the political repression agents.

The issues in this article pivot around the areas of interest of the repressive organs, as well as the likely use of the gathered information, regarding the left-wing organizations. The documental body dealt with here³ is restricted to the interrogations of *Operação Bandeirante* (Operation Bandeirante) and to São Paulo’s DOI,⁴ although several of the reflections and conclusions drawn from

² The need for an organ that acted dynamically and coordinatedly to fight off the enemies of the military regime, particularly the urban guerrilla organizations, was deeply felt in an episode that represented a profound dishonor to the Army: The desertion of Captain Carlos Lamarca from the 4th Infantry Regiment, in Quitaúna; and the concurrent stealing of weapons and ammunition from the Company in January 25th 1969 (JOFFILY, 2008a: 27).

³ The documents researched come from the São Paulo State Archives, Fundo DOPS, Dossiers Series, 50-Z-9. In order to facilitate citations, I will only mention the dossier code “50-Z-9” followed by the number of the folder and number of the document, besides the sheet when appropriate. The documents of the time showed numerous typing, spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes. I sought to reproduce the exact wording of the text, including capitalization and quotation marks.

⁴ São Paulo was the city chosen since it was the headquarters of Operation Bandeirante and

the study of these sources might well be extended to other regions of the country. The documental evidence focuses on the inquiries targeted at fighting off the left-wing organizations within an interval of time encompassing the years between 1969 and 1974.⁵ The themes of the interrogations allow us to understand the focus of concern of the political repression and this will be our main thread. Before going into this subject, however, it is adequate to briefly describe the make up of the organs that generated the interrogation of political prisoners hereby analyzed.

Oban and DOI-CODI

In July 1969, *Operação Bandeirante* (Oban) was created. The process was managed by the recently-appointed Commander of the II Army, General José Canavarro Pereira, whose Joint Chief of Staff was General Ernani Ayrosa da Silva. Also playing a key role was Minister of Justice Luís Antônio da Gama e Silva and General Carlos de Meira Mattos, chief of the *Inspetoria Geral das Polícias Militares* (Military Polices General Inspectorate), who oriented the I Seminar of Domestic Security in Brasilia in February 1969. Renowed people from the financial world, such as Antonio Delfim Neto, future Minister of Economy, and Gastão Vidigal, owner of *Banco Mercantil de São Paulo*, gave a great contribution by raising funds to finance the organization along with businessmen and industrialists of São Paulo. Political personalities from São Paulo also contributed to the enterprise through aids such as construction work in the region of the headquarters, street lighting, etc. Other companies participated by means of lending cars, providing food supplies and other kinds of aid.⁶ The organ gathered elements coming from the three Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Airforce), the *Departamento de Ordem Política e Social* (Department of Political and Social Order - DOPS), the *Departamento de Polícia Federal* (Department of Federal Police - DPF), and the *Secretaria de*

since it was considered at the time the great “subversion” capital of the country. (FON, 1979: 16).

⁵ The period following 1974 was dedicated to the obliteration of the left-wing parties. SÃO PAULO ARCHDIOCESE, 1986) For the changes of targets and themes in interrogations, see Joffily (2008a), and regarding the interrogations of persons not connected to political activities, see Joffily (2008b).

⁶ For more details on the financial contribution of these sectors, see Joffily (2008a: 30-32).

Segurança Pública (Public Security Bureau), the Military and Civil Polices.⁷ Oban was not legally officialized. Its command was in charge of the Army – personified by Colonel Antônio Lepiane, Joint Chief of Staff of the 2nd Infantry Division – who turned Oban into the gateway, in large scale, of the Armed Forces in police-like operations, specialized in political repression. The command of the Execution Coordination, the squad of search, arrest and interrogation operations of political prisoners, was awarded to Major Waldyr Coelho, chief of the information sector of the Joint Staff of the 2nd Army Division.

His mission consisted of “identifying, locating and capturing the members of subversive groups that acted in the area of the 2nd Army,⁸ particularly in São Paulo, with the goal of destroying or at least neutralizing the organizations to which they belong.”⁹ The installment of the new repressive organ happened under the sign of ambiguity. Founded in an act that gathered important civil and military authorities, it was not formally and juridically institutionalized, but rather by means of a set of internal administrative measures. Aiming at coordinating the fight against “subversion,” it often clashed with other coercive forces. Although it was directly commanded by the Army, it carried out the actions of a political police.¹⁰

Among the information community, Oban played a prominent role since it conjured the collection of information with direct action. In this sense, it was a “mixed” organ.¹¹ The information represented a privileged point in the strategy of fighting the armed left. In the words of then Lieutenant-Colonel Waldyr Coelho, in the introduction of his lecture on “subversion” in São Paulo, “The military doctrine states that only the well-informed Chief can reach timely and adequate decisions and, also, protect himself from any surprised the opposed

⁷ São Paulo State Archives, Fundo DOPS, Dossiers Series, 50-Z-9, sheet 12.

⁸ Currently Southeast Regional Command, administrative division of the Army whose headquarters is São Paulo state. The II Army comprehended the states of São Paulo and Mato Grosso, which would be dismembered in 1979.

⁹ São Paulo State Archives, Fundo DOPS, Dossiers Series, 50-Z-9, sheet 5.

¹⁰ I use the definition by Marília Xavier: “The term ‘political police’ has been traditionally used to refer to a special kind of police that plays a preventive and repressive role in the history of Brazil, having been created aiming at detecting and halting adverse political reactions, armed or otherwise, that compromised the “public order and security.” (XAVIER, 1993: 33).

¹¹ I share Carlos Fico's distinction between information organs, responsible for collecting, analysing and diffusing data, and mixed organs, that combined information and repression operations. (FICO, 2001: 92).

faction might think of.”¹²

A year after the repressive organ of São Paulo was created, with results which were considered quite reasonable, the masterminds of Oban, backed by the high ranks of the Army, decided to extend its reach, spreading a similar model throughout the country in the figure of the *Destacamento de Operações de Informações – Centros de Operações de Defesa Interna* (Department of Information Operations – Centers of Internal Defense Operations - DOI-CODI).

Some authors (MARTINS FILHO, 2009; SILVA, 2007) recall the fact that, between the creation of Oban and the adoption of the DOI-CODI system, there was an important recrudescence of the urban guerrilla activities, notably so the kidnapping of the American ambassador in September 1969, of the Japanese consul in March 1970, and of the German ambassador in July of that same year. According to Tadeu Antonio Dix Silva, the number of left-wing organizations rose to twelve. Despite the damages caused by the repressive organs, the *Vanguarda Popular Revolucionária* (Popular Revolutionary Vanguard - VPR) had opened a training ground for guerrillas in Ribeira Valley, led by Carlos Lamarca. The urban guerrilla actions, such as the expropriations of banks and commercial houses, had increased considerably. The number of repressive agents killed in confrontations against left-wing militants had equally grown, as well as the number of civilians killed during the actions, although it remained far below that of militants murdered by the security forces (SILVA, 2007: 221-222).

