

## Brazil's clandestine mass grave in Perus (São Paulo)

*by Lanaís de Castro*

"They tried to bury us, but they did not know we were seeds."<sup>1</sup>

- Mexican Proverb

In 1990, a clandestine mass grave with 1.049<sup>2</sup> unidentified mortal remains was found at the Dom Bosco Cemetery located in the outskirts of the city of São Paulo, more specifically, in the suburban district of Perus. It represents one of the innumerable crimes committed by the Brazilian dictatorial regime, which emerged with the military *coup d'état* in 1964 and lasted until 1985. The facts that have led to the discovery of the *Vala Clandestina de Perus* (Perus illegal ditch), as it came to be known, discloses a puzzle that could probably not be revealed if it were not for the courage of some individual persons. As we will see, among all involved people, the roles of two people in particular – the former administrator of this cemetery and a journalist – were especially important in putting the pieces of this story together, which already began to be written under the dictatorship. Although economic and political support are indispensable for moving forward with the search for those people subjected to enforced disappearance, in Brazil, like in other countries<sup>3</sup>, the state's immobility is unfortunately common. Therefore, the main advancements achieved in this search are primarily results of the mobilization of the affected families and torture survivors, who persist in this struggle without the state backing their initiatives as it should, or, in the worst cases, at all. Yet, there are necessary actions to be taken, such as those to identify the bones found in Perus, which crucially depends on the commitment of politicians, *inter alia*, to allocate financial resources to proceed with the forensic analyses. Families cannot advance in this sense alone. Notwithstanding, in 40 years there were only two mayors of the city of São Paulo with the political will to address the challenge concerning the *Vala Clandestina de Perus* and to effectively communicate with the higher spheres of the Brazilian federal system. These political conditions favored the case to make some progresses, but discontinuities brought about with the end of these mayors' terms resulted in steps backwards.

In this context it is necessary to retell the story of the *Vala Clandestina de Perus* based on witness' statements given in interviews<sup>4</sup> as well as in official publications<sup>5</sup> and reliable reports.<sup>6</sup> To enhance the reliability of this account, I present what was told or testified in public hearings and written reports in exactly the same manner as it has been originally expressed. Therefore, I translate, quote and paraphrase everything in a rigorous way. Besides that, in my position as one more person who tells this story, I restrain myself from personal perceptions as best as possible and seek to show all the possibly differing information on the same issue, making visible the common points that prevail among all declarations of the parties involved.

### **The cemetery and the illegal common ditch**

The Dom Bosco Cemetery was built by the government of the city of São Paulo in 1971 under the then mayor Paulo Maluf's mandate – appointed to this position by the dictatorial authorities. Since the very beginning of its activities, the cemetery was the main destination of corpses of unidentified decedents, e.g. the poor and people whose families did not claim their bodies. It was also the destination of people who were residents of this deprived neighborhood of São Paulo, and mortal victims of political repression. The latter have often been sent there with falsified papers making it improbable that they could be found.<sup>7</sup> As mainly known by the memories of the then gravediggers of the cemetery,<sup>8</sup> “[i]ts original project contained a special zone marked for ‘terrorists’ and also a plan for a crematorium to be used according to a new legislation allowing for the cremation of bodies without the approval of the deceased’s family”.<sup>9</sup> This crematorium project, which even raised suspicions of the building contractor that would have constructed it, was abandoned in 1976. Thousands of bones exhumed from 1975 onwards were heaped in the inactive rooms of the cemetery actually intended for wakes, also known as viewing rooms, and, in 1976, illegally buried in the clandestine ditch.<sup>10</sup> There were impediments from the legal point of view to the existence of a crematorium for the poor. Facing such problems, the crematorium project was transferred to the *Vila Nova Cachoeirinha* Cemetery and, later, to the *Vila Alpina* Cemetery, both in São Paulo. If the project had been concluded at the Dom Bosco Cemetery, this crematorium would have been the destination of thousands of remains that were buried by the early 1970s. Among them, there were remains of some regime opponents, too. Although often mentioned by different testimonies, there is, in fact, no accurate evidence that could really prove this crematorium project.

