

Past, present and future: representations of Foz do Iguaçu on the pages of *A Notícia* (1953-1959)

Passado, presente e futuro: representações de Foz do Iguaçu nas páginas de *A Notícia* (1953-1959)

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Abstract

This article examines how the newspaper *A Notícia*, published in Foz do Iguaçu between 1953 and 1959, contributed to the construction of representations of the city and its regional context during a period of profound transformations driven by federal regional development projects. Based on an analysis of the surviving issues of the newspaper, understood as an active producer of discourses and representations, the study investigates how past, present, and future were articulated in the construction of a regional narrative. The analysis is grounded in the fields of Cultural History and Regional History, drawing particularly on the works of Tania Regina de Luca on the press, Roger Chartier and Sandra Jatahy Pesavento on representations and social imaginaries. The article argues that *A Notícia* mobilized the memory of the Colônia Militar [Military Colony] and the Brazilian Army to legitimize the historical importance of the border; interpreted the present as a decisive moment of material modernization driven by tourism and territorial integration; and projected a future of progress in which Foz do Iguaçu emerged as the natural leader of western Paraná and as a strategic link between Brazil and its neighboring countries. It concludes that the newspaper not only recorded the transformations of the 1950s but also actively contributed to the construction of a regional imaginary based on the association between memory, development, and continental integration.

Keywords: Regional History; Press; Representations; Foz do Iguaçu; Borderlands.

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Resumo

this article examines how the newspaper *A Notícia*, published in Foz do Iguaçu between 1953 and 1959, contributed to the construction of representations of the city and its regional context during a period of profound transformations driven by federal regional development projects. Based on an analysis of the surviving issues of the newspaper, understood as an active producer of discourses and representations, the study investigates how past, present, and future were articulated in the construction of a regional narrative. The analysis is grounded in the fields of Cultural History and Regional History, drawing particularly on the works of Tania Regina de Luca on the press, Roger Chartier and Sandra Jatahy Pesavento on representations and social imaginaries. The article argues that *A Notícia* mobilized the memory of the Colônia Militar [Military Colony] and the Brazilian Army to legitimize the historical importance of the border; interpreted the present as a decisive moment of material modernization driven by tourism and territorial integration; and projected a future of progress in which Foz do Iguaçu emerged as the natural leader of western Paraná and as a strategic link between Brazil and its neighboring countries. It concludes that the newspaper not only recorded the transformations of the 1950s but also actively contributed to the construction of a regional imaginary based on the association between memory, development, and continental integration.

Palavras-chave: História Regional; Imprensa; Representações; Foz do Iguaçu; Fronteira.

Introduction

The 1950s was a period of intense transformations in Foz do Iguaçu. More than reconstructing this modernization process, this article¹ seeks to understand how such transformations were interpreted by local agents and included in a specific narrative about the city's historical trajectory and its future. All that region was impacted by two large projects of regional development implemented by the federal government. The first was the creation of the Parque Nacional do Iguaçu [National Park of Iguazu], as an "international tourism area"², enabled by the construction of infrastructure works such as airport, hydroelectrical power plant and a museum. The second, was the connection between the Paranaguá Port to Assunción, materializing in the region the beginning of the construction of the Ponte da Amizade [Friendship Bridge], announced in 1956. These two events led to a "path

¹ Artificial Intelligence was used to revise language/grammar (ChatGPT-4).

² MURGEL, Ângelo. *Parques Nacionais*. Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1945, p. 22.

dependency” that would mark the regional and national history of Paraná and internationally in South America.³

Both projects were conceived and impacted the border region from the center of power in Brazil. In the early 1950s, Foz do Iguaçu was already feeling the effects of the previous decade, which was a major turning point in public investments and policies for tourism development.⁴ The Cassino Iguaçu Hotel, opened in 1941, became a relevant space of sociability for local and regional elites, gathering actors participating in initiatives for the economic and political promotion of the city. One of these initiatives was the newspaper called *A Notícia*, which circulated from 1953 to 1959, and 25 of its 56 issues were preserved and are available in digital format in the collection of the Museu da Imprensa Foz do Iguaçu [Press Museum of Foz do Iguaçu].⁵ Despite being incomplete, the documentary collection preserved corresponds to approximately 45% of that publication known issues, distributed throughout almost its entire editorial trajectory, allowing the identification of continuities, theme recurrences and discursive changes. This article focusses on this corpus of primary sources, starting from the understanding that reading newspapers enables not only the understanding of local events, but also of representations of the city, the border, and the western region of Paraná.

However, the nature of journalistic sources requires specific methodological care. The press cannot be treated as a mere repository of information or curiosity about the past. As observed by Tania Regina de Luca, periodicals are produced within specific social contexts, express interests, political disputes and projects, and must be analyzed as agents that are actively involved in the social reality construction.⁶ From this perspective, not only does the press record events, but it also selects themes, prioritizes problems, formulates diagnosis, and proposes solutions. Considering that, the journalistic discourse analysis approaches reflections on the concept of representations, mainly Roger Chartier’s formulations. For that author,

³ LISBOA, Marcelino Teixeira; MARTÍNEZ, Fátima Elizabeth Morínigo. Path dependence in the Tri-Border Area. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue canadienne des études latino-américaines et caraïbes*, v. 46, n. 2, p. 196–221, 2021.

