
The *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* (SDDH)
and *Serviço Nacional de Informações*: surveillance and the
construction of the internal enemy during the Brazilian
military dictatorship

A *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* e o
Serviço Nacional de Informações: vigilância e a construção do
inimigo interno durante a Ditadura Militar brasileira

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Abstract

This article analyzes the systematic surveillance imposed on the *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* (SDDH) [Human Rights Defense Society of Pará] by the *Serviço Nacional de Informações* (SNI) [National Information Service] during the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985). Founded in Belém, Pará, in August 1977, the SDDH emerged from the defense of squatters involved in the Fazenda Capaz conflict and used the newspaper *Resistência* as its main platform to denounce state violence. This study methodology is based on a cross-analysis of documents produced by state intelligence agencies (particularly SNI reports) and the newspaper *Resistência*, adopting a critical reading of repressive sources in dialogue with historiography on dictatorship, memory, and surveillance. The documentation reveals that the SDDH was rapidly framed within the logic of the “domestic enemy,” with its actions interpreted as “subversive” and as “a catalyst for class struggle.” The monitoring proved to be sophisticated, including detailed records of meetings, action plans, and member profiles. The article thus highlights the contrast between the state’s narrative and the practices and discourses of the organization, contributing to a broader understanding of repression and resistance in the Amazon during the military regime.

Keywords: *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* (SDDH); Military Dictatorship; *Serviço Nacional de Informações* (SNI); Amazon; state of Pará.

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Resumo

O artigo analisa a vigilância sistemática imposta à Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos (SDDH) pelo Serviço Nacional de Informações (SNI) durante a Ditadura Militar (1964-1985). Fundada em Belém, Pará, em agosto de 1977, a SDDH surgiu motivada pela defesa de posseiros envolvidos no conflito da Fazenda Capaz e utilizava o jornal *Resistência* como principal instrumento de denúncia. Metodologicamente, o trabalho baseia-se na análise cruzada de documentação produzida pelos órgãos de informação do Estado (especialmente informes do SNI) e do periódico *Resistência*, adotando uma leitura crítica das fontes repressivas à luz da historiografia sobre ditadura, memória e vigilância. A documentação evidencia que a SDDH foi rapidamente enquadrada na lógica do “inimigo interno”, sendo suas ações interpretadas como “subversivas” e “fermento para a luta de classes”. O monitoramento mostrou-se sofisticado, com registros detalhados de reuniões, planos de ação e perfis de seus membros. O estudo evidencia, assim, o contraste entre a narrativa estatal e as práticas e discursos da entidade, contribuindo para a compreensão das formas de repressão e resistência na Amazônia durante o regime militar.

Palavras-chave: Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos; Ditadura Militar; Serviço Nacional de Informações; Amazônia; estado do Pará.

Introduction

Dealing with documents originating from repressive structures, such as those produced by the Serviço Nacional de Informações (SNI) and its regional agencies during the military dictatorship (1964-1985), requires critical analysis, but also careful observation of the traces, silences, and noises they contain. As Arlette Farge observes, “the archive is a breach in the fabric of days,” an opening that allows one to glimpse “fragments of truth [or reality] that were previously withheld.”¹ While offering us seductive materiality, sometimes with a significant amount of data, the archives of power or the State need to be questioned regarding what they do not say, what they conceal, or, especially, what they distort. “Although reality seems to be there, visible and tangible,” the author warns, “it is naive to believe that its essence has been reached at that point.”²

Robert Darnton states that there is no “historian who can get inside the heads of the dead – or, indeed, not even the heads of the living, even if they can be interviewed for contemporary history studies.” However, the author

¹ FARGE Arlette. *O sabor do arquivo*. Translated by Fátima Murad. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2009, p. 14.

² *Ibidem*, p. 18.

continues, “with sufficient documentation, one can detect patterns of thought and action.”³ It has not always been easy to access documentation such as that which I will be handling in this article, that is, archives produced by the military dictatorship. The same American author continues his reflection, rightly stating that “only rarely do the archives prove adequate, because censorship was exercised in secret and the secrets generally remained hidden or were destroyed.”⁴

Fortunately, in Brazil, documentation related to the authoritarian state began to be gradually released, especially from the 1990s onwards. This opening of archives allows historians to reach deeper dimensions of the mechanisms of control and repression, approaching, in a certain sense, what Darnton (although referring to a different object and set of documents) understands when he states that “once a sufficient chain of evidence is obtained, we can bring to light the underlying assumptions and hidden activities”⁵ promoted by those in charge of surveillance, espionage, monitoring and censorship.

Using a framework of sources compiled by the repressive organs of the Brazilian military dictatorship, I intend to trace the ways in which the authoritarian state sought to monitor the Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos (SDDH), in Belém, Pará. I seek to trace the paths that can lead us to understand the tumultuous relationship between the civil institution and the agents of repression of that period, especially in the initial stages of the Pará-based entity and how the military perceived them. To this end, I will use the documentation produced by the SNI and its tireless attempt to criminalize all social struggle, as well as analyze its vocabulary.

From the perspective of contemporary history, addressing this topic is certainly not an easy task. Discussing dictatorship means dealing with a memory that torments us, as it is still alive in our time. Contemporary history often leads us to a rather uncomfortable place. As Henry Rousso points out, “the recent past is rejected as a memory of horror while simultaneously torments consciences.”⁶ And that is the feeling one gets when dealing with the period of the dictatorship that began with the 1964 coup in Brazil. In any case, this is a burden that haunts the historian of the present time, because, as Christian Delacroix states, this historiography of the recent past has been carried out

³ DARNTON, Robert. *Censores em ação: como os estados influenciaram a literatura*. Translated by Figueiredo, Rubens. 1^a. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2016, p. 08.

⁴Ibidem.

⁵Ibidem.

⁶ ROUSSO, Henry. *A última catástrofe: a história, o presente e o contemporâneo*. Rio de Janeiro: FGV, 2016, p. 115.

mostly from social demands that require recognition and justice – which can be labeled as “memorial claims” – relating to traumatic pasts that are difficult for national communities to acknowledge, and which emanate from individuals or groups outside the realm of professional historians. The recognition of a debt to be paid to the past, therefore, seems common to these memorial claims.⁷

For this reason, the relationship between history and memory is always tense, especially when it comes to “pasts” still under dispute. As Henry Rousso reminds us, once again, in a text published in the early 1990s on the memory of the Vichy period in French society (a reflection that can also help us think about our own traumas), if there is, according to him, a “Vichy syndrome,” here perhaps we can speak of a “dictatorship syndrome.” Engaging with themes related to it has not been a simple task, especially in recent years, given the rise of discourses that deny the authoritarian and violent structure of the Brazilian state between 1964 and 1985. In any case, Rousso affirms that “*memory is a living phenomenon, something in perpetual evolution, whereas history is a scholarly and theoretical reconstruction [...] more apt to give rise to a substantial durable body of knowledge.*”⁸ While memory is plural, fragmented by groups, parties, communities and institutions, history appears as a critical attempt to rebuild facts from sources and interpretations.