The CODIs, created since 1970, had representatives from the three Armed Forces and the Civil and Military Polices and started being commanded by the Joint Chief of Staff of the Army.¹³ They were in charge of planning, coordinating, and aiding the internal defense measures of both information and security. Around the same time, DOIs were created, which were mobile and dynamic units operationally controlled by the 2nd Section of the Joint Staff of the Army¹⁴

¹² São Paulo State Archives, Fundo DOPS, Dossiers Series, 50-Z-9, 86, 16,084, sheet 1.

¹³ In 1970 DOI-CODIs were created for the I Army (Rio de Janeiro), the II Army (São Paulo), the IV Army (Recife) and the Highlands Military Command (Brasília); in 1971 the ones of the 5th Military Region (Curitiba), the 4th Army Division (Belo Horizonte), the 6th Military Region (Salvador), the 8th Military Region (Belém) and the 10th Military Region (Fortaleza); in 1974, the ones of the III Army (Porto Alegre), replacing the Central Information Division. (FICO, 2001: 124).

¹⁴ *Apostila Sistema de Segurança Interna. SISSEGIN, [1974?], Carlos Fico's personal records, chapter 2, 29.*

and subordinated to the CODIs. Their mission was executing political repression operations. CODIs were planning organs, while DOIs were action organs. All the command of the sections and sub-sections, except for the administration, was the Armed Forces' duty, which goes to show the militarist aspect of the organ and the importance the servicemen gave to the opposition control (GASPARI, 2002: 181). The command of DOI São Paulo was handed to then Major Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, officer of the 2nd Section of the II Army.

The DOI-CODI system was created from secret directives, elaborated by the National Security Council and approved by the President of the time, Emilio Garrastazu Médici (FICO, 2001: 119). According to Martha Huggins,

[...] although DOI/CODI was just a small subset of the Brazilian homeland security system, this organization – due to its direct subordination to the federal military Executive – overrode the other elements of homeland security and had a higher status than they did (HUGGINS, 1998: 190).

In order to fight the “domestic enemy,” DOI-CODI largely looked for inspiration in the French theory on revolutionary war. According to João Roberto Martins Filho, the French supposedly had been the pioneers in identifying and thinking over a conflict whose main characteristic resided in the “indistinction between politics, ideology, and military operations it put under way” (2004). The French military rationale placed on information control and on unifying the political and military command the key weapons for fighting off the revolutionary war, based on psychological action and ideological indoctrination, of an “insidious” and “subliminal” character (Ibidem, 2009).¹⁵ General Octávio Costa confirms the importance the French military rationale obtained among the Brazilian Armed Forces since the early 1960's when the concern towards what would come to be understood as a domestic war rose in the heart of the *Escola Superior de Guerra* (Higher School of War - ESG):

Great injustice is committed in attributing to the Americans the inspiration for the 64 movement. The war studied in the French schools was the insurrecional war, the revolutionary war. As we never ceased to send students to the Paris Higher School of War, our officers returned with this material in hands, all the French rationale on the subject. This was absorbed by our ESG, and it was the School that sowed the ideas on insurrecional and revolutionary wars and began

¹⁵ One of the ways the application of the French doctrine in São Paulo was the instruction given to doormen and janitors of buildings to prepare a register of all regular dwellers and denouncing any suspicious activity or presence. (FREIRE et al, 1997: 45).

identifying in them the portrait of our own possible war. (D'ARAÚJO et al., 1994a: 78).

Indeed, the definition of revolutionary or subversive war, recommended by the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces and adopted by the Army, bore similarities to the one elaborated by the French military. In both cases, it was a domestic war, but inside the context of opposition of both blocks (the Christian west, led by the USA, and the communist block, led by the USSR), that conveyed to it an international dimension, be it for the practical help, be it for the ideological support from other nations. This war encompassed actions of very distinct natures – political, social, economic, psychological, military – aiming at taking over the power by the insurgents and its replacement by another regime. The strategy employed by the guerrillas sought to explore the country's internal tensions, and its greater goal resided in the control over the population (TRINQUIER, Roger, 1961: 15-16).¹⁶ The commander of the Execution Coordination of Oban, Lieutenant Colonel Waldyr Coelho, in a lecture given to the students of the I Higher Police Course, in 1970, explicitly cited the French: “The GR [*guerra revolucionária*, revolutionary war] is of a different kind from other wars, because in it there is no open fight between armies. In the fortunate definition by the French, ‘GR is an abstract fight against an invisible enemy.’”¹⁷

The efforts of political repression were guided, therefore, by the obsessive quest for information on the opponent, to the smallest details, by the non-stop fight against left-wing organizations and by the duty of foretelling and locating the manifestations of the revolutionary war, which, in fact, meant broadening the range of suspicions as much as possible. Identifying the “subversion” in its “birth place” meant tracing all of its manifestations, turning into suspicion any expression of left-wing ideas or practices. The preliminary interrogations then took on a position of great importance in the scenario of fighting the “domestic enemy.”

The reading of thousands of interrogations¹⁸ leads to the conclusion that the information contained in the political prisoners' statements had at least three distinct purposes. The first and most urgent consisted in locating the

¹⁶ São Paulo State Archives, Fundo DOPS, Dossiers Series, 50-Z-9, 84, 15,602, sheet 1.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 84, 15,602, sheet 14.

¹⁸ The number of analyzed interrogation sessions was 5,427, happening between 1969 and 1975.

enemy: Collecting data for new chases and arrests, besides identifying the targets. The second was related to knowing the enemy, with the goal of foreseeing their steps and halting their movements. The third concerned legal punishment, and it was important to both assess how much the deponent was involved with political activities, and measure his intentions, laying base to the judiciary stage of the political repression aimed at orienting the judges' decisions in the law suit filed by the Military Justice.¹⁹

Locating the enemy: Meetings, hideouts, and names

In the interrogation sessions, the militants' rendezvous and the location of hideouts – the places where materials and documents of the organization were kept, where the planning of future actions was made, meetings were held, and militants were housed – were among the pieces of information to be most urgently obtained. It was through them that other militants could be quickly located, maintaining a chain of “falls” (arrests) and seizure of all sorts of materials: Propaganda, weapons, ammunition, money, internal documents.