### **The former administrator**

Antonio Pires Eustáquio<sup>11</sup>, best-known as Toninho, reports in the [public hearing held by the National Truth Commission and State Truth Commission "Rubens Paiva"](#), in 2014, that he had previously been the administrator of other cemeteries in the city of São Paulo when he was appointed to administer the Dom Bosco Cemetery around June 1976. Therefore, as he began to work at the cemetery the common ditch had already been dug and the aforesaid exhumed remains buried there. As Toninho says, the first thing he did when he started to work there, was to take over the task of reading the cemetery's books, the death certificates and burial records so that he could better understand "the dynamics of the place at which he was working" and "familiarize [himself] with that". In doing so, he could check that all remains that were buried in two blocks of the cemetery (blocks 1 and 2 of the field 1 – destined to indigents) had been exhumed. These exhumations were duly registered. However, Toninho could not find any information on what would have been done with those bones afterwards. According to the law, in such processes the destination of the exhumed remains must be registered as well. That was the first mismatch of information that raised his suspicion leading him to think that something was wrong. As he tried to get some information about the destination of those exhumations, the employees that were already working at the cemetery before he started (they were 26 during his administration) used to change the subject or sidestep his questions answering him very imprecisely and stating that they did not know about that either. "They did not trust me. It took time and I had to be very insistent", Toninho says. In his testimony, he describes that at the time of his administration the indigents were buried individually despite of inappropriate conditions of their caskets or coffins made of dried wood and many without lids. Asked about how the registration of the burials were executed, he explains that each body came from the Medical Legal Institute with the death certificate, which usually had very few information about both the person and the cause of the death, and reports that some of the certificates of those buried in the beginning of the 1970s came with the letter "T" written in red on its upper corner. These were, however, the minority of the certificates. In his words, "they were few enough so that they did not call my attention nor excite my curiosity at that time [1976] (...) I have become aware of what these "T's" stood for ["terrorists"] when, after the opening of the ditch, I started to participate in the [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the Vala de Perus](#)", established then in 1990.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, Toninho states that "as time passed by, on and off" his employees started to tell him about things from the period in which he was not working at the cemetery yet. According to them, there were occasions in which the corpse of only one "indigent" was brought and, normally, escorted by a police car; "I was told that nobody could get in or out of the cemetery while these bodies were not buried". As Toninho further declares, this sounded

really strange to him because the arrival of “real” indigents at any cemetery – like it is nowadays – used to happen in groups of at least six at once and without escorts. Such stories increased his certainty that something was truly wrong. He remembers that as of 1979, after the promulgation of the Amnesty Law, the presence of families looking for their disappeared relatives at the Dom Bosco Cemetery increased. Many had license plates of their cars from the city of Rio de Janeiro. As he describes, they were “people with a very different [elegant] bearing than that of the [poor] people who used to visit the cemetery”, and “they started to show up [...] asking to look at the burial records in order to search for the relatives’ names”. At that point his suspicions grew strongly. As confirmed by the victims’ relatives presented in this public hearing, Toninho has always tried to help them the best he could.

When he was asked about how he finally discovered the existence of the ditch, he describes this topic as “a separate chapter” and tells that during a relaxing day of fishing with the employees of the cemetery he saw the great opportunity to get a clue on the destination of those exhumed bones without any registration on their destination. He approached the eldest driver of the backhoe and asked him about the remains. The driver put the cards on the table and told him that “the bones of the terrorists had been thrown in a common ditch” (also illegal, because this has not been registered), which he himself had dug, and revealed its precise location (which did not belong to the burial areas according to the blueprint of the cemetery). After becoming aware of that, Toninho went during the night to the area described by his employee and, with the appropriate equipment, could dig up the earth “without any difficulty [...] to a depth of [approximately] 3 meters”. In that moment, he said to himself “here they are”. He kept that secret. This was roughly in 1980, ten years before the official opening of the ditch. According to the [final report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the Vala de Perus](#), he emphasizes in his public hearing that “it has been verified that it was necessary to disappear those exhumed bones [...] so the idea of the crematorium came up, but it did not happen [...] it was in 1976. Then they came with the idea of the common ditch, which was what was done. In 1976, the remains [that were buried in the beginning of the 1970s] have been exhumed and placed in the viewing rooms, which were not being used. The crematorium was not realized. The ditch was dug on the edge of a huge ravine with a backhoe, and the bones were put there.”