Such tension permeates the writing of history, since, in the words of the French historian,

*Whether professional or amateur, the historian is always a product of his own time and place. He stands at a crossroads in the byways of collective memory: on the one hand he, like any other citizen, is influenced by the dominant memory, which may subconsciously suggest interpretations and areas of research; on the other hand, he himself is a vector of memory and a carrier of fundamental importance, in that the vision he proposes of the past may, after some delay, exert and influence on contemporary representations.*⁹

This article starting point is the reading of documents produced by the *Serviço Nacional de Informações* (SNI) reporting on activities developed by

⁷ DELACROIX, Christian. A história do tempo presente, uma história (realmente) como as outras? *Tempo e Argumento*, Florianópolis, v. 10, n. 23, p. 39 - 79, Jan./Mar. 2018, p. 44.

⁸ ROUSSO, Henry. *The Vichy Syndrome*. History and memory in France since 1944. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 02.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 04.

the *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* (SDDH). Therefore, we propose a critical reading of those sources, evidence of what Rousso called “*event-oriented memory*”, that is, a place where multiple tensions cross the attempt of consolidating a collective representation of past events.¹⁰

Regarding the military dictatorship in Brazil, confronting it as a subject has never been an easy task, especially when considered in the context of a national collective memory. The historiography on the subject is vast, of course, but when it comes to remembering it, for example, everything seems too traumatic and too heavy; therefore, a *burdening history*. According to Bodo von Borries, “The mental task of reconciling oneself with difficult stories (in the sense of serious crimes committed by one’s own group in the past) [...] is somewhat complicated, time-consuming, and a mental burden.” In the author’s words, “a productive solution includes admitting the crimes committed; managing and reflecting on—and avoiding—the temptation to deny or forget [...] The mental act of assimilating, digesting, and overcoming difficult stories is crucial.”¹¹ As a recent example, the Lula government (2023-) solemnly ignored any kind of commemoration or event related to the 60th anniversary of the 1964 coup. The argument almost always rests on the attempt to indicate a path of reconciliation for what seems irreconcilable, or a desperate attempt to simply *forget*.

On the one hand, there was a stance that sought *forgetting* as the only remedy for the trauma; on the other hand, under the Bolsonaro government (2018–2022), an extreme attitude was observed, marked by denialist revisionism. Both the 1964 coup came to be treated as a “revolution,” and the dictatorship was presented as a form of “democracy,” capable of leaving George Orwell’s Big Brother and his “Newspeak” perplexed. In any case, there are problems with both of the aforementioned stances. Therefore, I insist, this is a matter of strong appeal that compels us to continue revisiting it in the light of historiography.

The *Comissão Nacional da Verdade* - CNV [National Truth Commission], which sought to address this traumatic memory, was created in 2011 (Law N° 12,528, of November 18) and established in 2012 (Decree N° 7,674), during the first term of Dilma Rousseff (2011–2014). The CNV’s final report was published in December 2014, totaling three substantial volumes comprising more than

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ VON BORRIES, Bodo. *Jovens e consciência histórica*. Organized and translated by Maria Auxiliadora Schmidt, Marcelo Fronza, Lucas Pydd Nechi-Curitiba: W.A. Editores, 2016, p. 33–34.

3,300 pages. Such documentation helps us to understand, at least partially, the wide variety of violations committed by the Brazilian state during the twenty-one years of that dictatorship.

However, there is no mention of the actions developed, or the persecutions suffered by such an important entity in that context as the SDDH, which was one of the most combative in the Amazon region. Similarly, little has been written in historiography about that entity, which is only mentioned when the underlying theme is the military dictatorship or human rights, but never as a central object of research.

In this regard, there is only one exception, as I was able to find a master's dissertation presented to the "Social Defense and Conflict Mediation Graduate Program" of the Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences at the Federal University of Pará, authored by Jumara de Moraes Cardoso do Nascimento. Entitled "Sociology of organizations in the context of civil society: the trajectory of a non-governmental organization for the defense of Human Rights in the Amazon to resist time and its social changes," it was published in 2014. However, that study focuses less on the history of the organization and its relationship with the military dictatorship, and more on the analysis of its internal functioning, based on frameworks from the sociology of organizations.¹²

The main objective of that author was to understand how SDDH resisted social and institutional transformations over time, mainly after the military regime, facing the challenges of its professionalization, the bureaucratization of its practices, and the growing dependence on agreements with the public sector. Although the work offers a relevant overview of the entity's trajectory, it falls more within the field of administration of third-sector organizations than historiography. Therefore, it does not address key aspects regarding how state repression recorded and reacted to the SDDH's activities during the authoritarian period, since this was not its objective.

Taking all that into account, this article aims to analyze how *the Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* (SDDH) was monitored and framed by the dictatorship information agencies, mainly in its initial stages. To that end, a brief history of the organization is presented first, so that

¹² NASCIMENTO, Jumara de Moraes Cardoso. *Sociologia das organizações no contexto da sociedade civil: a trajetória de uma organização não governamental de defesa dos direitos humanos na Amazônia para resistir ao tempo e suas mudanças sociais*. 2014. Dissertation (Social Defense and Conflict Mediation Professional Master's Program) –Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas [Philosophy and Human Sciences Institute], Federal University of Pará, Belém, 2024.

readers can familiarize themselves with the topic. Following this, the clues left by documentation produced by military agents about the organization are traced, comparing that information with the alternative newspaper called *Resistência*, produced and published by the SDDH and which served as its mouthpiece, to highlight the tensions between the repressive vocabulary of the state and the narratives produced by the organization.

The Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos

The *Sociedade de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* (SDDH) was created in August 1977, in the city of Belém, state of Pará, that is, during Ernesto Geisel's government (1974-1979). Although the historical memory frequently associates that period to the start of some "slow, gradual and safe" political opening, the SDDH trajectory reveals that the organization faced significant persecution and attacks from the authoritarian state. Such contrast highlights that, despite the official discourse, repressive practices remained in effect. Considering that, Marcos Napolitano offered a critical analysis of the liberal view of the Geisel period, stating:

Based on the content of media statements, political figures, and the perspective of some historians, there seems to be an almost direct link between the Geisel government and the political opening. The violent deaths of left-wing militants appear to be more the work of a previously uncontrollable "basement of the regime," while the purges, the closing of Congress, and institutional impositions seem to be mere tactics to better achieve *détente*. In both cases, not only the figure of Geisel, but also the liberal memory we alluded to regarding the former president, is preserved. As if the result of his political actions, "another chance for democracy," explained the nature and course of the historical process since the launch of "*détente*."¹³

Looking beyond the national plan and observing other regions, one can observe that the state violence continued to affect Brazilian society, especially in areas less visible in the country's major newspapers, for example. This study focuses on an organization located in the Amazon, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of both the reach and actions of the military (such as coercion and surveillance) and the sectors of society that resisted the dictatorship. By directing attention to spaces beyond the central-southern

¹³ NAPOLITANO, Marcos. 1964: história do regime militar brasileiro. São Paulo: Contexto, 2014, p. 245.

axis, a field of investigation is reached, one that reveals the persistence of repression even during the process of “opening up.” Thus, the experience of the SDDH under the Geisel and Figueiredo governments (1979-1985) highlights the ambiguous nature of that period, marked both by liberalizing measures and by the continuation of authoritarian practices.

Taking that into consideration, four main references are used here that provide information on the creation of that entity. The first is the work by Bernardo Kucinski, published in 1991, containing a broad survey of the alternative press in Brazil during the dictatorship. That author addressed the trajectory of the newspaper *Resistência*, created by the *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos*, and presented a brief history of the organization in Pará. Other two references are equally important: texts written by former writers of that newspaper and members of the institution, namely, Luiz Maklouf Carvalho, who published a book chapter about the newspaper in 1984 and, later, Paulo Roberto Ferreira, dedicated one of his works to the theme in 2010. In all cases, although the authors’ focus was the newspaper *Resistência*, it is impossible to analyze it without addressing the trajectory of the *Sociedade de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* which launched that publication.

In addition to these references, the use of the newspaper *Resistência* was also highly relevant since it was the SDDH’s mouthpiece and provided important information related to that institution’s objectives and interests, which will be useful to better understand its action.

Apart from the works already listed, it seems relevant to mention that SDDH is still active and keeps a page on the Internet dedicated to the publication of its activities. From that space I take advantage of some information that I find relevant. As the webpage emphasizes, the institution understands that “its origin is directly related to the struggle and resistance against the civil-military dictatorship, installed in Brazil with the military coup of 1964 and the history of human rights violations”¹⁴ resulting from the authoritarian state actions. Additionally, it informs:

The state of Pará and the Amazon region still suffer today from the disastrous policies adopted by the military governments during the occupation of the Amazonian territory. These policies disregarded the people who already lived there, generating conflict and violence that persist to this day. Land grabbing, illegality, slave labor, and violence against traditional communities and rural workers and their leaders are major scars left by this historical process.¹⁵

¹⁴ Available at: <http://sddh.org.br/quem-somos/#historico>. Accessed on Jun 06, 2025.

¹⁵ Available at: <http://sddh.org.br/quem-somos/#historico>. Accessed on Jun 06, 2025.

The text recently cited, written and updated exposes that the initial stance of the SDDH in the face of the regime (regarding the fight and resistance against the state violence) was linked to the concerns generated by the effects of public policies implemented during the military period in the Amazon, mainly in Pará. Thus, I think it is important to also recover the understanding that the institution had of itself in the context of its appearance, in the late 1970s. For this reason, I refer to the first issue of the newspaper *Resistência*, published in March 1978, only some months after the SDDH creation.

However, to have a better understanding of the conditions that originated the institution, it is necessary to take some distance from the immediate context of its creation, directly related to the conflict on the Capaz Farm, which gained the attention of different sectors in society and formed the base for its creation. This is the topic developed below.

SDDH creation and the Capaz Farm conflict

The first issue of the newspaper *Resistência* did not have the subtitle that would be adopted later “Resisting is the first step.” In that first publication, the information “Newspaper belonging to the *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos*” appeared. On the third page, the text “How the *Sociedade* was born” was published, alongside the entity’s “Letter of Principles”. Next, we analyze the points highlighted by the SDDH in that document:

The *SOCIEDADE PARAENSE DE DEFESA DOS DIREITOS HUMANOS* was officially founded on 08th August 1977, when its first board of directors was elected, after approval of its bylaws in the General Assembly. The idea of its creation appeared when a group of people gathered to defend and help squatters involved in the death of the North-American farmer John Davis, who had been arrested in São José [jail]. Those squatters were in a difficult situation, could not afford a lawyer or even buy a hammock to sleep in.¹⁶

The Capaz farm conflict marked by John Davis’s death became emblematic of land conflicts in the Amazon during the first half of the 1970s. The American, owner of the farm, sought to guarantee the legitimacy of his large landholding, presenting “a series of documents attesting that he had reverted to his patrimony several areas previously occupied by squatters, in

¹⁶ Jornal *Resistência*, ano 1, nº 1, March 1978, Belém (PA). “Como nasceu a Sociedade”, p. 03

accordance with the law, even paying compensation for the improvements made.”¹⁷ However, the constant arrival of migrants and peasants, guided by local leaders such as the priest Giuseppe Fontenella, intensified the conflicts, leading to a scenario of extreme violence and instability. The case tragic outcome occurred in 1976, when “confrontation at the CAPAZ farm [...] culminated in the death of two of John Davis’s children, as well as the deaths of unidentified squatters who were found in the farm’s woods days after the confrontation” (MESQUITA, 2018, p. 249). The episode was widely reported in the press and resulted in the mobilization of military and police troops, thus generating international repercussions and highlighting the complexity and seriousness of landownership conflicts in the region.¹⁸

Other sources expanded on the information found in the newspaper *Resistência* regarding the “Capaz Farm” conflict. This is the case, for example, of a text written by Luiz Maklouf Carvalho, a former member of SDDH, published in 1984. Although focused on the Belém-based periodical, the author also presented a brief history of the entity that published the newspaper. Carvalho stated that it was “precisely the violent repression that befell the squatters accused of the crime (torture, terrible prison conditions, etc.) that motivated some people to discuss a way to counter this and other similar situations.” In this regard, he continued:

Religious progressist and some emerging neighborhood leaders, university students, liberal professionals, political activists who had been imprisoned and tortured during the Médici government, democrats who were direct victims of the military coup – it is a rather heterogeneous group of individuals, mostly from the petit-bourgeoisie, that hold some meetings and found the SDDH in August 1977.¹⁹

Ismael Machado, biographer of the lawyer for the peasants and politician from Belém, Paulo Fonteles, states that the SDDH creation stemmed from an initial plan conceived by young university students who had been tortured in the dungeons of the dictatorship in the first half of the 1970s. These included the aforementioned Paulo, his partner Hecilda Veiga, and a couple of friends, Izabel Marques and Humberto Cunha. According to that author

¹⁷ MESQUITA, Thiago B. “Uma estrada revela o mundo”: O SNI e os conflitos pela posse da terra no Pará. Thesis, Social History doctorate program, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (PPGHIS/UFRJ), Rio de Janeiro, 2018, p. 238.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 77.