Obtaining the date and time of the next rendezvous, as well as the location of the hideouts, was crucial and imperious. In case the repression agents took long, the militants, after detecting the arrest of a comrade, stopped attending the rendezvous and at times moved the hideouts. According to the former CODI chief in Rio de Janeiro, Adyr Fiúza de Castro, “the rendezvous is what leads to jail.” (D'ARAUJO et al., 1994b: 67). A power dispute was then established in which the deponent sometimes could keep the desired information secret.

In case the rendezvous was revealed in time, the session was interrupted so that the deponent could attend it, followed by the Search Squad, who were responsible for the capture of the suspects. Many militants were arrested this way, for they ignored the arrest of their comrades or insisted in attending a rendezvous despite the absence, in previous rendezvous, of those he would meet up with. This “neglect” was justified for several reasons. Under the conditions of

¹⁹ Documents guiding the conduction of the interrogations were not found. There was, in some cases, information requiring certain themes be approached, but with no mention to methods or purposes. There is a book on interrogations translated and adapted from the American original by the *Centro de Informações do Exército* (Army Information Center - CIE). The documento, however, dates of 1971, when the empirical practices of Oban and DOI-CODI had already been into effect for at least two years.

siege and material deficiency the organizations faced, disassembling a hideout and finding a new one was troublesome and difficult. Moreover, there was a deep feeling of brotherhood among the members of the organizations, as if they were a family. Guiomar Lopes, former militant of the *Ação Libertadora Nacional* (National Liberation Action - ALN), comments on the phenomenon: “This grouping thing was very strong, there was this female comrade that said: It seemed like an *Arab family*, because one tried to save the other and was arrested, forming a chain...” (Apud RIDENTI, 1993: 265). Finally, there was the fear by the militants of losing contact with the organization and becoming even more isolated.

As they arrested the militants, DOI agents²⁰ proceeded to mapping the area where each organization operated with the information they had obtained. The militants used to wandered around certain areas of the city of São Paulo, which facilitated locating them. One director of the *Resistência Democrática* (Democratic Resistance - REDE) explained to the interrogators how he managed to find comrades from his organization or from ALN when contact was interrupted:

[...] when GILBERTO FARIA LIMA (“GIBA” or “CARLOS”) left the training ground, he looked for him on Indianópolis Ave., where the deponent had a “rendezvous” with DEVANIR JOSÉ DE CARVALHO (“HENRIQUE”). “GIBA” or “CARLOS” knew the deponent used to schedule ‘rendezvous’ in that place, and then, by trial and error, was able to find him. [...]

The deponent also recalls that, before the action, he had met up with “TOLEDO” some 3 or 4 times on Vila Mariana [...]. That these “rendezvous” took place exclusively in Vila Mariana, only the streets changed (places of rendezvous). [...] Inquired how he could contact someone of the organization in São Paulo, he replied he would try walking the neighborhoods of Vila Mariana and Indianópolis.²¹

The fact that the militants wandered within a delimited area of the city put them under great risk since, in these cases, the neighborhoods could be watched by DOI agents even if they did not have precise information about the dates and times of the meetings. Such procedure is described by DOI’s former commander, Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, in an operation intending to capture members of the ALN:

²⁰ DOI corresponded to the Execution Coordination of Operation Bandeirante, both responsible for capturing and interrogating the suspects. Since DOI-CODI São Paulo replaced Oban, continuing its mission, I will refer to either one interchangeably, noting the period of actions of 1969 (Oban) or from 1970 (DOI).

²¹ São Paulo State Archives, Fundo DOPS, Dossiers Series, 50-Z-9, 95, 16,084, sheet 18.070.

In the meeting of the Information Community [...] I had requested the chief of the 2nd Section of the Military Police put up roadblocks in the likely places where the terrorists wandered the most. According to the plan, after a study by DOI's Analysis Section, we chose some critical spots and indicated zones of greater terrorist activity so that the Military Police put up the roadblocks. (USTRA, 2006: 382).²²

The location of the hideouts were, likewise, an ever present theme in the interrogations. It allowed for not only the arrest of other militants who lived or were meeting up there, but also the seizure of vast propaganda material, weaponry, money, and documents of the organization to which the hideout belonged. Once one of these houses were identified, DOI agents went undercover in its surroundings, watching the movement around the place. They captured the ones who could be connected to the investigated organization and took them to Tutóia street, where Oban's and later São Paulo DOI's headquarters were located, in order to be interrogated. Then, once they obtained information on a hideout of a wanted militant, the interrogation was suspended so that the place could be searched. This interruption is pointed out by the inquirers in the very transcript of the interrogation: "NOTE: The deponent was taken by Search Teams 'A-3' and 'A-4,' in order to locate the house from where YOSHITANE had been seen leaving. If the house is recognized, the deponent must return to Oban and an ambush will be prepared."²³

The "bust" (discovery) of a hideout could mean a significant loss of material, of arrested militants, of classified information. In a report dated of September 1969, the II Army bragged about Oban having dismembered, at least for some time, the Red Wing of the *Partido Comunista do Brasil* (Brazil's Communist Party - PC do B):

The imprisonment of eleven members of PCdoB's Red Wing – most of whom the most active and of higher expression in the Party – along with the takeover of two "Hideouts" with a large amount of valuable material to the organization, allows us to state that the Red Wing suffered a heavy hit and that it has no conditions – at least for now – of "acting" efficiently in the subversive-terrorist field. On the other hand, the aforementioned arrests allowed us to solve a good number of robberies of Banks and commercial organizations and other acts of

²² According to General Leônidas Pires Gonçalves, former CODI Rio de Janeiro chief, a "pinnery" was made from this information: "there was a map of the men and their activities, marked by those pins, and, when we looked at it, we faced a nuclear chain. Because this guy connects to that guy who connects to... Then we performed a complete analysis, just right and stuff." (Apud D'ARAUJO et al., 1994b: 242).

²³ São Paulo State Archives, Fundo DOPS, Dossiers Series, 50-Z-9, 80, 14,658.

terrorism, the recover some money, weaponry and other stolen materials, apprehend weaponry and ammunition, and keep some robberies and other “actions” from happening which had already been planned and were even scheduled for the current week.²⁴

Numerous statements have a series of names, aliases, and activities developed by the cited individuals. In this aspect, three strategies are seen in the interrogations. The first consisted in broadening the suspicion range as much as possible so to avoid leaving out any individual who could be politically committed to the left-wing ideas. The second focused on obtaining more information on the mentioned individuals and assessing their participation in the organization. They tried to find out the real name of those whose aliases had been obtained in the interrogations. They then sought to define the degree of participation and the role of the person in the organizations – whether they were supporters or militants, in which sector of the organization they acted, which activities they carried out, etc. The third meant identifying the directors of each organization, their level of importance, habits and whereabouts.