According to Toninho, at some point, a famous Brazilian journalist started to frequently visit the cemetery and one day he came to Toninho and said, “he was looking for any topic for a new report”. Toninho tells that he looked at the journalist and answered him directly: “well [...] I think you are here looking for another thing”.

## The journalist

Caco Barcellos writes in the book *[Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos](#)*<sup>13</sup> (Political Dead and Disappeared People – free translation) how his [television report on the \*Vala Clandestina de Perus\*](#)<sup>14</sup>, and therefore, how his involvement with this story, came about. “In fact, it started by chance”, he says. In 1990 he was working on a years long research for his book *Route 66* that accounts the violence practiced against civilians by the police, mainly by the military police. He and his team of journalism students did an extensive investigation of the files of the Medical Legal Institute (IML)<sup>15</sup> in São Paulo, and from this documentation they were able to gather information that led him to around “60.000 identifications and possibilities of identifications of police’s victims [...] This IML documentation remained abandoned in in a room that functioned as a kind of unorganized archive to store these documents. As a consequence of this investigation they obtained identities and profiles of many people who were persecuted by the military police and searched in the IML for the information that matched the profile of these victims. The investigation at the IML was one of the many stages in his research on police violence, which had actually started in December 1975.

As he reports, at that time the information provided by the relatives of the deceased and politically disappeared people, such as the one given by Suzana Keniger Lisbôa – a militant during the dictatorship, whose partner had “disappeared” in 1972 and who had struggled since then to clarify the circumstances of his death and fellow victims of political repression – was that 269 militants, 144 of whom were officially dead and 125 “disappeared”, had been killed by a joint action of the Armed Forces, civilian and federal police. Suzana Lisbôa helped him discover the link between the IML documents and the bones found in the common illegal ditch of the Dom Bosco Cemetery by evaluating the database, which was created during the years of his research. The journalist states that in the course of his research process he frequently visited the cemetery of Perus. One day he came across the administrator of the cemetery, “who invited [him] to walk with him and go to the back of the administration building. [They] went to the graves because [Toninho] wanted to tell [Barcellos] a story that he intended to tell for a long time”. He told the journalist that “he was witness of the opening of a large ditch in the 1970s, where a large number of exhumed bones had been illegally deposited. He estimated around 1,500 bones”. Moreover, Toninho shared with him that “[t]his would have been done by the ‘men of the political repression of those years’, and he had been keeping that secret for a long time”. As the journalist highlights: “[Toninho] told this in some detail”, explaining that “he had talked about it to various directors of the Municipal Burial Service, and that he was surprised that they had never taken any kind of action”. In turn, they had always asked Toninho to disregard this story. As Barcellos further reports, Toninho told the journalist

that "since there was a project for the inauguration of ossuaries in several cemeteries of the city, this could be an opportunity to regularize that situation, which distressed him greatly".

When the journalist came back to the cemetery to get more details, Toninho gave him a reference that could lead him to some evidence. He told Barcellos that Gilberto Molina, an engineer from Rio de Janeiro whose brother, Flávio Carvalho Molina, was murdered for political reasons in 1971, "visited the cemetery one day". Gilberto Molina had asked for something to prove the existence of some unidentified buried bones at the cemetery. With the help of operators and a backhoe, and as Toninho declared in his abovementioned public hearing, with "an official authorization that Molina got from competent authorities", a small part of the grave was opened and an hour later they found the first bags with the bones, which were completely unidentified. According to Barcellos' reports, they continued digging and found three or four bags. Gilberto Molina began to feel ill because he hoped that those bags had a cardboard identification, but they had probably dissolved over the years. This was possibly due to the effect of humidity. Gilberto Molina thought that it would be impossible to obtain identification. "He was sick, he was moved, he asked Toninho to close the ditch", Barcellos writes. Regarding this episode, Toninho reported in his public hearing that Gilberto Molina no longer managed to get any other authorization to open any burial at the cemetery, but only this at that time.