⁴ SILVA, Micael Alvino da. *Breve História da Tríplice Fronteira: Como a maior hidrelétrica binacional e a segunda maior cidade do Paraguai foram decisivas para a formação da fronteira mais importante da América do Sul*. Foz do Iguaçu, PR: Instituto 100 Fronteiras, 2022.

⁵ The collection can be accessed using the link <https://museudaimpressafoz.com.br/periodicos/>, and selecting the filters “jornal” and “a notícia”. The issues available are 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 14, 15, 19, 23, 25, 28, 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 38, 41, 42, 44, 48, 50, 53, 55 and 56.

⁶ LUCA, Tania Regina de. História dos, nos e por meio dos periódicos. in: PINSKY, Carla B. et al. (org.). *Fontes históricas*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2005. p. 111-153.

representations are formulations that not only reflect reality but are also the locus of interpretation by groups and individuals about the social world around them and to which they seek to confer legitimacy on certain views.⁷

In dialogue with the Brazilian historiography of Cultural History, this perspective resonates with Sandra Jatahy Pesavento's reflections on the construction of social imaginaries. Representations elaborated by the press participate in the production of collective feelings about space, social groups and historical processes, thus contributing to define identities, belongings, and shared expectations.⁸

For this reason, it is interesting to observe how *A Notícia* participated in the symbolic elaboration of a specific idea of Foz do Iguaçu and western Paraná in a context of intense economic, political and territorial transformations. It is argued that the newspaper built a narrative articulated around three complementary temporalities. On the one hand, it mobilized the past to legitimize the historical importance of the border by evoking the memory of the Colônia Militar, the army's action and personalities that were considered exemplary. On the other hand, it interpreted the present as a decisive moment for material modernization, marked by public works, tourism expansion and territorial integration. Finally, it predicted a future of regional prosperity, in which Foz do Iguaçu appeared as the natural leader of western Paraná, and a privileged link between Brazil and its neighboring countries.

Therefore, our intention is not to reconstruct a linear history of the formation and modernization of Foz do Iguaçu through the newspaper, but rather to analyze how the newspaper organized an interpretation of this trajectory, by selecting past elements, giving meaning to present transformations and creating expectations for the future. Thus, the aim of this article is to analyze how the newspaper *A Notícia* took part in the construction of representations of Foz do Iguaçu between 1953 and 1959, by investigating how past, present, and future were integrated in a discourse that associated the city to the idea of progress, regional integration and border protagonism.

A legitimizing past: the military memory construction

The first issue of *A Notícia* was published on October 31, 1953. Self-described as “an independent and news-oriented organ”, the newspaper had

⁷ CHARTIER, Roger. *A história cultural: entre práticas e representações*. Lisboa: DIFEL, 2002.

⁸ PESAVENTO, Sandra Jatahy. *História & história cultural*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2005.

João Lobato Machado as its editor-in-chief during the six years it circulated. The first editorial was titled *Roteiro* [Route] and, in fact, it served as a guide whose ideas permeated subsequent issues. The past was used as inspiration, as the newspaper adopted the position of exalting “our past, our traditions of honor, our glories and our beliefs” and history was the foundation upon which the city was built:

[...] becoming adult, [...] growing a lot, [...] widely civilized, which means: possessing culture, knowledge and education. Progress is the result of this set of factors; therefore, we are progressing, and this is palpably, in a gigantic way, accompanying the prodigious awakes of the entire western region of Paraná. Foz do Iguaçu must be, as it always has been, at the forefront, on the front line, leading such progress.⁹

The past mobilized by *A Notícia* was not an object of contemplation. It served to legitimize agents and projects of the present, mainly the role played by the army in the border society of the 1950s. In issue n° 7,¹⁰ the editorial presented a series that reproduced in fragments the book *Descoberta de Foz do Iguaçu e Fundação da Colônia Militar de José Maria de Brito* [Discovery of Foz do Iguaçu and Foundation of the José Maria de Brito Military Colony].¹¹ The newspaper classified that series as a tribute to the author, deceased in 1946, and considered the last member of the Military Colony foundation. Originally published in 1938, *A Notícia* classified it as a “historical book” fundamental for the history of Paraná. The series of texts aimed to pay homage to that author, and at the same time, establish the bases of the local history interpretation in connection to the Brazilian Army mission that founded the Colônia Militar in 1889.

The Colônia Militar of Foz do Iguaçu, installed in 1889¹² and dissolved in 1913,¹³ constituted the first permanent administrative experience of the Brazilian State in that border area. The military presence would be resumed in

⁹ MACHADO, João Lobato. *Roteiro* [Route]. *A Notícia*, n. 1, p. 1–2, 1953.

¹⁰ MACHADO, João Lobato. O Exército e sua ação civilizadora e nacionalizadora [The Army and its civilizing and nationalizing action]. *A Notícia*, n. 7, p. 1–2, 1954.