The four were the first to organize what would become the *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* (SPDDH). Hecilda and Izabel, in particular, were the ones who initiated a campaign to help squatters on a farm called Capaz where, unsurprisingly, there were threats, evictions, and violence. From the initial meetings aimed at assisting the squatters, the idea arose for an organization that would address issues of guaranteeing human rights.²⁰

This information shows that, in fact, although the appearance of that institution was strongly related to the Capaz farm conflict, its scope of action was broadened over time. In any case, neither the newspaper *Resistência* published any specific mention of a prior coordination by Paulo, Hecilda, Humberto, and Izabel; nor did the publication by Luiz Maklouf Carvalho. Nevertheless, the fact remains that SDDH emerged in 1977, under the presidency of Paulo Fonteles.

Also, in the first issue of *Resistência*, SDDH published another document called by the entity “Letter of Principles”. It contained significant information regarding expectations about the institution’s role in those early days. The text expressed a forceful diagnosis of the situation in the Amazon during that context, under the military dictatorship. The document also denounced environmental destruction, predatory exploitation by external economic interests, and the process of social expropriation experienced by local populations (especially farmers, landholders, riverside dwellers, and urban workers). Indignation is evident in fragments such as this: “Its people are witnessing, today, the destruction of an entire way of life, where all the riches produced over millennia by nature are being irremediably devastated due to alien interests, to the detriment of the Amazonian people themselves.”²¹

SDDH associated the violence of large landholdings and land grabbing with the advance of large corporate projects that, in the name of “development,” generated unemployment, forced migration, community disruption, and urban marginalization. It also presented a direct critique of the capitalist and authoritarian logic of the occupation of the Amazon, stating that the Amazonian man had been reduced to the condition of a marginalized inhabitant, without access to full citizenship. In a particularly forceful passage, it stated: “Traditionally a squatter, [the Amazonian man]

²⁰ MACHADO, Ismael. *Paulo Fonteles: sem ponto final*. 1ª. ed. São Paulo: Instituto Paulo Fonteles, Fundação Maurício Grabois, Anita Garibaldi, 2017, p. 127.

²¹ *Jornal Resistência*, ano 1, nº 1, March 1978, Belém (PA). “A carta de princípios”, p. 03.

is expelled from the land by the expansion of new farms, transformed into a 'traded laborer,' facing new barbed wire fences in each area, if not dozens of armed thugs ready to destroy his crops, his makeshift house, and even his very life."²²

In response to that scenery of injustice and inspired in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the document also set the SDDH main objectives related to the following themes: fight for housing, decent work, health, public education, access to land, freedom of expression, accessible daycare centers and recreational areas, the reinstatement of habeas corpus, broad amnesty, the inviolability of civil rights, and democratic guarantees such as free and periodic elections.

The text as a whole stood out because it addressed social denunciation, political restart, and an emphasis on the developmentalist policies imposed on the Amazon region. Therefore, it revealed the original "vocation" of SDDH as an organization actively defending human rights in the Amazon, especially through its expressed commitment to the vulnerable populations of the region.

There is one aspect related to this document that deserves highlighting. It concerns the observation made by the aforementioned journalist Luiz Maklouf Carvalho, regarding the text published in *Resistência*. According to that author, there were clear limitations to that initiative, which can be seen precisely in this record. For him, there was no "explicit reference to the military dictatorship," since the text spoke of "alien interests," "they usurped our power to decide," "the power of large national and multinational companies," and "expressions [...] without a clearly identified subject."²³

This is a forceful critical analysis, because for Carvalho, it was not just about metaphors used "out of the fear that the dictatorship instilled in hearts and minds." Furthermore, and above all, that stance reflected "a concern to have a document signed and endorsed by broad political sectors," also denoting "the limited level of that initiative."²⁴

Despite Carvalho's critique to the SDDH, to *PCdoB* [Communist Party of Brazil] and to the content of the newspaper *Resistência* (which, for much of its circulation period, was directed by him), Ismael Machado, in the already mentioned biography, observed that, at the time of its creation the organization

²² *Jornal Resistência*, ano 1, nº 1, March 1978, Belém (PA). "A carta de princípios", p. 03.

²³ CARVALHO, Luiz Maklouf. Apontamentos para uma História do Jornal *Resistência*, p. 77.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

was “internally conflictive and diverse, [the organization] suffered from the same problems that the Brazilian left wing political organizations have always had: fragmentation into various and scattered groups”.²⁵ Nevertheless, Carvalho goes further in his assessment, although he qualifies it at the end of his reasoning, when he mentions:

In addition, there is no political analysis of the situation the country was going through at the time: the regime changes, the balance of power, the forms of struggle of the opposition. Only at the end does the list of words of origin, beyond those related to human rights, raise more general struggles [...] For the moment, however, it was the best that could be done, and an important step in integrating the state into national struggles.²⁶

In any case, what matters at this moment is recognizing that SDDH began its activities motivated by the conflict at the CAPAZ Farm, joining different sectors of society around its agenda. From this experience, it managed to structure and devise, in a more consistent way, the principles that guided its actions. With the creation of *Resistência*, in early 1978, it became even more evident, through reports, opinion articles, editorials, and news, that the central enemy was the military dictatorship and, consequently, the projects stemming from it.

The SDDH, the military regime: surveillance and espionage

Having established the founding context and the principles that guided the SDDH’s actions, it is now necessary to examine how the military regime perceived and monitored the organization in its initial stages; that is, how did the intelligence agencies monitor its activities and its members? To answer these questions, I will now analyze the documentation produced by the *Serviço Nacional de Informações* (SNI) [National Information Service] and its regional agencies, when applicable, comparing it to the elements found within the newspaper *Resistência*.

Before proceeding, however, a brief historical overview of the SNI is necessary, since much of the documentation used in this article originates from that agency. *The Serviço Nacional de Informações* was created shortly after the 1964 coup, based on a proposal by General Golbery do Couto e Silva to

²⁵ MACHADO, Ismael. *Paulo Fonteles: sem ponto final*, p. 127.

²⁶ CARVALHO, Luiz Maklouf. *Apontamentos para uma História do Jornal Resistência*, p. 77.

