

The Press of the State of Mato Grosso and the Civil-Military Coup of 1964

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In the last few years, the media has been taken as a source and object of study in the area of history. Researchers have already demonstrated that *Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Estado de S. Paulo*, *Diário de S. Paulo*, *O Globo*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *Tribuna da Imprensa*, and *Correio da Manhã* contributed to the civil-military coup of 1964. In addition to them, periodicals produced in the State of Mato Grosso also played an important role in the process that culminated in the overthrow of President João Goulart. *O Progresso*, *O Mato-grossense*, *O Correio do Estado*, and *O Estado de Mato Grosso* are a few examples. In this article, the aim is to demonstrate the role of the written press in the State of Mato Grosso in the civil-military coup of 1964. Therefore, it is understood that newspapers play a role in the political game and in the construction of the historical event itself.

Keywords: press, State of Mato Grosso, Coup of 1964

In a work published in the 1980's, Professor René A. Dreifuss (1987) demonstrated the media operation that led to a multifaceted ideological campaign, coordinated by the Brazilian Institute of Democratic Action (IBAD) and the Institute of Research and Social Studies (IPES), aiming to “model the various fractions of the dominant classes and different social groups of the middle classes” (p. 232). According to the study carried out by Dreifuss (1987, p. 232), the media contributed to “the dismissal of João Goulart and the containment of popular mobilization”. As a result, a broad and heterogeneous alliance between civilians and the military “allowed the victory of the 1964 coup d’état” (Reis Filho, 2014, p. 47). As observed by Professor Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta (2013, p. 63), “the mainstream media supported the military intervention, contributing to the notable civilian support given to the 1964 Coup”. Therefore, with the exception of the newspaper *Última Hora*, newspapers with national circulation participated in this alliance.

Two examples seem enlightening. The question published by the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*, on March 27, 1964, is an expression of the position of the printed organs on the eve of the coup: “Until when will the responsible forces of this country, those who embody the ideals and principles of democracy, passively witness the systematic, obstinate, and now openly declared effort led by the President of the Republic to destroy democratic institutions?” As an example of the press’ actions, Brazilian researchers point out the editorial published by the newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, with the title “Enough!”. At the top of the first page, he stated: “Brazil has already suffered

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too much with the current government. Now, it's enough!" (Gaspari, 2002, pp. 64-65)

There is a consensus in historiography regarding the role of periodicals with corporate administrative structure, produced in the southeast region, with wide circulation and national distribution. However, we know little about the editorial stance of newspapers produced in other regions of Brazil. According to Miranda (2017, p. 281), "a large portion of the studies on the coup and the Brazilian military dictatorship focus on the events that occurred in the Southeast region of the country".

Nevertheless, in recent years, studies have been conducted to assess the relationship between the press located in the Legal Amazon¹ territory and the 1964² coup. Among others, there are studies by Arakaki (2003), Miranda (2017), Fontes (2014), and Sotana (2019). Aiming to contribute to the expansion of studies on media and politics, this article seeks to demonstrate the role of the written press in the State of Mato Grosso in the civil-military coup of 1964. However, considering the state's vast territorial expanse during that period and the consequent diversity of periodicals, four cases will be addressed.

However, before starting the description of the sources, it is necessary to make an observation. In research work, it is understood that it is possible to study history "through the press", taking the newspaper "as a primary source for historical research" (Zicman, 2012, p. 90). It is observed that newspapers are "often consulted and cited", but "rarely studied and analyzed". Therefore, we agree with Zicman (2012, p. 90) regarding the role of the press in the "political-ideological field".

The presentation of news is not a mere repetition of occurrences and records, but rather a direct cause of events, where information is not given randomly, but instead reflects the distinctive attitudes of each information vehicle.

The Press of the State of Mato Grosso and the 1964 Coup

Professor Suzana Arakaki studied the newspaper *O Progresso*³ periodical published in Dourados, which at the time was owned by Weimar Torres, federal deputy for the Social Democratic Party (PSD).⁴ According to Arakaki (2003, p. 113), in 1964 the newspaper "held Goulart responsible for national problems". The newspaper did not suggest that Goulart intended to establish a communist regime in Brazil, but it associated strikes and popular demonstrations carried out during his government as "internal disorder, provoked by Jango's mismanagement, rather than as a labor right and an act of citizenship".