¹¹ BRITO, José Maria de. *Descoberta da Foz do Iguaçu e fundação de uma Colônia Militar*. *Boletim IHGEP*, n. 32, p. 45–72, 1977.

¹² REBOUÇAS, André. *Diário e notas autobiográficas*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1938.

¹³ The Colônia Militar de Foz do Iguaçu was dissolved by Decree n. 1.024, of January 31, 1913 by the Ministry of War. The Paraná State Law n. 971, of April 9, 1910 created the district linked to Guarapuava, which was emancipated as Vila Iguassú, later on named Foz do Iguaçu, pursuant to State Law n. 1383, March 14, 1914, installed on June 10 in the same year.

1932, with the Companhia Isolada de Fronteira [Isolated Border Company], later incorporated to the Primeiro Batalhão de Fronteira [First Border Battalion].¹⁴ Such historical path is of interest here less as an institutional sequence in itself than for the way it was recovered by *A Notícia*.¹⁵ By linking the Colônia Militar to the contemporary presence of the army, the newspaper constructed a continuity between past and present, attributing to the military a historical function associated with the state presence, civilization and progress.

Considering this history linked to the foundation of the first settlement and administration of the territory, the newspaper *A Notícia* presented militaries as the direct heirs of the military colony and the colony as a strategy to bring “civilization and progress” to isolated regions of the country. The editor’s note entitled “The Army and its civilizing and nationalizing action” praises the Brazilian Army role and reinforces the centrality of the military in the local economic development and in the social life of Foz do Iguaçu in the 1950s.¹⁶

The institutional presence of the Brazilian Army in local society was so relevant that Julio Pasa, an active and multifaceted collaborator of the newspaper,¹⁷ published a text entitled “7 de Julho em memória da chegada da Companhia Isolada de Fronteira” [July 7 in memory of the arrival of the Isolated Border Company], in 1932. In his historical chronicle, Pasa revisited the past 1924 Revolution, which was still a recent memory for him, when Foz do Iguaçu was occupied by revolutionaries who arrived in western Paraná. In that year, with no military garrison on the border, the public safety and order did not offer resistance to “prevent the invasion of revolutionary forces”, the consequence was an occupation that lasted for six months.¹⁸ The revolutionaries’ passage left permanent marks on the local memory, especially referring to the treatment given to the authorities of that time. The then mayor, Jorge Schimmelpfeng, fled in haste and recommended that the population flee to Argentina or Paraguay. The local clerk, Franklin de

¹⁴ WACHOWICZ, Ruy. *Obrageiros mensus e colonos: história do oeste paranaense*. Curitiba: Vicentina, 1982.

¹⁵ IBIAPINA, Alcides Vieira; TAVARES, Salvador Coelho; LIMA, Carlos Arthur de Moraes. *Livro de ouro*. Foz do Iguaçu: Primeiro Batalhão de Fronteira, 1965.

¹⁶ MACHADO, João Lobato. O Exército e sua ação civilizadora e nacionalizadora [The Army and its civilizing and nationalizing action], op. cit.

¹⁷ Julio Pasa arrived in Foz do Iguaçu in 1918, when he was in his twentyish and had experienced the main historical moments of his time. He was named mayor in 1930 and elected for the same position in 1947. The historical chronicles published highlighted main local events such as Santos Dumont’s visit to the city, in 1916, and a list of media outlets that had existed up to the creation of the newspaper *A Notícia*.

¹⁸ WACHOWICZ, R. *Obrageiros mensus e colonos: história do oeste paranaense*, op. cit.

Sá Ribas, a refugee in Paraguay, returned to the city temporarily and was murdered by the revolutionaries.¹⁹

This local memory highlights that, for the editors of *A Notícia*, the 1924 Revolution was a historical landmark used to reinforce the idea that Foz do Iguaçu needed the army garrison, primarily to guarantee order and sovereignty in a strategic point of the national territory. In the context of the 23rd anniversary of the military's return to the city, celebrated in the text by Julio Pasa, in addition to safety, the pages of *A Notícia* also reported certain omnipresence of the Primeiro Batalhão de Fronteiras in the social life of Foz do Iguaçu. Frequent news reports of events at social clubs linked to the army,²⁰ presentations of the battalion's band,²¹ sports competitions²² and charity events²³ revealed the constant presence of that institution in the city's social life. Thus, the border imagined by *A Notícia* was not only protected by the military force, it was also socially organized around them.

In addition to its connections to the past and its social omnipresence in the 1950s, due to its location on the border between Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, The Brazilian army battalion played a prominent role in diplomatic events. On October 4, 1958, the opening of the Hotel das Cataratas [Waterfalls Hotel] allowed for a major international event to take place, considering Foz do Iguaçu standards. The event was covered by the newspaper *A Notícia* whose article was titled "Foz do Iguaçu Faz História" [Foz do Iguaçu makes history], highlighting the series, specifically the "fourth meeting of the presidents of Paraguay and Brazil".²⁴ Besides all the protocol and the hotel opening, the local press reported that the Primeiro Batalhão de Fronteiras also provided the venue for a reserved conference between presidents Juscelino Kubitschek and Alfredo Stroessner: "At 01:00pm [...] the presidential caravan left the National Park, heading towards the international bridge. On the way, [...], the Presidents visited the headquarters of the Primeiro Batalhão, where they conferred [...]".²⁵

¹⁹ ASSIS, Dilermano Cândido de. *Nas barrancas do Alto-Paraná*. Rio de Janeiro: Empreza Gaphica Editora, 1926.