In the *Relatórios Especiais de Informação* (Special Information Reports), a document periodically issued by the II Army to assess the combat to left-wing organizations, there was a summary of the number of individuals from each organization who were “identified,” “unidentified, but with known aliases,” “arrested,” and “at large.”²⁵ Once properly identified and located, the individual was the target of a Search Warrant, sent to several repressive organs of the area at hand, under the following terms:

1. ALCIDES YUKIMITSU MAMIZUKA is the coordinator of the “Masses Sector” of ALN, in the cities of CAMPINAS and RIO CLARO.
2. ALCIDES is attending the 4th year of the Engineering College of Campinas. Besides the academic occupation, he teaches private lessons in Mathematics.
3. Attached is a picture of ALCIDES YUKIMITSU MAMIZUKA.
4. We request investigations, aiming at locating, arresting, and forwarding ALCIDES YUKIMITSU MAMIZUKA to the CE [Execution Coordination]/Op Band.²⁶

Also, ever since the beginning of Operation Bandeirante, posters were spread with the pictures of the most wanted militants. In another report, it is said that the posters started being put up in August 1969, with a first batch of one thousand series, with the intention of soon expanding this edition: “OB

²⁴ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 58, 9,786.

²⁵ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 58, 9,782.

²⁶ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 71, 12,741.

expects to print 100,000 more posters (20,000 series) as to widely publicize the terrorists' pictures, aiming at facilitating their capture."²⁷ In agreement with the idea that the population's help was key to the combat of the revolutionary war, the goal was not only to have their sympathy, but also their active participation in combating the "domestic enemy":

Putting up posters with the pictures of wanted terrorists is awaking the population of São Paulo to the serious problem of subversion and terrorism. Everything shows that such measure will motivate the population to give information that will contribute to the arrest of subversives and terrorists.²⁸

Another commonly used resource was picture albums,²⁹ assembled in order to identify members of left-wing organizations or student movement leaderships. The photographs allowed for the identification of individuals of whom the interrogators had only some physical descriptions, made not only by the militants themselves, but also by witnesses and victims of armed actions. As time went by, these albums specialized in certain themes such as: The one of students who attended the UNE Congress in Inibúna,³⁰ the one of individuals at large, the specific ones for each left-wing organization, the one of criminals, the one of the exiled, the one of wanted persons.³¹

Many interrogation sessions were dedicated, partially or completely, to obtaining elements that allowed for the arrest of directors of left-wing organizations. Firstly, it was necessary to identify who were the most prominent people in each organization and the order of importance of each one. For the DOI agents, it was important to know the most prominent figures and take them out of the streets. Several directors were murdered, either under torture or

²⁷ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 54, 9,278.

²⁸ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 54, 9,276.

²⁹ Unfortunately, none of these albums were found in the researched documentation.

Is is assumed they had been prepared with photographs taken in the repression organs at the moment of the arrest of suspects of political activities, with photographic material seized in the hideouts and with the militants or, even, with identikits prepared from the information gathered during interrogations.

The execution and updating of these albums was the duty of the Subseção de Análise de Informações (Information Analysis Subsection). *Apostila Sistema de Segurança Interna. SISSEGIN, [1974?], Carlos Fico's personal records, chapter 2, 32.*

³⁰ Held in clandestinity in 12th October 1968 in a farm in Ibiúna, in São Paulo state, the XXX Une Congress was invaded by military troops. Among the 972 people arrested, the leaders of student entities were carefully selected, identified and filed. The resulting material would be largely used by the repression organs in their fight against the left-wing organizations and the student movement. (MIR, 1994: 335).

³¹ São Paulo State Archives, Fundo DOPS, Dossiers Series, 50-Z-9, 147, 16,084, sheet 30,746-30,745.

gunfight, which leads to the belief of the deliberate execution of key people in the organizations (CEMDP, 2007). In fact, one of the concerns of DOI agents lay on the possibility of the rise of a charismatic opposition leader who could bring together the atomized organizations around a single project. In his report on the revolutionary war, the commander of Execution Coordination of Operation Bandeirante, Lieutenant Colonel Waldyr Coelho, explained the role of the vanguard group in conducting the revolution, stressing that “There cannot be a RW without the existence of a national leader.”³² By assessing the “subversion” in São Paulo, he acknowledged the “personalism of the Chiefs of subversive-terrorist organizations” and the “nonexistence of an authentic nationwide leader.”³³

General Dilermando Gomes Monteiro, commander of the II Army and of CODI São Paulo from 1976, gave an interview to *Veja* magazine in which he explains what the strategy for reaching the “heads” was, in the period of combating the left-wing organizations.³⁴

At that time [of his predecessor, General Ednardo D’Ávila Mello], the way of fighting off terrorism had to be a little tougher, more violent than fighting off just plots. And that’s the orientation I conveyed to my command. Terrorism must be fought with bullets. So, if the enemy is armed, I am armed; if the enemy reacts with gunfire, I have to shoot him. And then it’s combat. [...] In his command we were still treating the subversion problem with equal toughness as there was at the hard times of terrorism. So, many people were arrested in order to reach, through the statement of these people, the heads, those who are the true subversives, who almost always are not found. (VEJA, 1979:3)

The passage shows that the focus was on the directors of the left-wing groups, considered the most dangerous and the hardest ones to reach. It also indicates the policy of eliminating “with bullets” such “terrorists,” since they would be armed and could represent a risk to the repressive agents.

Actually, the fact that the leaderships were the constant object of inquiry shows the intention of uprooting the evil before they could represent a greater danger. The directors were a preferred target not only due to the role they played in the organizations, but also due to the potential each of them had of becoming a concentrator of the left-wing forces.

³² Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 84, 15,602, sheet 5.

³³ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 84, 15,602, sheet 36.

³⁴ From 1974, when the left-wing organizations were virtually annihilated, the information and security system turned mostly to the combat of communist parties. In this regard, see Archdiocese of São Paulo (1986); CEMDP (2007), and Joffily (2008a).

Knowing the enemy: Organization structure and operation

While hard-hitting actions such as kidnapping diplomats, robbing banks, or killing agents connected to repressive organs gave visibility to the urban guerrilla, they also tended to further isolate the left-wing groups and make them vulnerable. César Benjamin, former militant of the *Movimento Revolucionário 8 de Outubro* (Revolutionary Movement 8th October - MR-8), finely described at the time the left-wing operations:

It's typical of the urban guerrilla to achieve early success, it is tactically effective. Through it, a very small group can, at any given time, sneak into the national spotlight. But it's strategically ineffective since, while one holds the center of the political fight – this brings an illusion of power –, the political process is quickly radicalized, and the guerrilla might not entail advances in the mass struggle. [...] The fight is reduced to a clash between groups and the State. (Apud RIDENTI, 1993: 53).