When Barcellos went after Gilberto Molina in Rio de Janeiro, and Molina confirmed the story that Toninho had told him before, the journalist reports that "the details were identical. There was no personal connection between one and the other, so [Barcellos] was sure about the existence of the ditch." As Barcellos points out, he already had accumulated 60.000 documents registered at the IML and there was, simultaneously, the certainty of the existence of a ditch. The first thing he then tried to check was if the ditch was actually clandestine. He searched in the records of the municipal department for any document that could refer to the ditch. However, he could only find the plans and maps of the cemetery indicating only the location of the planned ossuary (400 meters away from the ditch) and the design of a chapel that would be right at the site of the place where the ditch was located. He could not find any registration of a common ditch. The journalist started to worry about keeping Toninho at his job and started to investigate the story more discreetly.

The next step that Barcellos took was to try to find out who was buried in that ditch, and, therefore, he used his database. There were some vestiges of the bones in the cemetery administration's books in Perus. With the help of Suzana Lisbôa, they found a specific documentation within the Legal Medical Institute. As Barcellos tells, "in some certificates of necroscopic examination of victims of the political police there was the letter 'T' in red, 'T' for

'terrorist'". As he puts it, "this was an indication of the police officers from that period when the person who was killed was a political prisoner". The journalist also says that he no longer found the letter "T" in red in the certificates dated as of the end of 1973. Anyway, the data he gathered facilitated their search. They compared his database information from 1971 (the year of the inauguration of the Dom Bosco Cemetery) until 1976 (as the exhumed remains from the blocks 1 and 2 of field 1 were placed in the ditch) with the lists of political dead and disappeared people and their respective codenames, which allowed them to have a high degree of certainty that at least six of the militants, considered "officially dead" were surely buried in that common illegal ditch. Through the match of these data, they verified the following names: [Dimas Antônio Casemiro](#), [Dênis Casemiro](#) and [Grenaldo de Jesus da Silva](#), buried with their true names; [Frederico Eduardo Mayr](#), buried as Eugênio Magalhães Sardinha; [Flávio Carvalho Molina](#), buried as Álvaro Lopes Peralta; and [Francisco José de Oliveira](#),<sup>16</sup> buried as Dario Marcondes. Barcellos sought out the Commission of Relatives of Political Prisoners, the information was publicized and a request for opening the ditch was sent to the City Hall. Caco Barcellos was the first to officially condemn this ditch. As of today, four of these six regime's opponents, murdered by the state's force and whose remains were thrown in the *Vala Clandestina de Perus*, have been identified.

### **State's action<sup>17</sup>**

Luiza Erundina, who was mayor of the city of São Paulo from 1989 to 1993, was the first politician committed to assume any political cost intrinsic to the clarification of the *Vala Clandestina de Perus*. The common ditch was opened during her administration on 4 September 1990. She provided the political conditions for the installation of the aforesaid Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry and the establishment of an agreement with the University of Campinas (Unicamp) to identify the bones. This Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry was installed in the City Hall of São Paulo to ascertain the story of the ditch and the bones buried there. This was considered the first act of reparation taken by the state. Also on 12 September 1990 Erundina created the Special Commission for Investigation and Monitoring of Human Bones (free translation - *Comissão Especial de Investigação e Acompanhamento das Ossadas Humanas*) found in cemeteries of the capital. The purpose of the Commission was to investigate the existence of clandestine ditches in conjunction with the Commission of Relatives. The direct participation of the Medical Legal Institute of São Paulo in this project was vetoed on the basis of the families' claims, which did not accept the identification of bones to be led by officials who already had certain positions under the dictatorship acting as agents of repression and who managed to obtain or keep employment at the Institute after the fall of the regime . The 1,049 bones located in the ditch belong to several groups of victims:



persons murdered by the Death Squad,<sup>18</sup> [children killed by an epidemic of meningitis that was concealed by the state in the 1970s](#), victims of poverty, bodies not claimed by relatives, and political prisoners. All the bones were sent to the Department of Legal Medicine of Unicamp (DML/Unicamp) in order to be identified. The work of DML began on 22 November 1990, after an agreement that was signed between the São Paulo City Hall, the State Government, and the University. Two politically disappeared could be identified: Frederico Eduardo Mayr (militant of the *Ação Libertadora Nacional* - Nationalist Liberation Alliance) and Dênis Casemiro (militant of the *Vanguarda Popular Revolucionária* - Revolutionary Popular Vanguard). This investigative work was stopped at the end of the decade and the bones abandoned.