²⁰ Grêmio Olavo Bilac. *A Notícia*, n. 6, p. 4, 1954.

²¹ Círculo centenário. *A Notícia*, n. 14, p. 8, 1954.

²² Encerrado o Grande Concurso Esportivo, com a coroação da Rainha do Esporte [Great Sports event closed with the coronation of the Sports Queen]. *A Notícia*, n. 48, p. 4, 1958.

²³ Natal da criança pobre [Poor Child's Christmas]. *A Notícia*, n. 38, p. 1, 1956.

²⁴ Foz do Iguaçu Faz História [Foz do Iguaçu makes history]. *A Notícia*, n. 55, p. 10, 1958.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

The choice of words by the *A Notícia* report could not be more symbolic. The most important bilateral presidential meeting was held in the premises of the Batalhão de Fronteiras, the direct heir of the first regional development strategy by the Brazilian government. The place of origin for presidents Kubitscheck and Stroessner was the inauguration of the last of the major works of the regional development complex started in 1939 with the creation of the Parque Nacional do Iguaçu. After the meeting, the destination would be an inspection of the works on the Ponte da Amizade, the greatest icon of the rapprochement between Brazil and Paraguay, and that would result in regional development on both sides of the border.

The Batalhão de Fronteiras was the main host for visits from international authorities passing through the region. This fact is not only due to their involvement in exceptional events such as the bilateral meeting described above, but *A Notícia* also produced unique records of authorities from other foreign countries such as Austria, Canada and the United States, in addition to neighboring Argentina and Paraguay. In issue number 9, of June 10, 1954, the newspaper reported the arrival of a delegation of foreign military attachés. The group, which landed in Foz do Iguaçu on May 14, was composed of “senior officers from twelve nations”, including representatives from France, Paraguay, Guatemala, Great Britain, Uruguay, Italy, Argentina, the United States, Peru, Chile and Colombia. The military personnel were accompanied by a Brazilian Lieutenant Colonel as a liaison officer.²⁶

A little over ten years later, when publishing the “golden book” commemorating the military achievements on the border, the representatives of the Primeiro Batalhão de Fronteiras made only a discrete mention of the Brazilian officer received that year, 1954, without mentioning the reception of international attachés detailed by *A Notícia*.²⁷ The real reason of the omission is unknown, but the fact that it appeared in the press as an international event in Foz do Iguaçu allows us to infer that there was a certain growth in the relevance of this South American border in international interests. This presence of military representatives suggests that the region aroused a certain strategic interest that went beyond local and border limits, therefore, further reinforcing the vision of fulfilling the mission of the military based on that border.

²⁶ Visita Foz do Iguaçu adidos militares de diversos países [Visit to Foz do Iguaçu, military attachés from several countries]. *A Notícia*, n. 9, p. 8, 1954.

²⁷ IBIAPINA; TAVARES; LIMA. *Livro de ouro*, p. 27.

Thus, in the same way that the military had a significant social presence in Foz do Iguaçu in the 1950s, the newspaper *A Notícia* articulated the construction of the representation of a city whose past was linked to the arrival of the military and which was advancing towards an inexorable future of material development and progress. Between inspiration from the past and aspirations for the future, *A Notícia* saw itself as a witness of grand events. In its fifth anniversary commemorative issue, the editorial highlighted that it had recorded the history of Foz do Iguaçu in motion: “some are born, others die; traditions are erased, names vanish, prestige disappears”.²⁸ Therefore, on the pages of that newspaper, past played a fundamental role in the construction of meanings about Foz do Iguaçu. Far from being a mere memorial exercise, the evocation of historical events and personalities of that time functioned as a mechanism of legitimation of the present and projection of the city’s future. The recovery of the trajectory of the Colônia Militar do Iguaçu, from the visits of illustrious figures to the actions of the army integrated a broader narrative which sought to demonstrate the historical importance of the region for the Brazilian nation under an “idealistic sense” recognized and assumed by the editors.²⁹

Thus, the historical memory mobilized by *A Notícia* was not limited to the reconstruction of past facts. It operated as a discursive resource to support the idea that the development observed in the 1950s constituted the natural continuation of a historical trajectory marked by the territory defense, the civilizing action of the State, and the strategic importance of the border. With this past as a foundation, the present of the 1950s predicted a future of progress for the border region, which Foz do Iguaçu should use to justify their leadership in another kind of progress. The progress of the western region of Paraná depended on its status as a regional host, a status established by the two works that represented the then new regional development initiatives through tourism and the connection with Paraguay.