The pamphlets left on the places of the actions, aiming at informing the population about the political role they claimed for themselves and letting the organization be known, did not go unnoticed by the repressive system's watchful eyes. The hard time the organizations had in conciliating the tough needs of secrecy, meaning forced clandestinity, with the importance they attributed to clarifying the population about what they were doing, created an ambiguity of which the repressive organs made good use.

However, although the organizations' manifestos represented a valuable source of information, it was during the interrogations the details were thoroughly examined, checked and updated. As new organizations appeared, the interrogators inquired about the origin of the acronyms, getting to know the specificities of each one. For example, regarding the use of the denomination Revolutionary Movement 8th October (MR-8), since the group had been dismembered a few months before, they recorded the following answer: "He informs, furthermore, that after the fall of MR-8 (in mid-69), the name and ideological-political heritage of MR-8, were excited [sic] by a left-wing organization keen on the armed fight, originally dubbed Communist-Dissidence."³⁵ From another militant, they obtained the explanation of the

³⁵ The name Revolutionary Movement 8th October – which pays homage to Che Guevara, recalling the date of his murder in Bolívia in 8th October 1967 – was reclaimed by the PCB's Guanabara Dissidence during the kidnapping of the American ambassador Charles Burke

acronym “PORT,” as well as the organization’s ultimate goal:

[...] clarifying that the acronym POR means *Partido Operário Revolucionário* (Workman Revolutionary Party) and is followed by the word trotskyist in parenthesis, but through its use often only the T is added resulting in the acronym PORT meaning *Partido Operário Revolucionário Trotskista* (Workman Revolutionary Trotskyist Party); that the acronym choice follows local guidance, since as it is known is it an International organization, although they work autonomously[;] they nevertheless follow international programs aiming at the socialist organization of all mankind.³⁶

Two great concerns by the interrogators, which appear as recurring themes in the statements, are the stock of guns and ammunition and the origin and distribution of funds. Since combatting the left-wing organizations was considered a domestic war, knowing the enemy’s firepower was crucial. The theme equally gained further importance since one of the sources of weapons the guerrilla organizations had was the Army. At the time of Capitan Carlos Lamarca’s desertion along with his comrades, followed by the stealing of heavy weaponry from the barracks in Quitaúna, in 1969, the servicemen felt deeply insulted, for the weapons that served the urban guerrilla, as well as the servicemen involved, had come from their own ranks. It is not by chance that the military had created a series of control mechanisms in order to guarantee the respect to hierarchy and the prevalence of the view of the military regime among the higher officials. The purges following the 1964 coup aimed precisely at guaranteeing the command and alignment of the Armed Forces with the government being instituted, eliminating democrat and nationalist servicemen that could oppose their political project (ALVES, 2005: 77-78). The issue was, hence, invested of a double nature, at the same time strategic, to avoid the infiltration into their corps, and symbolic, keeping the institution from being maculated.

Regarding the financial status, it was important to know the organization’s sources of income – “expropriation” actions, militant and sympathizer contributions, sales of newspapers –, who was responsible for its distribution throughout the several sectors and how the militants made a living. Mostly in clandestinity, the militants in general did not have an income other than the

Elbrick in September 1969 to demoralize the repressive organs that informed having dismembered the original organization in Niterói. (MIRANDA, 1999: 393).

São Paulo State Archives, Fundo DOPS, Dossiers Series, 50-Z-9, 67, 11,742.

³⁶ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 110, 21,183.

results of bank, supermarket and armored car robberies. It then became vital to know how the fundraising actions took place in order to better prevent them, as can be seen in the following Operation Bandeirante Report, dated of August 1969:

The Bank robberies continue, being now carried out by groups with larger numbers than the ones employed in previous robberies. On the other hand, such robberies have been proving increasingly daring, becoming almost commonplace the blocking of the agency surroundings and the detouring of the traffic.³⁷

Also vital was following the tendencies and modifications in this field, as shown by the reply of a VPR militant in May 1970:

[...] that the current remaining members of the Terrorist Organizations are not focusing on robbing Banks given the heavy patrolling and also since the Banks keep little money with themselves; that the surveys for robberies are aimed at armored cars that transport money from Supermarkets and banks [...].³⁸

The reading of interrogations of the time shows how the repression, as it learned the organizations' *modus operandi*, adjusted its methods and how its actions hindered the possibilities of the opposition.

Another focus consisted of the organization chart of the left-wing groups. Although the vast majority had originated in the PCB (Brazilian Communist Party), their internal structure, number of militants, support systems and areas of actuation could greatly vary among them. Among this "constellation" of groups, the DOI agents sought to understand the workings and logic of each one, turning to organization charts, posts occupied and roles played by the most prominent militants and directors, the means of communication of the organization – newspapers, pamphlets, internal documents –, and the targets chosen for the actions. Besides demanding that the deponents revealed the operation chart of the organization they were part of, the interrogators formulated more specific questions about each sector and connections between the several members. They also sought to obtain updated information on the dazzling changes the groups' structures underwent due to the fall of their leaders and militants, understanding not only the possible changes in structure but also, above all, the names of those who took over each sector.

³⁷ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 120, 23,229.

³⁸ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 149, 31,154.

The “opinion offense”: Degree of political involvement and level of ideological conviction

Among the goals of interrogating the political prisoners, those that attempted to convey a degree of involvement of the deponents in the “subversive” fight and their level of ideological conviction were prominent. In this realm, the political ideology issue stands out, which splits into opposite fields the repressive agents and the political prisoners.

Brigadier João Paulo Moreira Burnier, one of the exponents of the “hardline,” clearly expresses the status conferred by the members of the information and security system to left-wing militants: “They were criminals! They were preparing the destruction of the Brazilian society!” (D’ARAÚJO et al., 1994b: 185) The “subversive” – considered dangerous for his project of modifying the established order – and the “terrorist” – the one who, in order to reach his goals carried out violent actions – were located, for the repressive organs, in the cross between the criminal and the enemy. This cross was characterized in the gathering, in DOI, of police officers and servicemen to fight them off. It is hard to assess the point up to which DOI agents linked actions such as bank robberies, diplomat kidnappings, and murdering of persons involved in the repression to crimes of political nature or to ordinary crimes. The police vocabulary, of a moral connotation, normally employed regarding common criminals – such as “conceal,” “lover,” “allure” – makes up a view of the left-wing militants that puts them into the realm of the delinquent, which does not mean that they were closely connected.