President Humberto de Alencar Castello Branco. As Priscila Brandão recounts, “the prevailing perspective was that a solid intelligence institution was needed to allow the consolidation of the new regime.”²⁷ Therefore, a law creating the SNI was approved on 13th June 1964. The agency was structured as follows:

Pursuant to its art. 5th, the SNI would comprise a central agency with headquarters in the Federal District and “regional agencies, as many as necessary, in capitals of states and main cities of the country”. In other words, the SNI was created with a flexible structure, which enabled it to adapt to new contexts that might develop at the time. Such plasticity of its structure allowed the service to create a true information complex.²⁸

The central agency was responsible for the selection of information and was divided into different specialized sections. In addition, personnel recruitment was predominantly military and “the force with greatest presence in the agency was the army. Some civil servants were also initially hired, but they usually occupied specific positions, such as clerks, etc.”²⁹ As observed by Leonardo Fetter da Silva, “in no time, the SNI branched out and formed a national network for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information across various spheres of the state, becoming a reliable source for the dictatorial presidents.”³⁰ That author added:

More than information dissemination, the establishment of the SNI was the starting point of a broad project of social control and repression, instituted and conceived by the military from 1964 onwards. The civil-military dictatorship established a process of persecution and combat against political opponents, especially through the use of violence, which intensified from 1967/68 with the construction of a strong apparatus of repression and information.³¹

²⁷ BRANDÃO, Priscila C. *SNI & Abin: uma leitura da atuação dos serviços secretos brasileiros ao longo do século XX*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 2002, p. 54.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 56.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ SILVA, Leonardo Fetter da. *Sob suspeita e vigilância: o monitoramento dos grupos e ações de defesa dos direitos humanos pelos órgãos de informação da ditadura civil-militar (1969-1984)*. 2023. Thesis (History Doctorate Program) – History Graduate Program, School of Humanities, Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2023, p. 24.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

With the hardening of the regime, the SNI expanded significantly, including the creation of courses and a national intelligence school. Thus, “with the beginning of the armed struggle and the hardening of the regime at the end of 1968, a great transformation occurred in the area of intelligence. Intelligence services were created within the armed forces specifically for this fight”.³² Regarding the army, for example, there was the *Centro de Estudos e Pessoal* (CEP) [Study and Personnel Center], which “provided information courses for officers and sergeants, and regular training of specialists to equip the intelligence agencies, the SNI (National Information Service) and the Army Intelligence Center.”³³

Therefore, it seems relevant to analyze once more Robert Darnton’s contributions. Although dealing with distinct contexts, that author warns that censorship and its agents should never be thought to be “stupid”. According to him, “to dismiss censorship as a crude repression carried out by ignorant bureaucrats is to misunderstand it.” Analyzing three cases in different countries and eras, that author concludes: “Although it varied enormously, censorship was, in general, a complex process that demanded talent and training and that radiated deep within the social order.”³⁴

The quotation above is important because when considering the apparatus, power and influence of the SNI (and its agencies), as well as control agencies such as those belonging to the army (CIE, *Centro de Informações do Exército*) [Army Information Center], the navy (Cenimar, *Centro de Informações da Marinha*) [Navy Information Center] and Aeronautics (Cisa, *Centro de Informações da Aeronáutica*) [Aeronautics Information Center], a sophisticated espionage system was used to surveil and combat all and any enemies within the regime.

Also, when considering, for example, only the CIE, which was created in May 1967, during Costa e Silva government, researchers Fabiana Andrade and Suzeley Mathias reported that the military regime felt the need to create “a system able to produce the information necessary to sustain the regime and the government administration, as well as police operations and those conducted to combat the [domestic] enemy.”³⁵ For this reason, on that

³² BRANDÃO, Priscila, *SNI & Abin: uma leitura da atuação dos serviços secretos brasileiros ao longo do século XX*, p. 59.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ DARNTON, Robert. *Censores em ação: como os estados influenciaram a literatura*, p. 276.

³⁵ MATHIAS, Suzeley Kalil; ANDRADE, Fabiana de Oliveira. O Serviço de Informações e a cultura do segredo. *Varia História*, Belo Horizonte, MG, v. 28, n. 48, p. 537-554, July 2012, p. 545.

occasion the “2nd Section of the Army – which was in charge of information – was restructured with the creation of the Army Information Center – CIE, led by colonel Adyr Fiuza de Castro.”³⁶ Lucas Figueiredo, in turn, informed that the dictatorship “Intelligence Community”, with its diverse agencies, “started to work, mostly, so that some of its agencies could do things it did not do, that is, direct repression of those opposing the regime.”³⁷

The system as a whole was quite sophisticated and, as I intend to show in the document analysis, no effort was spared in establishing a strong surveillance and censorship apparatus. Once again, I refer to Brandão, who emphasized that the CIE was “the intelligence service with the largest staff and the one most committed to combating the armed struggle.” In that author’s words,

General Fiúza became the first head of the CIE. According to his testimony, as soon as the CIE was activated, it began receiving information from all E2 units, Cenimar, Cisa, SNI, and the Federal Police Department, and centralizing it [...] There were, among them [the CIE group], people trained to pick locks and enter private premises, in addition to about 50 people responsible for wiretapping, on the 50 telephone lines that the CIE possessed. The CIE also had a specific budget line used to pay informal agents: the “CIE lookouts”.³⁸

In the city of Belém, where there was an SNI agency, the presence of “CIE lookouts” (or even SNI agents) scattered throughout the regions where it operated most directly was not uncommon, judging by the information about the SDDH, its demonstrations, participants, and its influence in the metropolitan region of the capital of Pará, among other data identified in the documentary collection.

Preliminary information worth mentioning is the fact that great part of the documents surveyed in this study was produced by SNI and its agencies. However, as informed by Leonardo Fetter da Silva, another substantial part of this material, despite being kept by the SNI Fund at the National Archive” had come from “different origins within the civil-military dictatorship information system.”³⁹ That author, who sought to find out the way control

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ FIGUEIREDO, Lucas. *Ministério do silêncio*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2005, p. 20.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 69.

³⁹ SILVA, Leonardo Fetter da. *Sob suspeita e vigilância: o monitoramento dos grupos e ações de defesa dos direitos humanos pelos órgãos de informação da ditadura civil-militar (1969-1984)*, p. 79.

agencies and the dictatorship surveillance worked in relation to several movements or social organizations spread across the country, added that in general, dossiers or items related to the theme were mainly provided by the following agencies: *Serviço Nacional de Informações* (SNI) [National Information Service], *Centro de Informações do Exército* (CIE) [Army Information Center], *Divisões de Segurança e Informações* (DSIs) [Safety and Information Offices], *Centro de Informações de Segurança da Aeronáutica* (Cisa) [Aeronautics Safety Information Center], *Centro de Informações - Departamento da Polícia Federal* (CI-DPF) [Federal Police Department – Information Center], and *Centro de Informações da Marinha* (Cesimar) [Navy Information Center].⁴⁰

The information mentioned above is important because when in contact with the documents produced by the army related to the SDDH, we observed, for instance, that inside a folder (here described as a dossier), there was a set of documents that had different origins, however, most of it was directly related to the SNI, mainly from Belém.