With the approach of the coup, the editorial stance of the newspaper began to change, attempting to assign the responsibility of what had happened to the government. According to the newspaper, March 31st resulted from "the choice of misguided government methods, communist infiltration in the government, and the excessive freedom granted to agitators". For the newspaper, the military's actions took place against any "communist manifestation that was present in the actions of the left" (Arakaki, 2003, p. 116).

The article entitled "Small History of a Great Revolution" expresses the position of the periodical and the

¹ According to IPEA (2008), the Legal Amazon is "an area that corresponds to 59% of the Brazilian territory and encompasses a total of eight states (Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima, and Tocantins) and part of the State of Maranhão".

² Regarding the use of the term civil-military coup of 1964, Marly Motta's observations (2014, p. 9) are referred to: "The addition of the term 'civil' is justified, both by the support of a significant portion of public opinion for the coup, and by the mobilization of civilian leaders in radical opposition to Jango's government, with military support, of course".

³ The newspaper's collection is available for consultation at the Regional Documentation Center (CDR) of the Federal University of Grande Dourados.

⁴ To understand the dynamics of the Social Democratic Party in the period from 1945 to 1964, check Hippolito (1985).

classifications established by it. It is worth observing the excerpt published in *O Progresso* (The Progress), on April 12, 1964: “On April Fools’ Day a Real Revolution began”. In the conclusion, it was noted: “The Revolution that removed Mr. João Goulart from Power is over. The Army once again left the barracks to change the destiny of the Nation” (Arakaki, 2003, p. 118).

Besides analyzing its editorial position, Arakaki also presented data on the periodical’s performance in the “Gold for the Good of Brazil” campaign, a campaign spearheaded nationally by the media conglomerate *Diários Associados* in the context of the 1964 coup. At the regional level, *O Progresso* (The progress) called for the population of Dourados and its surroundings to “collaborate with the campaign (...) initiated by the civil entity Lions Club of Dourados” (Arakaki, 2013, p. 113).

The newspaper *O Matogrossense*⁵, from the city of Campo Grande, aligned with the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and at the time directed by deputy Philadelpho Garcia, published articles about the organization and programming of the “*Marcha da Família, com Deus e pela Liberdade*” (The March of the Family, With God and for Freedom).⁶

However, the newspaper adopted a different format at the beginning of the military regime and published reports containing exchanges of correspondence between military personnel. Such reports also contained quotes regarding the military’s position on the context. As an example, the headline titled “Complete Order in the Entire Military Region. Army Fulfilled Its Historic Role Once Again”, published on April 5, 1964, conveyed an excerpt from the telegram sent by General Amauri Kruehl, commander of the 2nd Army, about the manifest released by the Armed Forces to the Nation against communism. This manifesto defended Goulart’s exit. The position of General Mário Ferreira Barbosa Pinto, at the time commander of the 9th Military Region, based in Campo Grande, regarding the atmosphere of tranquility that prevailed in all cities in Mato Grosso, must be highlighted. Barbosa Pinto’s statement was: “the Army continues to be vigilant, ensuring the safety and peace of the Mato Grosso family and that the harmful elements are being detained and included in ‘Operation Cage’...”

In subsequent years, *O Matogrossense* celebrated the coup. On March 29, 1965, it released the program for the celebration of the first anniversary of the “Democratic Revolution”, organized by the Command of the 9th Military Region. It also published an article entitled “Revolution Celebrates Its First Anniversary”. It is worth noting the beginning of the text: “With brilliant and well-attended ceremonies throughout the Brazilian territory, the federal government celebrates today the first anniversary of the Revolutionary Movement that exterminated the red threat in the country”.

Still in Campo Grande, it is possible to observe the position of the newspaper *O Correio do Estado*, at the time owned by José Barbosa Rodrigues and linked to the National Democratic Union.⁷

In his dissertation, Correa (2018, p. 101) demonstrates that the newspaper, in January 1964, “would describe the national moment as governed by a ‘rhythm of order disturbance’ that jeopardized the democratic regime”.