A present as a promise: development and future achievements

While the military past provided *A Notícia* with a genealogy able to legitimize the historical importance of Foz do Iguaçu, the present of the 1950s was represented as a moment of fast transformations and, above all, as a promise of future. Public works, tourism, territorial integration and political

²⁸ Nosso Aniversário [Our Anniversary]. *A Notícia*, n. 55, p. 1, 1958.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

articulation were interpreted by that periodical as evidence that the city entered a new era of development. On the pages of the newspaper, the Mesa Redonda dos Prefeitos da Faixa de Fronteira [Round Table of Mayors of the Border Region], held in 1954, produced a political region focused on western Paraná; the laying of the Foundation Stone of the Ponte da Amizade, in 1956, predicted a transnational region connected to Paraguay; and the opening of the Hotel das Cataratas, in 1958, consolidated a tourist region of international reach. Not only did *A Notícia* describe previously existing regions, but it also participated in their symbolic elaboration. The political region of western Paraná, the transnational region integrating Paraguay and the international tourist region associated with the Waterfalls emerged from the pages of that publication as discursive constructions.

The Round Table discussion, the laying of the cornerstone and the opening of the hotel were important because they enabled discursive construction and worked as a synthesis of the newspaper editors' thoughts about the future. In its first issue, regional leadership, border location and tourism already appeared in the journalistic discourse:

Foz do Iguaçu must be, as it has always been, at the forefront, leading this progress. [...] This is the city of the triple border and, given its exceptional situation as a prime tourist city [...] it has ample credentials for such leadership.³⁰

The above quote is exemplary and lead us to the essence of the representation of Foz do Iguaçu's destiny that the writer João Lobato Machado and the collaborators of *A Notícia* employed. The idea that Foz do Iguaçu possessed the conditions for leadership in western Paraná permeates all the newspaper's issues. This leadership view was supported by the understanding that the city possessed two fundamental interconnected conditions. The first was the fact that the city was located in a strategic geographical position on the triple border, which exclusively conferred upon Foz do Iguaçu the aforementioned international credentials that no other city in western Paraná possessed.

The second fundamental condition of the "triple border city" was its inexorable fate of being an international center for tourism and logistics for South American integration. This view found practical reinforcement in works and events that motivated *A Notícia*. International tourism consolidated

³⁰ MACHADO, João Lobato. Roteiro [Route], op. cit.

the Parque Nacional do Iguaçu with the opening of the Hotel das Cataratas in 1958, while the axis of economic and road integration materialized in the ongoing construction of the Ponte da Amizade. Such ongoing regional internationalization also echoed the national developmental discourse as revealed in the reproduction of an article by the National Agency:

The international bridge will connect, on the Brazilian side, BR-35 highway Paranaguá-Curitiba-Foz do Iguaçu and, on the Paraguayan side, the Assunción-Porto Presidente Franco highway. Therefore, the Paraguayan capital will be linked not only to the important Brazilian seaport, but also, through Curitiba, to Rio de Janeiro, and the new capital Brasília.³¹

Given these fundamentals, in the representation promoted by the issues of *A Notícia*, the regional political leadership by the people of Foz do Iguaçu was a logical consequence. And the event that gave the editors the opportunity to elaborate on this formulation was the aforementioned Mesa Redonda de Prefeitos from the cities of the border region, which was held in Foz do Iguaçu, on November, 30 1954. The journalistic coverage of the event shows that *A Notícia* did not act merely as observers of the events. By emphasizing some themes and assigning specific meanings to the meeting, the newspaper played an active role in the formulation of projects for the region. This behavior is compatible with the perspective proposed by Tânia de Luca regarding the press as a participating agent in social life.³²

Considering that, *A Notícia* highlighted the role and responsibility of Foz do Iguaçu as the “living room of Brazil” and the “anteroom of our State”.³³ The Round Table was an initiative of the director of the Departamento de Fronteiras do Paraná [Paraná Border Department], Major Adélio Conti, who brought together delegations composed of mayors, secretaries, accountants, and presidents of municipal councils of the cities of Foz do Iguaçu, Barracão, Santo Antônio do Sudoeste, Capanema, Toledo and Guaíra. In addition to the Departamento de Fronteiras, which was a special agency in Paraná responsible for assisting border municipalities, the technical coordination of activities included the Departamento de Assistência Técnica aos Municípios do Paraná [Department of Technical Assistance to Municipalities of Paraná],

³¹ AGÊNCIA NACIONAL, Ligação Rodoferroviária Brasil – Paraguai [Brazil-Paraguay road-rail link]. *A Notícia*, n. 56, p. 10, 1959.

³² LUCA, Tania R. História dos, nos e por meio dos periódicos, op. cit.

³³ Problemas dos municípios da fronteira do Paraná [Problems in municipalities of the Paraná border region]. *A Notícia*, n. 15, p. 1, 1954.

the Associação Comercial e Industrial de Foz do Iguaçu [Commercial and Industrial Association of Foz do Iguaçu], the Batalhão de Fronteiras [Border Battalion] and the Capitania dos Portos do Rio Paraná [Captaincy of the Ports of the Paraná River].