In this regard, there is data presented by Leonardo Fetter da Silva that deserves special attention: out of the total set of documents analyzed by him, there was “predominance of documents coming essentially from four regional [SNI] agencies, namely, from Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Belém and Recife.”⁴¹ Regarding the first two, the high volume of documents can be explained by the fact that in those Brazilian metropolises the significant presence of “groups, organizations and actors who defended human rights” was observed.”⁴² Regarding the capitals of Pará and Pernambuco, that author provides relevant information. In his words “the number of documents corresponds to the surveillance of two institutions [namely] the *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* (Belém/PA) [Human Rights Defense Society of Pará] and the *Centro de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos da Arquidiocese da Paraíba* (João Pessoa/PB) [Human Rights Defense Center of the Archbishop of Paraíba], respectively.”⁴³

The data presented reveals the importance ascribed to SDDH by the government agencies in charge of its surveillance and monitoring. The previously mentioned author dedicated part of his research (and it is relevant to highlight this) to address, among other leftist organizations, the espionage targeting the SDDH. Although that is a relevant study focused on

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ Ibidem.

several progressive organizations that were spied on or monitored during the dictatorship, I seek to add to the contributions already presented by Silva or to show another perspective based on the documentation used.

In a document dated 25th October 1977, only two months after the creation of the institution in Pará, the SNI agency in Belém elaborated an information document entitled “Activities developed by the *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos*”, registered with number 1.631/119/ABE/77. The report presented a brief history of the institution, relating it to the events occurred on Capaz Farm and provided a description of the SDDH situation at that time, as observed in this excerpt: “Today, after one year, according to the institution, it has already attracted over 200 members.” Later, its members were explicitly associated with the domestic enemy figure, who should be fought and the report stated that its board included “elements with subversive background and others who acted against the government.”⁴⁴

The surveillance sophistication can be noticed in an excerpt that continued the narrative presented in the document. The level of detail is significant, and the timeliness of the information is impressive, since the reported event had occurred only four days before the document was written. In this excerpt, we found the following:

On 21st Oct 77, one of the meetings was held, starting at 10:30 pm, at the same place where the previous ones occurred, with an attendance of around 30 people. To attend, individuals who were not known had to introduce themselves and at the end two or three members of the SPDDH would question them asking where they had heard of the SPDDH; why they wanted to take part in the SPDDH; what they thought of the meeting; how they thought it should have been held, etc.⁴⁵

Additionally, and with expressive degree of detail, the document listed the action plan presented in the meeting organized by the SDDH, including a list of the topics in the agenda, which had been discussed by the members of that institution, such as the proposal of an action plan designed by its members. This indicates undoubtedly that the surveillance occurred in a

⁴⁴ *Infão* of 25th October 1977, number 1.631/119/ABE/77. Available at: http://imagem.sian.an.gov.br/acervo/derivadas/BR_DFANBSB_V8/MIC/GNC/AAA/77107527/BR_DFANBSB_V8_MIC_GNC_AAA_77107527_d0001de0001.pdf. Access on 17 Jul. 2025, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Infão* of 25th October 1977, number 1.631/119/ABE/77. Available at: http://imagem.sian.an.gov.br/acervo/derivadas/BR_DFANBSB_V8/MIC/GNC/AAA/77107527/BR_DFANBSB_V8_MIC_GNC_AAA_77107527_d0001de0001.pdf. Access on 17 Jul. 2025, p. 2.

quite sophisticated way (possibly with informants) since as emphasized by Giseli Milani Santiago Balbino, the intelligence or undercover agents, “from the most diverse agencies linked to information services, collected data by means of espionage by natural persons or corporate entities, and send it to regional agencies scattered throughout the territory or to the central agency.”⁴⁶ (BALBINO, 2025, p. 86). The latter, in turn, “received the circulating documents, collected by information agencies, and attached them to an ‘information report’”.⁴⁷

We cannot state that there was an undercover member in the institution, which might not be the case. It is possible, however, that it was an informant not necessarily linked to the backstage of the institution from Belém. As reported by Marionilde Dias Brepohl de Magalhães, apart from the violent repression of that time, there was another factor that that author calls “preventive repression, which consisted in surveillance and control of the everyday activities of the *Sociedade*. This practice was consolidated by the creation of what was called *intelligence community*.” Within the structure of possible informants, there was an agent known as type C, who “usually belonged to the army, most often a sergeant trained by the EsNI (National Intelligence School), who, dressed in civilian clothes, and infiltrated various locations to collect as much data as possible.”⁴⁸

Therefore, as previously mentioned, there was a set of relevant information describing the SDDH activities. In the same document, there was a version of the minutes discussed in the meeting of the *Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos*, which in the report produced by the SNI agency in Belém was called “Declaration of Principles”. Such text was published in March 1978 in the newspaper *Resistência* as “The Letter of Principles”, already mentioned elsewhere in this article. The state agent responsible for writing the information publication highlighted, among other points, that such declaration stated that “the economic policy of the federal government was not suitable for the region.”⁴⁹ Only this affirmation could already be

⁴⁶ BALBINO, Giseli Milani Santiago. *Serviço Nacional de Informações: a mulher e sua representação em um fundo arquivístico*. 2025. Thesis (Information Science Doctorate Program) – Information Science Graduate Program, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, 2025, p. 86.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ BREPOHL DE MAGALHAES, Marionilde. D. A Lógica da Suspeição: Sobre Os Aparelhos Repressivos de Estado À Época da Ditadura Militar. *Revista Brasileira de História*, São Paulo, v. 17, n.34, p. 203-220, 1997, p. 203. (my emphasis).

⁴⁹ *Infão* of 25th October 1977, number 1.631/119/ABE/77. Available at: http://imagem.sian.an.gov.br/acervo/derivadas/BR_DFANBSB_V8/MIC/GNC/AAA/77107527/BR_DFANBSB_V8_MIC_GNC_AAA_77107527_d0001de0001.pdf. Access on 17 Jul. 2025, p. 3.

considered sensitive to military interests. However, in another paragraph, a more direct observation appeared regarding the way the agents interpreted the SDDH: “Some items of the said declaration seemed to be, in fact, a *catalyst for class struggle* because, under the guise of defending human rights, it actually brings to light problems of social justice.”⁵⁰

As observed, the very idea of “human rights” was seen as something to be combated since it would promote class struggle, which was understood as something negative from the authoritarian state standpoint. Thus, the construction of a notion that would become central to the military government information agencies was consolidated, that is, the “domestic enemy” figure was created. Although addressing another aspect of this imaginary in the context of contemporary Brazilian history, researcher Thaiane Mendonça presented a precise summary by stating that this subject identified as a threat “was related to the subversive, the communist, that is, a political enemy who proposed [something different or contrary] to the [military] regime.”⁵¹ In a broader way, there is also a good characterization of that context proposed by Luiz Henrique Santos Brandão, who remarked