In March, the newspaper highlighted the first “March of the Family With God for Freedom” held in São Paulo on the 19th. Following this, it noted:

Inspired by the São Paulo march, women from Campo Grande initiated a “women’s movement in defense of democratic

⁵ The newspaper’s archive is available for research at the Historical Archive of Campo Grande—ARCA.

⁶ To understand the objectives of the Marches held between March and May of 1964, please refer to Presot (2004) and Cordeiro (2021).

⁷ To grasp the dynamics of the National Democratic Union within the Brazilian party system formed between 1945 and 1964, consult Benevides (1981).

institutions.” Thus, they decided to hold, in Campo Grande on April 2nd, an “identical demonstration of faith and civic duty” for which they “invited delegations from other municipalities, as well as the highest authorities from the State and various municipalities.” (Correa, 2018, p. 102)

In the March 31 edition, the newspaper published the following invitation: “Come with us, march with us! With God and for freedom, against communism”. On April 1st, it summarized its position in the following text: “Brazil Standing for Freedom [...] The cry of reaction came from Minas Gerais and echoed throughout the country, São Paulo and Mato Grosso being the first to join forces with the land of Tiradentes” (Correa, 2018, p. 102).

According to the researcher, at the end of April 1964 the newspaper adopted a “propagandistic strategy in defense” of the incipient regime. Textual sentences can be divided into three thematic sets. In the first thematic axis, it presents the “defense of the regime, its leaders and practices”. Some examples: “Marechal Castelo Branco is a strict believer in discipline, order and law. His government will carry out a sanitary action and will make of the revolution a salvation of democracy”; “April’s revolution swept away the rule of corruption and communism from our homeland. Brazil will never tolerate the risks and embarrassments to which its rulers exposed it”. In the second thematic axis he called on the population to support and cooperate with the government: “Cooperate with the Government in the task of reconstruction. Save money, produce and think about collective problems as you think about your own problems”; “That everyone has the freedom to produce more and earn as much as they are able, as long as they do not violate the law, exploit workers and consumers, or hinder the country’s development”. The third thematic section concerns the “fight against communism and its agents”.

As an example, there is the title: “The antidote to communism is authentic and vigilant democracy. A population who knows freedom is not resigned to lose it” (Correa, 2018, pp. 104-105).

In editorials, *Correio do Estado* also positioned itself substantiating the 1964 coup as a “revolution”. In “The Duty of the Democrats”, March 31st was presented as the result of “the union of the patriotism of civilians and military personnel”, who demonstrated an “irresistible force, to remove the corrupt and subversive Government from power”, and it was up to the Democrats to “support the Government and not collude with preachers of exotic ideologies [...]”. For the newspaper, this was “the best way to serve Brazil and contribute to its progress” (Correa, 2018, p. 106).

Move on to the last of the newspapers mentioned, the Cuiabá periodical *O Estado de Mato Grosso*.⁸ Founded in 1939 by Archimedes Pereira Lima, at the time Director of the Official Press of the State and head of the State Department of Press and Propaganda (DEIP), during the 1960s, its anti-communist stance and its alignment with Carlos Lacerda, then governor of Guanabara and a staunch opponent of João Goulart, who was vying for the Presidency of the Republic, became evident. The newspaper published an abundant amount of critical material about João Goulart. Phrases such as “manipulating the workers” and “stirring up” were associated with the president in the pages of the newspaper. It also used terms like “spirochete” and “irresponsible”, portraying him as a cause of “disorder” and an adversary of democracy, adjectives quite different from those typically attributed to Carlos Lacerda or Filinto Müller, for instance.

On its pages, it gave wide coverage to the Family March, held in Cuiabá. As other newspapers mentioned, it celebrated the 1964 coup. A year after the event, it was printed on the first page: “The Entirety of Brazil

⁸ The archive of this newspaper is deposited and available for research in three Brazilian public institutions: at the Regional Historical Documentation and Information Center (NDHIR), at the Institute of Geography, History, and Documentation (IGHD/UFMT), at the State Archive of Mato Grosso, and in the Digital Newspaper Library of the National Library.

Celebrates the Anniversary of the Revolution Today” (O Estado de Mato Grosso, 1965, p. 1).

Despite the textual diversity, it seems important to narrow down the scope of observation to one of the journalists involved in the production of O Estado de Mato Grosso. Our focus will be on Pedro R. Jucá and his report published on April 8, 1964, titled “Mato Grosso Was Part of the Governor’s Scheme From the Beginning”.