The debates aimed at practical solutions to the common border problems that would be taken to the appreciation of the Paraná government. The municipalities demanded mainly the construction of a school to qualify teachers for basic education; infrastructure improvements with urgent focus on the access highway; the construction of a hydroelectrical power plant to cater for the growing energy demand; studies and promotion for the economy and health areas; and, as recorded in the memorandum addressed to the governor Bento Munhoz da Rocha, that the works in western Paraná should be carried out on “a large scale” so as not to become obsolete.³⁴

The demands presented at the meeting also allow the contemporary observer to establish connections with the broader transformations underway in western Paraná. In the 1950s, a process started that would culminate in fast demographic growth in the following decades, which the historian Ruy Wachowicz called “frente sulista” [southern front] of occupation of Paraná.³⁵ The main characteristic of such occupation was the migration mainly from Rio Grande do Sul to work predominantly in agriculture. The arrival of new dwellers attracted by colonization companies was a pattern observed in the west of the State, with an evident exception precisely in Foz do Iguaçu.³⁶

This process became apparent in the advertisements published in the newspaper *A Notícia*. Since the territory of Foz do Iguaçu was expanding to almost the entire west, with the exception of the cities already mentioned, colonization companies such as Colonizadora Bento Gonçalves [Bento Gonçalves Colonization], which started the colonization of the city that later would be called Medianeira, advertised in the very first edition of the newspaper the sale of land in the place that would be the “future breadbasket of Brazil”.³⁷ The broadest development process in western Paraná through colonization transformed the region that two decades before was seen as

³⁴ Escoadouro do Oeste [Western Outlet]. *A Notícia*, n. 15, p. 10, 1954.

³⁵ WACHOWICZ, Ruy. *História do Paraná*. Curitiba: Imprensa Oficial, 2002.

³⁶ SILVA, Micael Alvino; LISBOA, Marcelino Teixeira; GIMENEZ, Heloisa Marques. Extremo Oeste: A historiografia regional, o Oeste e a (Tríplice) Fronteira internacional do Paraná. *Revista de História Regional*, v. 27, n. 1, p. 360-386, 2022.

³⁷ Venha conhecer as maravilhosas terras do oeste do Paraná [Come and see the wonderful lands of western Paraná]. *A Notícia*, n. 1, p. 9, 1953.

decadent and precarious into a region of future and *A Notícia* captured the moment and contributed to the construction of this new representation.

In this new context, in the mid-20th century, despite challenges, the urban center of Foz do Iguaçu had better infrastructure than other cities in the west region. Access through the official port and airport of Parque Nacional do Iguaçu, the generation of electrical energy by the Usina São João [São João Power Plant], also in the national park, and tourism as economic activity were a reality literally built in the 1940s. The substantial resources that transformed the then small village into a construction site were destined by both the federal and state governments, which engaged in a certain dispute that resulted in exclusive state and federal projects for Foz do Iguaçu. Even the territory was, literally, disputed by the governments.

Although there was coordination between the federal and state government, the then president Getúlio Vargas created, in 1943, the Território Federal do Iguaçu [Federal Territory of Iguaçu] separating all of western Santa Catarina and western and southeastern Paraná into a new federal unit.³⁸ The Territory had a short life and when *A Notícia* published its first edition, it had only been seven years since its extinction. So, when reporting the new great project of Ponte da Amizade, the federal initiative memory was very present and generated a paradox for the people of Paraná. The new federal project to establish the link with Paraguay attracted investments and developed the whole stretch between Paranaguá and Foz do Iguaçu and, at the same time, increased the surveillance regarding the maintenance of the territory unity.

The newspaper's coordination with the political class of the Paraná State government was a constant in the issues of *A Notícia*. Despite reporting the presence of the governor, the federal government action in projects for the border was emphasized in light of the destiny such initiatives held for Foz do Iguaçu. One example of that is the October 31st, 1956 issue that reported and celebrated the laying of the foundation stone for the construction of the Ponte da Amizade. The event was attended by presidents of Brazil and Paraguay and the discourses were given at the Cassino Iguaçu Hotel, owned by the government of Paraná. In that issue 36, the newspaper's first page, portrayed the symbolism of Foz do Iguaçu as an internationalized city and relevant city for Brasil: "Approximately 50 Brazilian, Paraguayan, and North

³⁸ LOPES, Sérgio. O Território do Iguaçu no contexto da "Marcha para Oeste". Cascavel: Edunioeste, 2021.

American planes landed at Foz do Iguaçu airport, over these two days, carrying specially invited authorities from the three countries.”³⁹

The mention of the United States was not accompanied by an explicit reflection on the international relations at the time, but it is evidence of how local journalists, mainly the editor João Lobato Machado, processed the coordination of local, regional and international scales. On the front page of issue 36, the headline in the newspaper *A Notícia* was precisely the speech given by the president Juscelino Kubitschek: “We do not defend a democracy of words that only rich nations can enjoy”.⁴⁰ The emphasis reflected precisely the context of the Cold War international policy and the propositions of Brazil’s foreign policy.