The DSN [National Security Doctrine] identified social cohesion as a condition for the state security, therefore, blurring the boundaries between state and society and resulting in a lack of distinction between criminal and enemy of war – united in the figure of the political criminal or “domestic enemy.” One consequence of this characterization of internal pressures and antagonisms as a threat to “national security” was the criminalization of all types of political discourse and artistic expressions that pointed to structural problems in the socioeconomic model the regime sought to impose, such as class struggle, exploitative relations, or socioeconomic inequality, identifying these ideas as harmful distortions to national unity and, therefore, as “subversive.”⁵²

⁵⁰ *Infão* of 25th October 1977, number 1.631/119/ABE/77. Available at: http://imagem.sian.an.gov.br/acervo/derivadas/BR_DFANBSB_V8/MIC/GNC/AAA/77107527/BR_DFANBSB_V8_MIC_GNC_AAA_77107527_d0001de0001.pdf. Access on 17 Jul. 2025, p. 3. (my emphasis).

⁵¹ MENDONÇA, Thaiane. Política de segurança e a construção do conceito de “inimigo interno” no Brasil. In: *I Seminário Internacional de Ciência Política da UFRGS*, 2015, Porto Alegre. Anais I SICP, 2015, p. 03.

⁵² BRANDÃO, Luiz Henrique Santos. *Tóxico-subversão: anticomunismo e proibicionismo na construção do “inimigo interno” durante a Ditadura Militar no Brasil*. 2019. Dissertation (History Master’s Program) – History Graduate Program, University of Brasília, Brasília, 2019, p. 44. (my emphasis).

As observed, the SDDH debates and initiatives were inserted in the characteristics pertaining to the notion of “domestic enemy”, and the monitoring of its activities by the SNI agents was kept during the years of the military dictatorship. The document cited, *Infão* nº 1631/119, of 25th October 1977, was concluded providing detailed information about the next steps planned by the organization. The following was noted:

The SPDDH board will hold a meeting on 26th October 1977, at 8:30pm, for its directors only, at its headquarters (location not yet determined), and another meeting on 28th October, at 8:30pm, in the parish hall of the Church of St. Theresa, to continue the discussion of the “Declaration of Principles.”⁵³

We observed that not only did the information report from October record the activities carried out by the SDDH, but it also anticipated the institution’s next steps such as the meetings already scheduled for 26th and 28th of that month. However, it seems relevant to highlight that that was not the first record produced by the state information agencies about the institution. A previous document, dated 6th September 1977, and elaborated by the SNI agency in Belém, in fact inaugurated the systematic monitoring of the SDDH and its members’ activities. This initial material and its implications will be discussed next.

While the information document of October 1977 (*Infão* nº 1631/119, of 25th October 1977), already mentioned, presented significant details of the SDDH activities, it is necessary to go back some weeks to examine the first known record produced by the information agents about that institution. That initial material reveals how the newly created institution was immediately included in the repressive vocabulary of the National Security Doctrine and incorporated to the logic of “domestic enemy”.

All started with *Infão* nº 1346/119/ABE/77, produced by the National Information Service, in its agency in Belém, PA, dated 06th September 1977. The first information contained in that document seems to aim at informing only, replicating some data from an article published in the newspaper *A Província do Pará*, from the capital of that state on 16th August 1977, which reported the creation of the SDDH. The article included a list of names of the institution’s first board and their respective positions.

⁵³ *Infão* of 25th October 1977, number 1.631/119/ABE/77. Available at: http://imagem.sian.an.gov.br/acervo/derivadas/BR_DFANBSB_V8/MIC/GNC/AAA/77107527/BR_DFANBSB_V8_MIC_GNC_AAA_77107527_d0001de0001.pdf. Access on 17 Jul. 2025, p. 4.

After the disclosure of those names, the repression agents stated to have in their register the background of some of them, regarding their political trajectory. It seems relevant to analyze some excerpts that appear below since they present significant information. About the SDDH first president, Paulo César Fonteles de Lima, they reported:

- Son of Benedito Osvaldo Rodrigues de Lima and Cordolina Fonteles de Lima
- Born on 11 Feb 49 – Belém/PA
- Married to Hecilda Mary Veiga Fonteles de Lima
- Nickname: “PEIXOTO”, became an activist of APML do B (Ação Popular Marxista-Leninista do Brasil) [Marxist-Leninist Popular Action of Brazil], in Dec 69, recruited by LAÍSE SALES, who was President of the student’s union of the Philosophy Center of UFPA, in BELÉM.
- PAULO CÉSAR and HECILDA MARY became members of CRAR91 (Comando Regional Ampliado da R91) [R19 Regional Broadened Command]. Due to security problems, they were sent to BRASÍLIA/DF, to head the base organization that would act alongside the student’s union and, with that purpose, they got enrolled with the UnB.
- Arrested in BRASILIA/DF, PAULO CÉSAR was charged in an IPM (Military Police Inquiry) initiated at the headquarters of the 3rd Infantry Brigade in December 1971. In his testimony given there, PAULO CÉSAR confessed to his participation (and that of his wife Hecilda Mary) in the illegal activities of the APML do B. Student in the Physics Center of the University of Brasília, PAULO CÉSAR was subject to the sanctions of Decree-Law No. 477, of 26th February 1969, after his subversive activities in university circles were proven. He was expelled from UnB on 13th March 1972, “with a prohibition on enrolling” in any school in the country for 3 years. On the same date, and for the same reasons, his wife, HECILDA MARY, suffered the same penalty of expulsion, since she was a student at the Center for Human Sciences, also at UnB.⁵⁴

Regarding Paulo Fontelles and the facts described by state agents, it is valid and important to contextualize such information. The document of September 1977, which mentions Paulo César Fonteles de Lima, described him

⁵⁴ *Infão* of 06th September 1977, number 1346/119/ABE/77. Available at: http://imagem.sian.an.gov.br/acervo/derivadas/BR_DFANBSB_V8/MIC/GNC/AAA/77106656/BR_DFANBSB_V8_MIC_GNC_AAA_77106656_d0001de0001.pdf. Access on 02 Oct. 2025, p. 6. (capitalized words in the original).

in the view of repression agencies, that is, as somebody “charged in an IPM occurred at the headquarters of the 3rd Infantry Brigade” and as a student punished pursuant to the Decree nº 477/1969, which expelled him from the University of Brasília for conducting activities considered “subversive”. In the register produced by the SNI, Paulo appeared as “convicted” and an activist in a clandestine organization, which reinforces his image of a threat to the political order. This framing, however, silences fundamental aspects of his life, especially the violence he suffered during his arrest and trial.