Several years later, the bones were placed in boxes and transferred from Campinas to São Paulo. They were sent to the columbarium of the Araçá Cemetery and later the Institute Oscar Freire of the University of São Paulo restarted the analyses at the beginning of the 2000s. This process was, however, interrupted once again. To find out what happened in the previous analysis stages, under the pressure of victims' families, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office initiated a Public Civil Action in 2009. The work undertaken by the families and the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office for the search and the analyses as well as attempts to cross and compare the DNA samples collected from family members with pieces of bones taken from the remains found in Perus were sent to different laboratories in Brazil and abroad. Notwithstanding how inappropriate this process seems to have been conducted, it was possible to identify another missing person who was in this clandestine ditch: Flávio Carvalho Molina (militant of the *Movimento de Libertação Popular* - Movement of Popular Liberation).<sup>19</sup> Fifteen years after the opening of the *Vala Clandestina de Perus*, in September 2005, and after several attempts at DNA extraction – carried out by Brazilian universities and foreign institutions – the remains of Flávio Molina were finally identified by a private laboratory in São Paulo, the Genomic Laboratory, thanks to the initiative of the Federal Public Ministry with the support of SEDH-PR (State Secretariat of Human Rights of Paraná), which addressed the family's judicial actions.<sup>20</sup>

During the term of the São Paulo's mayor Fernando Haddad (2013-2017), political conditions were once again provided and the Perus Working Group (*Grupo de Trabalho Perus*) was created in April 2014. According to the report [The formation of the forensic anthropology group for the identification of the bones of the Vala de Perus](#), facing the pressure from the Commission of Relatives that continuously denounced the vulnerable conditions under which the remains were being kept, the Secretariat for Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic and the Special Commission on Political Dead and Disappeared People made an agreement with the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship of the São Paulo



City Hall (SMDHC), the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) and the Human Rights and Minorities Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, in order to resume the analyses of the remains found in the clandestine ditch, aiming at specially identifying among all remains those from political dead and disappeared. Thus, Argentinean and Peruvian anthropologists as well as archaeologists formed an analysis group covering the different stages of forensic anthropology (preliminary investigation and data, *ante-mortem*, *post-mortem* and genetic analysis). Through this, the Peruvian Team of Forensic Anthropology (EPAF), the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF), Brazilian archaeologists and anthropologists, started to work with forensic doctors of several Medical Institutes of the Police and of the National Secretariat on Public Security, under the observation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Their work represents some of the greatest advancements in this investigative process, which can be checked in the report just mentioned.

Since the beginning of its activities, the Perus Working Group has concluded in February 2018 the identification of the fourth of the six political disappeared people who would very likely been buried in the *Vala Clandestina de Perus*. The analyses allowed the confirmation of the identity of Dimas Antônio Casemiro (director of the *Movimento Revolucionário dos Trabalhadores* - Revolutionary Movement of Workers, and who had previously been militant of the *Ala Vermelha* – Red Wing and the *Vanguarda Armada Revolucionária Palmares* - Armed Revolutionary Vanguard Palmares), who were killed in April 1971 by the military regime's agents of political repression. The final confirmation was completed on 16 February 2018 after the working group received the results of DNA exams from the first remittance of biological samples sent for genetic analysis to the [International Commission on Missing Persons \(ICMP\)](#), an international entity with headquarters in The Hague, which acts as a partner of the Working Group.<sup>21</sup>

## **The challenges**

The changes in the federal government in 2016, with the fall of Dilma Rousseff, and the change of municipal government in São Paulo threatened the continuation of the activities. The [Perus Working Group has been suffering successive budget cuts](#), for example, “[i]n 2017, the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship of São Paulo, while under Fernando Haddad's administration, approved a budget of R\$ 880,000.00 (about 225.000 Euros; December 2017 exchange rate) for the working group, doubling the amount provided in 2016. The current administration, however, decided to freeze 74,75% of that total”. An [agreement dated December 2017](#) guaranteed their work for another year. The lack of securing the transfer of resources permanently threatens the continuation of the activities.