More than transcribing the presidential speech, the event coverage integrated local, regional and international contexts, highlighting that the bridge linking Brazil and Paraguay was seen as a “new era in the South American life”. The neighborhood relations with smaller countries carried out by Brazil bore no resemblance with the practices of the United States in Central America. Despite the asymmetry, Brazil and Paraguay set an example to the world of a relationship between “solidarity countries, genuinely interested in each other’s problems”.⁴¹

The developmentalist tone in Brazil with its international neighborhood foreign policy, permeated other issues of the newspaper *A Notícia*, always showing Foz do Iguaçu as the epicenter of the process. The issues following the groundbreaking ceremony continued to reverberate that the future conclusion of that work would not only result in a bridge connecting the two sides of the border, but would also open the “broadest possibilities of progress” for the future of the city, the region and South America.⁴² Furthermore, other infrastructure projects could be built in the medium term, such as a new river port and the extension of the Paraná railway line to the border.⁴³

The construction of a new and modern port on the Paraná River, as well as the arrival of the railway to the border never materialized. However, not only was the Ponte da Amizade a concrete work, but it was also the subject of

³⁹ O Paraguai terá ligação ao Porto de Paranaguá [Paraguay will be linked to Port of Paranaguá]. *A Notícia*, n. 36, p. 1, 1956.

⁴⁰ Não defendemos uma democracia de palavras que somente os povos ricos podem usufruir [We do not defend a democracy of words that only rich nations can enjoy]. *A Notícia*, n. 36, p. 1, 1956.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² TEIXEIRA. Paraguai de hoje [Paraguay today]. *A Notícia*, n. 53, p. 1–2, 1958.

⁴³ AGÊNCIA NACIONAL, Ligação Rodoferroviária Brasil – Paraguai [Brazil-Paraguay rail-road link].

almost every issue of *A Notícia*. In its “Chronicle of the Border”, João Lobato Machado expressed that “Everything concerning the international bridge interests us deeply, such is the magnitude it represents for the future of the city”.⁴⁴

Approximately two years after the start of the construction, when the Ponte da Amizade was taking shape over the Paraná river, presidents Juscelino Kubitschek and Alfredo Stroessner once again met in Foz do Iguaçu. The occasion was the long-awaited opening of the “majestic hotel” Cataratas [Waterfalls], on October 4, 1958. In its coverage of the event, *A Notícia* highlighted the authorities’ speeches, accompanied the visit to the facilities of the “sumptuous building” and the “magnificent lunch” for the presidents of Brazil and Paraguay and their delegations.⁴⁵ With the completion of this project, the series of inaugurations by the federal government came to an end, marking the implementation of the regional development through the creation of the do Parque Nacional do Iguaçu.⁴⁶ The subsequent inspection by the presidential delegations of the progress of the Ponte da Amizade construction, already analyzed in the previous section due to the involvement of the army, reinforced the new strategy of regional development through the connection of the Port of Paranaguá and the capital of Paraguay.

Throughout the newspaper circulation period, from 1953 to 1959, besides the two great presidential events reported with greater vigor, the Hotel das Cataratas and the Ponte da Amizade were the subject of recurring comments, news and reports. Most articles emphasized the future and invited readers to think about the city from certain perspective which, as highlighted in the first section, had a consistent historical base and a future of progress and development. When this view was challenged by a major national media outlet, the reaction defending the image of Foz do Iguaçu constructed from the location was immediate.

In issue number 42 of *A Notícia*, columnist Zaldir Lima dedicated a lengthy text to refuting the negative image of Foz do Iguaçu conveyed in the magazine *O Cruzeiro*. In that year, 1957, the magazine was the main publication of national circulation reaching a broad and diversified audience with its then-modern visual language. In the April 27 issue, the cover announced: “a color report on the most beautiful waterfalls in the world, on

⁴⁴ MACHADO, João Lobato. Crônica da fronteira [Chronicle of the Border]. *A Notícia*, n. 48, p. 1, 1958.

⁴⁵ Foz do Iguaçu Faz História.

⁴⁶ MURGEL. *Parques Nacionais*.

the border of Brazil with Argentina”. The promising photo report praised the Falls, but contrasted it with the city described as “small, rudimentary, with a primitivism lacking much hope”.⁴⁷ In his counterpoint, Zaldir Lima recognized the quality of the images of the Cataratas do Iguaçu [Iguaçu Waterfalls], but criticized the text about Foz do Iguaçu since in his opinion “its concepts were rather derogatory”.⁴⁸

The text in the local newspaper not only corrected some of the incorrect or inaccurate information in the national magazine, but also revealed a dispute over representations of Foz do Iguaçu. In the terms proposed by Roger Chartier,⁴⁹ it was not just a matter of issuing different descriptions of reality, but above all of competing for different meanings of the border space. The representations of the “primitive” city in *O Cruzeiro* clashed violently with the representation of an emerging city, representative and articulator of development and regional integration claimed in the issues of *A Notícia*.