Before addressing the mentioned article, it is worth noting that Jucá was not a journalist at the beginning of his career. In the early 1960s, he took on the role of chief editor of the newspaper. At the state level, he undertook other important initiatives in the field of journalism. For instance, he contributed to the creation and operation of Rexpress, the first news agency in the state of Mato Grosso. Starting in 1961, he was a correspondent for the newspaper O Estado de São Paulo and the magazine Visão, a role he concluded in 1972.

After providing context about the journalist Pedro Rocha Jucá attention is turned to the text published on April 8, 1964. In early 1964, as a representative of the newspapers O Estado de S. Paulo and Folha Matogrossense, of Radio Difusora Bom Jesus de Cuiabá and of the magazine Visão, Jucá approached the journalist Pedro Valle, director of the Public Relations Service of the Government of the State of Mato Grosso, to make a “historical record of the events that led to the restoration of the democratic regime”. This was because Fernando Correa da Costa, the governor of the state, was in Rio de Janeiro to discuss the “agreements for the election of the new President of the Republic”.

What was his intention? It is to produce a retrospective on the “evolution of the last political crisis”, bringing to light “previously secret facts” related to the maneuvers of the “revolutionary process” that, according to him, were set in motion after the Central do Brasil Rally. According to the journalist, after the rally in Rio, General Castelo Branco, in a confidential memo, “warned” military commanders about the “seriousness of the situation”. On the other hand, Governor Carlos Lacerda worked to smooth the civilian apparatus, sending a letter to the governors on March 17, 1964.

In the case of Correia da Costa, the correspondence was accompanied by a note written by Lacerda, a strategy aimed at the strengthening of the friendship between the two governors. In the letter, Lacerda evaluated:

In order to prevent my election, he wants to prevent any democratic election: the progressive handover of key positions to the communists and their accomplices, in the economy, in education, in transportation and communication, in the control of fuels (...) What matters to us is the unity of all those interested in defending Freedom, including the freedom to disagree. (O Estado de Mato Grosso, 1964, p. 02)

The missive did not go unanswered. On March 23, Fernando Correa da Costa sent a telegram to Carlos Lacerda, deeming the “appeal” to the “civic and patriotic conscience” of those responsible for “our homeland” justified. He expressed solidarity and conveyed his “democratic sentiment” in declaring support for those “engaged in this struggle for survival” and for the “democratic institutions that govern us”. The governor of Mato Grosso articulated his stance based on the “tradition of our Christian civilization founded on the freedom of the human person”.

According to Juca’s text, on March 24, the governor of Mato Grosso received two more letters. Correspondences from Ildo Menghetti and Ademar de Barros, respectively governors of Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo, arrived via VASP airplane, emphasizing the “seriousness of the situation and requesting the presence of the Chief Executive of Mato Grosso in Porto Alegre on the 31st”. The response from the governor of Mato Grosso was dispatched “into the hands of Colonel Carlos de Meira Matos, Commander of the 16th Hunter Battalion”. Simultaneously, Fernando Correa da Costa summoned Colonel Evaristo da Costa e Silva of the

military police, instructing him to proceed to Rondonópolis to put into action, along with the 16th Hunter Battalion, “the first part of the civil-military plan” to “isolate Cuiabá blocking the routes to Alto Araguaia and Campo Grande”. Additionally, the 2nd Hunter Battalion, settled in Campo Grande, was to promptly dispatch “reinforcements to Rondonópolis”.

However, the meeting scheduled for the southern part of the country did not take place. Correa da Costa began his journey and, in Campo Grande, was “taken by surprise by the news of the postponement of the governors’ conference”. The reason for the suspension was the execution of the civil-military coup. But the governor did not remain idle. He contacted Demóstenes Martins, President of the State Directory of the National Democratic Union (UDN) and Secretary of State for Interior, Justice, and Finance, to outline “the maneuvers that preceded the military coup in Mato Grosso, with emphasis on the participation of the UDN” (O Estado de Mato Grosso, 1965, p. 2).