In a testimony published in the newspaper *Resistência* in August 1978 (issue that was censored and confiscated by the military), Fonteles recalled his capture, which occurred in October 1971, and his journey through the centers of repression, from the cell of the criminal investigations platoon in Brasília to the army police apparatus in Rio de Janeiro. There, he was subjected to physical and psychological torture, recounting periods of confinement in dark cells, which the military called the “Vietnam chamber.” In his words: “I was going crazy. The sounds, my body trembling, my head burning.” In another passage, he described interrogations in rooms adapted to inflict extreme pain, where he was tied to a “chair full of electrical wires” in an environment that, in his words, was “scientifically prepared for the most complete physical and mental annihilation of man.”⁵⁵

Such reports show that what the official documents reduced to mere “subversive background”, in fact, disguised a systematically violent experience. The very legal process that resulted in his condemnation to a year and eight months in prison, and that of Hecilda Veiga to one year in prison, were based on weak accusations, namely, leaflet distribution, political graffiti and students’ meetings. Fonteles insisted: “the actions that would have constituted my crimes were half a dozen meetings linked to the Marxist-Leninist Popular Action of Brazil, distributing pamphlets inside the University of Brasília against the government, graffiti in Brasília against the death penalty, and the attempt to reorganize the National Union of Students.”⁵⁶

The discrepancy between what appears in the SNI report and what Fonteles himself recounts revealed an essential point: the authoritarian state sought to consolidate a narrative in which political opponents were portrayed as criminals, erasing the violence perpetrated against them. As Steven Uhly observed, based on the biography written by Luiz Maklouf Carvalho, Paulo

⁵⁵ Jornal *Resistência*, ano 1, nº 5, agosto de 1978, Belém (PA), “Paraenses torturados”, p. 19.

⁵⁶ Jornal *Resistência*, ano 1, nº 5, August 1978, Belém (PA), “Paraenses torturados”, p. 19.

and Hecilda “were in prison for eight months before being formally charged on 16th June 1972 [...] The time of their illegal imprisonment was not taken into account.” Even more serious, “the judges did not consider the torture allegations presented by the couple’s lawyers.”⁵⁷

Therefore, the contrast between the official document and the individuals’ testimony not only reveals mechanisms of criminalization of dissonant voices, but also the deliberate erasure of torture practices. While the SNI agents recorded Fonteles’s trajectory as evidence of threat and “subversion”, the newspaper *Resistência* transformed it into public denouncement of the violence he and his comrades had been subjected to. This clash of narratives allows us to understand the centrality of SDDH and the newspaper itself in the effort to break the silence imposed by the dictatorship and to bring to light the experience of those who were forcibly transformed into “domestic enemies”.

In addition to Paulo Fontelles, there was also information collected about the journalist Luiz Maklouf Carvalho, who became editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Resistência*. About him, the official reports read “he appeared as a columnist and film critic when ‘O ESTADO DO PARÁ’ resumed circulation in Belém in 1976. He is not a unionized journalist”.⁵⁸ Additionally, those responsible for the official documents sought in the previously mentioned newspaper records, Carvalho’s opinion articles about the country’s cinema production, highlighting that journalist’s sharp critique to the censorship mechanisms.

In the same document, my attention was drawn to a clipping from the newspaper *A Província do Pará*, which reported on the creation of the SDDH through the article “The *Sociedade de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* elected its board of directors.” The agent responsible for reading and organizing the material from the Belém branch of the SNI took care to highlight the names of all the people mentioned in the article, which undoubtedly indicates the state’s concern in policing and monitoring each person individually, in order to obtain a more precise understanding of the entity or group being monitored. Finally, on the last page of *Infão* No. 1346/119/ABE/77, there was a photo of Paulo Fonteles and his wife, Hecilda Veiga.

⁵⁷ UHLY, Steven. Paulo César Fonteles de Lima: Poesia e Ditadura. *Literatura e Autoritarismo*, vol. 9, n. 1, s/p., 2007, p. 16.

⁵⁸ *Infão* of 06th September 1977, number 1346/119/ABE/77. Available at: http://imagem.sian.an.gov.br/acervo/derivadas/BR_DFANBSB_V8/MIC/GNC/AAA/77106656/BR_DFANBSB_V8_MIC_GNC_AAA_77106656_d0001de0001.pdf. Access on 02 Oct. 2025, p. 7. (Capitalized words in the original text).

Final Considerations

This article sought to reconstruct, using sources produced by the information apparatus of the authoritarian state, the ways in which the *Sociedade de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos* (SDDH) of Pará was quickly framed within the logic of the “domestic enemy” and converted into an object of systematic surveillance in its initial stages. By linking documents from the *Serviço Nacional de Informações* (SNI) and its regional agencies with the newspaper *Resistência*, the contrast between the repressive vocabulary of the state and the voices denouncing the violence perpetrated by it became evident.

The 1977 reports revealed three complementary movements. First, the speed of the framing, since just a few weeks after the founding of the SDDH, names, profiles, and meetings were already being recorded with unusual detail. Second, the sophistication of the procedures, that is, the detailed internal agendas and action plans, suggests the presence of informants and the capillary functioning of the “intelligence community.” Third, the ideological translation perceived in categories constructed by state agents such as “element with subversive background,” “contesting line,” and “a catalyst for class struggle” shifts actions from the defense of rights to the field of political-security threats.

The Paulo Fonteles case, in turn, unveils the discrepancies between the official record and the experience of those chased by the regime. While the state documents charged, punished and labeled, the testimony published in the newspaper *Resistência* exposed torture, imprisonment and a legal process supported by weak accusations. Such war of narratives indicates that not only did the regime’s document production inform, but it rather performed the criminalization of opponents by silencing violence practices that supported the very repressive system.

By placing the SDDH and *Resistência* back at the center of the scene, shifting the focus to the Amazon, I also sought to highlight that the “slow, gradual, and safe” opening coexisted with palpable authoritarian continuities in regional daily life. The absence of the SDDH in the CNV’s Final Report, in turn, signals gaps in public memory regarding repression in the Amazon and reinforces the need for new research that engages with state archives and sources produced by civil entities.

It is important to emphasize that the excerpts presented here focused only on the inaugural moments of the entity and state monitoring in 1977,

that is, there remains available a significant amount of documentation that continued to monitor the SDDH until the mid-1980s and which demands more detailed analysis.

In short, by combining the “gaze of the State” and the narratives produced by the targets of surveillance themselves, the article showed that the SDDH was not only monitored, but also produced counter-archives that challenged the repressive grammar, inscribing uncomfortable and therefore indispensable memories in the public sphere

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