An example of this clash of representations was the reference to the Hotel das Cataratas. In Foz do Iguaçu, as we have already mentioned, its opening in the following year would be a major event summarizing the development projects for the city and region. In the *O Cruzeiro* article, a photo of the hotel was accompanied by the following caption: “Uncertain style, ranging from faux colonial to the Chinese pagoda of its tower”.⁵⁰ Upon encountering this mention, Zaldir Lima demonstrated his indignations and, at the same time, his concern with the image of the city and asked himself: “Why then this ill will against our city? Why should they depreciate everything that is ours, in a magazine of international character?”.⁵¹

The columnist for *A Notícia* went farther, suggesting that if reality had been faithfully portrayed, the journalist who wrote for *O Cruzeiro* would have recognized that the isolated border condition was a thing of the past and that the city was no longer “primitive”. To counter this adjective, Zaldir Lima explained certain criteria that summarized the ideals of progress, development and regional belonging. First the institutions and material evidence of progress were emphasized: “a city that has good buildings, such as the school, the Bank of Brazil, the Court building, the City Hall, the 1st Border

⁴⁷ Iguaçu, filho renegado do turismo brasileiro [Iguaçu, renegade child of Brazilian tourism] . *O Cruzeiro*, n. 28, p. 65–70, 1957.

⁴⁸ LIMA, Zaldir. Iguaçu – Água Grande [Iguaçu – Big Water]. *A Notícia*, n. 42, 1957.

⁴⁹ CHARTIER, R. *A história cultural*, op. cit.

⁵⁰ Iguaçu, filho renegado do turismo brasileiro.

⁵¹ LIMA, Zaldir. Iguaçu – Água Grande, op. cit.

Battalion Headquarters, the Hospital, etc.”. He continued his remarks with the description of a proper urban layout with wide streets, “which owns a radio station, a gymnasium, in short, a series of things whose enumeration would be monotonous. It might be small, but never a primitivism without much hope”.⁵² The notion of civilization developed in such explanation also included the Brazilian army, no longer as a civilizing agent as it had been in the past, but buildings, public service and urban equipment appear as a list of proof of development.

The reaction of publishing a text in a local newspaper rebutting a national story from the mainstream media of that time revealed that *A Notícia*’s concerns were not limited to the description of local events. What was at stake was the production of a collective imaginary about Foz do Iguaçu, which when confronted, felt challenged. Therefore, the representations disseminated by the newspaper participated in the construction of shared social images of the city, contributing to the definition of identities, belongings and future expectations, as suggested by Sandra Pesavento.⁵³

Thus, the newspaper not only described events, but also projected a horizon of expectancies for the city, where tourism, international integration and regional leadership appeared as natural developments of its historical trajectory. *A Notícia* organized its interpretation of reality through an articulation between temporalities. The military past legitimated the developmentalist present, while the present was seen as evidence of an inevitable future of progress and regional leadership. And when such representation was confronted, the pages of the local newspaper were used to claim “Report the truth... but do not offend us...”.⁵⁴

Final considerations

The analysis of preserved issues of the newspaper *A Notícia* allows us to understand that the periodical played a broader role than that of a simple information vehicle in Foz do Iguaçu during the 1950s. By selecting events, valuing certain historical agents, and projecting expectations for the city and the region, the newspaper participated actively in the construction of representations of the border, contributing to producing shared meanings about the regional past, present and future.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ PESAVENTO, Sandra. *História & história cultural*, op. cit.

⁵⁴ LIMA, Zaldir. Iguaçu - Água Grande, op. cit.

As we sought to demonstrate, the narrative elaborated by the publication integrated different temporalities. The past was mobilized through the Colônia Militar memory and the Brazilian army action, presented as historical foundations of the presence of the State and civilization on the border. The present appeared as the decisive moment of material transformation, marked by infrastructure works, tourism expansion, and territorial integration. And the future was predicted as a horizon of progress, where Foz do Iguaçu emerged as a leader in western Paraná and a strategic point of connection between Brazil and its neighboring countries.

The history emerging from these pages should not be confused with a linear reconstruction of Foz do Iguaçu's trajectory. It is the interpretation that certain local agents produced of that trajectory, by selecting past events, ascribing meaning to the transformation that they experienced and projecting future expectations onto them. In this process, *A Notícia* not only registered the ongoing transformations, but also participated in the symbolic elaboration of different regional scales. The pages of the newspaper produced an image of western Paraná as a space of political articulation, of the border with Paraguay as an axis of continental integration and Foz do Iguaçu as a tourist center of international reach. These different spatial scales integrated the representation produced by the newspaper regarding the position that Foz do Iguaçu occupied, and should occupy, in the ongoing development process.

By analyzing the newspaper's performance from this perspective, the article sought to highlight how the local press took part in the formulation of a regional imaginary supported by the association between memory, development and integration. More than a witness to the changes that marked the 1950s, *A Notícia* was also one of the agents that contributed to defining the meanings assigned to them and to projecting a certain view of the future for the border region. By privileging the local press as object of analysis, this study aimed to contribute to the understanding of how agents located on the periphery of large urban centers also participated in the formulation of regional and national projects within the Brazilian development context.

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