Referring to the the involvement of members of the Death Squad³⁹ in the political repression, Luiz Roberto Salinas Fortes, former political prisoner, sentenced:

It would not be long before the subtleties based on these vague categories of the juridical ideology suffered a definitive impact from reality that would end up, in its voracity, mixing the genres since they saw as beans of the same pod the deviants of all calibers, the crooks of all kinds, putting in the pursuit of politicians the same ones who had been trained and specialized in the production of the poor perforated stiffs. (FORTES, 1998: 27).⁴⁰

³⁹ The death squads were paramilitary groups that carried out the execution of ordinary criminals. The first death squads linked to politics appeared in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1950’s (HUGGINS, 1998: 145). One of the best known squads was the one led by DOPS commissary Sérgio Paranhos Fleury in São Paulo.

⁴⁰ It is worth remembering that political prisoners and ordinary criminals shared the clandestine graves of Dom Bosco Cemetery, in the neighborhood of Perus, where they were

On the other hand, in this note inserted into the statement of a PC do B Red Wing militant, the political component of his criminal background is clearly highlighted:

NOTE: [...] In the interrogation, it was observed that the deponent had been allured to militate (distributing pamphlets and taking part in meetings of a political character in public streets) in P. C. do B.'s RED WING. The deponent also has a political-criminal record (attending a demonstration).⁴¹

Indeed, Act 898 of September 29th 1969 deemed a crime, under article 45, the “subversive” propaganda, consubstantiated in the realization of “rallye, public meeting, parade or demonstration.” The combat of political crimes, however, reached absolute priority over the common crime, even if the methods were similar, as Salinas declares:

The political fight had been radicalized. It was natural that the power utilized all available means. The war on subversion, more than an extension of politics through other means, would also have to be the continuation, through the same and traditional means, of the classic repression of all forms of dissidence. (FORTES, 1998: 28).

One plausible hypothesis to explain the perception of a greater danger from the political militant than from the common criminal comes from the conclusion of Michel Foucault’s research on the dawn of the prison as a mechanism of social control:

The observation that prison fails to eliminate crime, one should perhaps substitute the hypothesis that prison has succeeded extremely well introducing delinquency, a specific type, a politically or economically less dangerous -and on occasion, usable- form of illegality; in producing delinquents, in an apparently marginal, but in fact centrally supervised milieu; in producing the delinquent as a pathologized subject. (FOUCAULT, 1991: 244).

The numerous and threatening offense modalities, with all the political dimension they can take on, under the contexts where they represent an affront not only to the established laws, but also to the elite that formulated them, were circumscribed to the figure of the delinquent, neutralizing his potencial danger in face of the establishment of a visible, and controllable, illegality. While the common crime was delimited by the restricted field of delinquency, the political crime, for its explicitly nature of questioning the current domination, seems to contain all the risks the coercive systems of the State, notably so the police,

buried as indigents. (BARCELLOS, 2001: 213-226).

⁴¹ São Paulo State Archives, Fundo DOPS, Dossiers Series, 50-Z-9, 134, 28,069-28,068.

succeeded in deterring in the ordinary offenses. It is not about a localized appropriation of someone else's property, but about a clearly expressed intention of subverting the established power system.

Moreover, to the security forces, it was about a more sophisticated outlaw, native not of the popular classes, but of the middle and higher classes themselves. In the words of General Octávio Costa:

Suddenly, there started happening an intellectualized action, offenses planned and carried out by the best Brazilian intelligence: Students, journalists, intellectuals. Some people who practiced robberies or kidnappings are now around, are great figures of the Republic, ministers, deputies, senators, key men in the public administration. [...] It is unarguable that the law enforcement agencies proved themselves incapable of facing the new criminal challenges. (D'ARAUJO et al., 1994b: 277).

Notwithstanding the differences between common and "subversive" criminals, the fight against "the new criminal challenges" employed mechanisms which refer to the ones described by Michel Foucault in the process of replacing the "offender" by the "delinquent": Locating the individuals, infiltrating groups, stimulating delation, isolating the groups from society, reducing them to a precarious condition of existence and forcing them to go into a restricted action realm, destitute of popular support, stigmatized and depolitized (FOUCAULT, 1991: 244-245). This process is described by former political militant César Benjamin:

With the defeat of the 1968 social movements, and the repression that followed, we were thrown out of the Brazilian social ties. [...] We were led to radicalizing the political process the moment the opponent was much stronger and, worse, did it in spite of the organized popular action. [...] from a certain point on, we could not retreat, or, at least, it was much harder than one imagines, for the bridges to society were broken and the political situation was prematurely radicalized. (Apud RIDENTI, 1993: 250-251).

At the same time, the sectors of the Armed Forces and police involved in the political repression of the 1960's and 1970's built the stigma of the "terrorist subversive," splitting the universe of individuals involved in left-wing militancy into two categories: The "fanatic" and the "useful innocent." The system from which the perception of repressive agents was organized identified the latter as "youngsters who had been illuded, fanaticized and used by experient communist militants," in the words of the former DOI São Paulo commander (USTRA, 2006: 320). For him, "The brainwashing and the committing to subversive organizations made them [the youngsters] hostages of terror and true

automatons” (Ibidem).

Adyr Fiúza de Castro, former commander of CODI Rio de Janeiro, describes these youngsters as “petit bourgeois, offspring of a rich dad, whom, when leaving prison, the parents try to remove from the organization, and they allow it” (D’ARAÚJO et al., 1994b: 65). On the other hand, the “coldest” were “very well-structured, very resentful, and only thought about the return, the payback. When released, they returned to their terrorist group” (Ibidem, 66). In some information released by DOI-CODI São Paulo regarding the *Movimento de Emancipação do Proletariado* (Proletariat Emancipation Movement - MEP), in 1977, when it had been years since the armed left-wing organizations had been decimated, the terms employed to describe one of its militants were “authentic communist” and “union agitator,” who had given himself “body and soul to the impatriotic service of subversion and disorder.” Another militant, from the same organization, was described as a “dangerous allurer to the paths of disintegration and subversion.”⁴²

Associated to the adjectivation of “illuded” or “fanatic,” the idea of family disaggregation was constantly present. Perhaps it was a plausible explanation for the repressive agents to contemplate the involvement of sons of the “righteous society” with social, political, and economical worries which did not directly concerned them, especially in a period of rising economic growth indicators, which directly benefited these social sectors (ALVES, 2005: 182). According to Cecília Coimbra, “It was the current thinking of the time, inside the repression organs, that there were two categories of political prisoners: The recoverable and the unrecoverable” (1997: 431). The worry about classifying the individuals into these two groups seems to be part of a strategy of circumscribing the “unrecoverable” ones, isolating them from society so as to avoid the spread of “subversive” ideas. But it also follows the rationale of disqualifying the enemy, explicit in the words of former CODI Rio de Janeiro chief Leônidas Pires Gonçalves:

Now, with no mockery, with no spirit of negative criticism with other purposes, the number of people with personal problems in the subversion world is impressive. Impressive. Most had psychological problems. It’s amazing! The mother left the father or did something worse, cheated on by a woman, impotent... You know I was impressed? (D’ARAÚJO et al., 1994b: 251).