Before continuing to discuss the matter, it is necessary to highlight “the exclusion of José Garcia Neto from the decision-making process”. As noted by Araujo (2022, pp. 334-338), with the governor absent, the vice-governor should have taken over as the constitutional substitute. However, it seems that José Garcia Neto “Did not relish the trust of the UDN’s core, due to his social background and political positions, considered to be more left-leaning than theirs. Demosthenes Martins was in fact the governor”.

According to the article’s news, Martins contacted General Barbosa Pinto, commander of the 9th Military Region, who assured that “the garrisons of Mato Grosso were united alongside the democratic forces”. Additionally, according to the report, Meira Mattos (O Estado de Mato Grosso, 1964, p. 2)⁹ intercepted a telegram from the National Union of Students (UNE) addressed to the students of Mato Grosso, asking for solidarity to the government. He then met with Demóstenes Martins to arrange “measures related to the surveillance of certain elements, under the responsibility of the Civil Police”. He also instructed 150 subordinates to proceed “to join Colonel Evaristo in Rondonópolis, another group to block Alto Araguaia, and the remaining troops with instructions to march towards Jataí in Goiás, making contact with the troops of the Second Army”.

Still, according to the article, Fernando Correa da Costa maintained “lengthy” telephone contacts with Ademar de Barros from Campo Grande, “keeping himself informed of the events and reporting on the perfect unity, in favor of the movement, in Mato Grosso”. In the early afternoon, he returned to Cuiabá and “personally oversaw the final necessary measures”.

After recounting the events and situating the position of each participant in the State of Mato Grosso, the journalist concluded his text as follows: “the troops of Democracy extended their actions to most of the national territory, ensuring the victory of the forces of legality” (O Estado de Mato Grosso, 1964, p. 2).

Therefore, the article informs about the maneuvers of different political agents (with military involvement), established at local, regional, and national levels, for the execution of the coup. Additionally, the text emphasizes the stance of the newspaper on the event by referring, for instance, to the agents involved in the coup as “troops of democracy”.

⁹ Moreover, praises for Meira Mattos were sung in the newspaper. In the column titled “Without Censorship”, Evaldo de Barros assessed that João Goulart “failed to seize the opportunity to govern that was offered to him” and wrote about Meira Mattos amidst the city’s anniversary celebrations: “However, even though Cuiabá may not celebrate its foundation anniversary as it has in other years, one thing my dear city can certainly receive; the victory of the 16th B.C. was the greatest gift of all. The publicity that Colonel Meira Matos brought to Cuiabá with his patriotism, civic spirit, and sense of duty, promptly responds to a trio of anniversaries, as the often forgotten eternal capital of Mato Grosso, true to its historical past, formed the front line once again and provided the most irrefutable evidence and the most beautiful examples that when it comes to Brazil, Cuiabá is at the forefront.

Final Remarks

Based on research conducted with the newspapers O Progresso, O Matogrossense, O Correio do Estado, and O Estado de Mato Grosso, it is evident that there is an abundant amount of material published in the printed pages that allows an understanding of the political positions taken and the methods employed in journalistic production.

Regarding the civil-military coup of 1964, it can be observed that the newspapers did not remain neutral, impartial, and detached from the political field. As Professor Ciro Marcondes Filho pointed out, to produce a newspaper

is to find a way to elevate the interest of individuals and groups to a high power in publicly asserting their opinions and information. It is a means of giving resonance to personal, class, or national positions through a technological-industrial complex, which, in addition to preserving a supposed impersonality, asserts itself, by its power and sovereignty, as “the truth”. (1986, p. 11)

In this way, newspapers are produced by historical subjects, who must also be situated in the political field in order to historically contextualize the civil-military coup of 1964 and the 21 years of military dictatorship that ensued. They operate in the political realm, create products, and generate representations of the social world (Bourdieu, 2000).

Newspapers are “an integral part of the political game and the very construction of historical events” (Abreu, 1996, p. 9). Therefore, a media outlet should not be regarded “solely as an amplifier of political life”, but as a social agent that “influences and is influenced by the structure and dynamics of politics” (Busetto, 2008, p. 19).

Ultimately, in this study, we hope to draw attention to the importance of studying the press produced in the territory of Legal Amazon. Through the analysis of four newspapers, it is expected to promote historical research with newspapers published in Mato Grosso in the context of the civil-military coup and, likewise, the military Brazilian dictatorship.

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