⁴² Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 211, 42,067-42,066.

Degree of political involvement:

Assessing how much the deponent was involved with the left-wing organizations was also a concern for repressive agents and holding that information could fulfill at least two purposes: Determining their potential in terms of providing data and offering subsidies for their involvement to be judged in the later stages of the inquiry and trial by the Military Justice. An example of the first purpose, i.e., investigating the deponent's position in the organization hierarchy, is found in the following observation added to the statement of an *Ação Popular* (Popular Action - AP) militant:

NOTE ON THE INTERROGATION:

That the deponent showed himself to have great militance in AP, which he joined in 1967; that from the statement given, he must belong to the ranks of Command or Direction, of the aforementioned organization; that this conclusion is drawn from the great political movimentation he carried out in great part of the national territory [the deponent cites the names of militants in the states of Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Bahia, Pernambuco and Guanabara] and for being closely linked to the militancy or militants with directing positions.⁴³

In the terminology of the time, there were several political participation categories: Director, militant, sympathizer, and supporter. In the two first cases, the involvement was obvious. Yet in the other ones, it had to be checked. The border between the sympathizer and the "supporter" is not very clear. The sympathizer could come to militate in the organization, supported its theory thinking, and carried out some simpler tasks. It would be a sort of "pre-militant." The supporter could help a militant or director for sharing the same ideals, although he was afraid of getting more deeply involved. Or simply carry out a task or two for the family or friendship ties which connected him to the militant. DOI interrogators explored the motivations, scanned the nature of the deponent's relations with the organization and with its militants, investigated the intention of each deed.

The realm of participation of the political prisoners was delimited. When it was about a little known individual by the repressive agents, especially if he had already been arrested, it was necessary to have a notion of his importance and political involvement. It was common, then, that questions were formulated to a deponent regarding his militancy comrades. Therefore, it happened that an

⁴³ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 137, 28,723.

interrogation session could be wholly dedicated to investigating another prisoner's degree of participation, to checking the truth of his claims, or to exploring the information given by him. Whenever the deponents were not actually connected to an organization, but rather had been arrested for having housed a militant, there was an effort in making sure whether the support was political or personal, and the investigation could be extended to the family and friends. Therefore, one of the interrogation sessions of an ALN militant was dedicated, to a great extent, to the examination of the political involvement of the college fellow who had housed him:

[...] that his political discussions with "EDE," regarded the demands of the College, peremptorily claiming, that they had never discussed any revolutionary group activity, and, never mentioned to "EDE," his connection with ALN; [...] he decided to tell EDVALDO CORADETTI, he was being searched by the repression, for political problems; that "EDE" told him nothing after knowing what was happening to him, expressing only, some sorrow on his face for his bad luck without inquiring details about it [...].⁴⁴

Four days later, he was moved and the object of investigation turned to his colleague's sister:

That he confirmed his previous claims also clarifying the following: That he states, peremptorily, that the lawyer TEREZINHA CORADETTI, does not have a left-wing political ideology and knows nothing about his political activities.

That he does not believe TEREZINHA CORADETTI had run away for being implicated in subversive-terrorist movements.

CONFRONTATION: Confronted with EDVALDO CORADETTI ("EDE"), about the possibility of TEREZINHA CORADETTI being involved in subversive-terrorist movements, they acquitted her, claiming the same, of her complete ignorance of PAULO DE TARSO VANNUCHI's activities.⁴⁵

These excerpts reveal that, more than the "offense" itself, what was in dispute was the way it had been carried out, its attenuating – in the case of family ties – or aggravating conditions – in the case of sharing the same political belief. An ALN militant's girlfriend justified his actions in the following manner:

[...] in what pertains the translations and typing jobs for producing the pamphlets printed by ALCIDES, the deponent did it merely taken by the feeling of companionship and obligation she has in cooperating with her lover under all circumstances and conditions, and not intentionally to render relevant services to the left-wing organization, for she only worried about the construction of her home.⁴⁶

It is observed that the interrogators were not limited to obtaining

⁴⁴ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 165, 34,280.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 165, 43,264.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 165, 34,334.

information to help orienting DOI's prosecuting activities, locating political militants and their hideouts. The organ performed a similar role as that of a police station, specialized, however, in political matters. In a certain way, the political nature of the deed could be more serious than the offense itself, or, at least, its lack of political nature served as an attenuating circumstance, as is shown in the justification of a bank robber: "That he reasserts not having acted with any political intention. That he only acted in face of his financial troubles."⁴⁷

The deponents' political ideas served as a moral aggravating circumstance, proving the existence of intention in the crime committed. This aspect must not be despised, since it shows DOI agents worked looking forward to the follow-ups of the first statements, which included the installment of the military police inquiry and the legal trial. In this last stage, such worries were again the focus of the interrogations, matching the nature of some of the questions asked in the early interrogations, but, this time, under oath, as Marco Aurélio Vannucchi Leme Mattos points out: "When interrogating the defendant, the Justice Council worried about knowing whether there had been *dolus* in committing the crime, which was attested through questions that tried to assess the defendant's ideological convictions" (2002: 110). In the two following excerpts, it is seen that there was a concern in verifying whether there was full awareness by the deponents of their political actions, within an instrument of ratifying their classification between "subversives" or "terrorists," and not between "useful innocents" or "manipulated": "CONFRONTED with JOVELINA TONELLO DO NASCIMENTO (his wife): Confirmed their previous claims and that both participated consciously and voluntarily in the organization denominated VPR."⁴⁸ Inside this same rationale:

In face of the evidence of the facts [confrontation], the declarant admits she really was a sympathizer of POLOP, this in her student times. [...] That she had full awareness of what she was doing; that this permission of hers characterized her actions as POC's support network. That her husband warned her about the fact of having allowed the mimeographing of such newspapers, which led her to terminating such activities.⁴⁹

Used to living with left-wing militants, the interrogators allowed

⁴⁷ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 74, 13,290.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 76, 13,658.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 144, 30,017-30,016.

themselves to, beyond that, make their own conclusions regarding the political formation of some deponents. A young man, affiliated to AP, arrested by ABCD Sectional Police Station with other members of the organization and forwarded to DOI, declared:

That in 1969, first semester he joined an organization he doesn't quite know the name, but he knows they worked in the distribution of pamphlets handing them to passer-bys under the orders of "CHICO", FRANCISCO DE CARVALHO, not knowing what or whom they were serving with this procedure; that he joined the organization to learn how to read and write; that he does not know anything about politics.⁵⁰

In face of his little skill in matters of politics, the interrogator added the following comment: "It is observed that the deponent is the stereotypical kind of someone who completely ignored what politics is, being even unaccessible to indoctrination, revealing full ignorance of the smallest machination that might involve him." That is, his political ignorance was such that he could not even be the victim of "machinations," nor be considered an "useful innocent." A very diverse account was elaborated regarding a left-wing intellectual, who denied his involvement with the ALN: "NOTE: The deponent is a very politicized individual and radicalized in his left-wing positions, not admitting to being connected to the ALN."⁵¹ We have, consequently, at least three categories established by the interrogators themselves: The "ignorant" and depoliticized individual, incapable of understanding the meaning of a political militance; the "naïve," manipulated by more graduated individuals in the organization; and the politicized and "radical."

Ideological conviction:

During the interrogations, the theme of ideological conviction appears often; not ideological in the Marxist sense of the word, that is, denoting ideas falsely taken as universal, but determined by the dominance of one class over the other. But rather in the sense generalized by the practical sociological and political language, meaning, in the words Mario Stoppino, "a set of political beliefs: A set of ideas and values respecting the public order and having as a role orienting the collective political behavior" (1993: 585). The issue seems to be

⁵⁰ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 137, 28,671.

⁵¹ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 108, 20,632.

closely linked to two factors. The first one is related to the possibility of relapse by the “subversives.” Inquired about how he behaved after leaving prison, an ALN militant replied:

That he was in jail for 11 months and that he currently is being subjected to a trial in the 2nd Military Auditing as an indicted; that his participation in the ALN process was properly clarified and that it entailed the relaxation of his preventive imprisonment [...] that after having been released he has had no contact with people involved in left-wing movement. That he believes having learned his lesson and has not been involved in any kind of movement of political nature.⁵²

Knowing what the deponents would do once free meant having surveillance instruments to maintain the supervision over those who intended to keep developing their dissenting political activities. Both the maintenance of the left-wing ideas and the project of putting them into practice were at hand. A POC militant, asked about both, replied: “The deponent reasserts his political ideas and if released, he will continue as a sympathizer, not anymore as a militant, however he considers communism, as the ideal solution for Brazilian problems.”⁵³ Another political prey, member of the same organization, replied: “She claims that, after being put back in the streets, she will return to the fight, for, there will only be greater progress in a socialist Brazil, therefore, she will not abandon the cause, and the fight as well.”⁵⁴

The second factor to explain the recurrency of the ideological conviction theme concerns the role played by DOI in the sense of not only keeping by force the militants from translating their “subversive” ideas into practice, acting in the left-wing organizations, but from continuing having them after their detention. By no means they tested, at that moment, the efficacy of the “regenerative” role of the repressive organ, that is, the effect produced by the punishment inflicted to the political prisoners. Hence, to an AP militant the repressive agents asked whether she regretted what she had done: “Asked whether she regretted having entered subversion, the deponent states she doesn’t.”⁵⁵

The same question was presented to a PCB militant, who claimed not to be “politicized”:

[...] he claims that he has nothing else to inform, since everything he

⁵² Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 88, 16,516.

⁵³ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 175, 36,138.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 169, 34,984.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 76, 13,801.

knew he has already had the chance of clarifying. He wishes only to point out that, he has never been a politicized militant. He became a PCB member through his process of involvement and commitment with militants of this party, with whom he kept a series of contacts. Once involved, he had no conditions of turning back, although it was his intention to step away and losing touch with any left-wing person or organization.⁵⁶

It is interesting to notice that the adjective “politicized,” neutral in its meaning, in this context takes on a leftist connotation. For the interrogators, the expression is always associated to militants who were secure in their political ideas. Thus, being “politicized” did not mean being “able of understanding the importance of the political thinking and action” or having “awareness of the citizens’ duties and rights,” (HOUAISS: 2001: 2.253) but rather having a view that society should be organized in a distinct manner than that professed by the military regime.

In some statements, it can be seen that part of the inquiries turned to the possibility of changing one’s view of the world due to their passage through DOI. Expressions such as “keeps being,” “reaffirms,” “not erased,” “do not abdicate” reflect the contesting of a previously formulated claim. In this sense, a militant from *Organização de Combate Marxista Leninista-Política Operária* (Worker Political Lininist Marxist Combat Organization - OCML-PO) stated:

[...] that, despite being quite “demoralized” by his arrest, considering his opinion is null, since he keeps being a socialist at heart. That, the class differences in Brazil, is something incredible and only the well dosed socialism, can in a near future balance this difference that exists from one class to the other.⁵⁷

Other times, the interrogators themselves conclude, from the deponents’ discourse, the impossibility of changing the ideas of some of them, such as this comment appended to the statement of an ALN sympathizer: “NOTE: This is a cult individual, conscious of his ideas, highly politicized and who believes nobody will change his fondness of Socialism.”⁵⁸ Or in this note on another militant of the same organization: “NOTE: The deponent retains her leftist ideals, keeping her thought always turned towards the Brazilian economy. In her view in a general analysis, the Nation’s development is not benefiting the

⁵⁶ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 160, 33,372.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 188, 38,331.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 122, 23,711.

people in general.”⁵⁹ It is important to point out that such comments would later be transcribed by the prosecutors in their cases as aggravating circumstances and would be recorded in the Military Justice trials.

Returning to the issue announced in the beginning of this article, as a sort of conclusion, it can be said the interest of the repressive organs were varied and were not limited to a strictly instrumental gathering of information. Some of the cited interrogations point towards questions of an ideologic nature, which shows DOI agents ventured into political discussion territory.

It is seen that the information gathered during the interrogations served for reaching different goals. Identifying and locating other political militants, with special attention to the directors, in order to arrest and interrogate them. Knowing the organizations’ structure and workings, following the internal changes or those caused by the repressive action itself, in order to better fight them off. Scrutinizing the intentions in the deeds committed, as well as the degree of ideological conviction of the deponents, in order to guide the sentencing by the Military Justice. And, finally, gauging the “pedagogic” effect of undergoing torture inside DOI’s rooms and calculating the degree of “hazard” still left in individuals of whom there was often not enough evidence to have them convicted.

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⁵⁹ Ibidem, 50-Z-9, 152, 31,694.

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