In general, the Brazilian state's action regarding reparation policies has always been limited. For example, the few commissions<sup>22</sup> created by the state to deal with the crimes committed during the repression usually could merely deliver reports that constitute "a laudable, albeit limited effort to cope with Brazil's dictatorial past."<sup>23</sup> Specifically, considering the Perus case, to afford the processes to investigate it and identify the bones means not only a challenge that must be met by the state. More than that, the state owes the victims' families and, broadly speaking, the Brazilian civil society more than a remedial speech recognizing the state's responsibility for such atrocities of the past. Politicians are the ones in charge for implementing the adequate policies to be driven by the needs of those most affected citizens instead of sweeping state's crimes under the rug. Thus, continuing to account the identification of the mortal remains found in Perus as well as investigating similar and all other crimes against humanity committed during the dictatorship configure a state's historical obligation. The legitimate need for investigation must be addressed by a realistic action plan by the competent authorities to ensure adequate results and these activities cannot be interrupted by every change of government. The fact that [the story of the \*Vala Clandestina de Perus\* began more than 40 years ago and has not finished yet](#)<sup>24</sup> can only be qualified as inadmissible.

Moreover, justice has its time and victims' relatives yearn for advancements. Nevertheless, "[w]hilst families of the disappeared would welcome justice, this is not their priority".<sup>25</sup> Family members usually require the answers before justice acts, and thus humanitarian interventions should be prioritized so as to recover, identify and restitute the remains of the disappeared to their families, without excluding the need for justice at the same time.<sup>26</sup> All who bear the marks of the dictatorship know that financial compensation to the families does not heal pains, eliminate scars or bury memories. The clarification of the circumstances of the deaths, that is, the truth, and the right to bury the remains of their loved ones according to their beliefs and creeds is what relatives would like to have in the first place; while their certainty that justice is the only way towards the criminal and historical accountability of those responsible is what keeps them going.<sup>27</sup>

The families of both Grenaldo de Jesus da Silva and Francisco José de Oliveira, like all the families in the world whose loved ones have "disappeared" by the hands of the repressive state, deserve in times of democracy all political actions to be taken without any reservations towards the identification and restitution of their relatives' remains. It is their right, enshrined in international laws and treaties, of which Brazil is a signatory. Burial rites are intrinsic with the primitive instincts of all humans.<sup>28</sup> The assurance of the political and financial support to the Perus Working Group until all its activities and investigations are finally concluded means definitely a policy for *human dignity*. The latter addressed in the Article 1, Item III of the

Brazilian Federal Constitution. For those put in the *Vala Clandestina de Perus* in 1976, for those who suffered human rights violations alike, alive or dead, for all Brazilians who die every day as victims of a state that cruelly kills, a human burial will always be owned.

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## Notes and references:

<sup>1</sup> Free translation. In original: "Nos quisieron enterrar, pero no sabían que éramos semilla".

<sup>2</sup> Hespanha, Luiz (2012). A primeira comissão da verdade. *In: Desaparecidos políticos: um capítulo não encerrado da história brasileira*. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. Instituto Macuco. Available at <http://www.justica.gov.br/central-de-conteudo/anistia/anexos/livro-vala-de-perus.pdf> [Accessed on 07.08.2018]

<sup>3</sup> Enforced disappearance was a recurring phenomenon in Latin American dictatorial regimes and continued to be within the framework of the "fight against subversion" present in many of its democratic regimes, even if the latter might be less visible. Colombia has one of the highest levels of enforced disappearances in the world. The search strategies designed and promoted by its National Search Commission to finding missing persons did not achieve expected results. In Peru, the lack of strategy and statement expressed on a systematic search allowed only the discovery of mortal remains of people, presumed to have disappeared without being able to identify them.

**See more:** Haugaard, Lisa; Nicholls Kelly. (2010). Breaking the silence: In search of Colombia's disappeared. Latin America Working Group Education Fund and U.S. Office on Colombia. Available at <http://www.lawg.org/storage/documents/Colombia/BreakingTheSilence.pdf> [Accessed on 16.08.2018]; Pion-Berlin, David. (1989). *The Ideology of State Terror: Economic Doctrine and Political Repression in Argentina and Peru*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> The documentary produced by the *Jornal GGN* team "*Ossadas da Vala Clandestina de Perus, de 1970 a 2015*" (Bones of the Perus' illegal ditch, from 1970 to 2015 – free translation) tells the story of the bones found in the ditch. There are several characters that joined this journey since the "official discovery" (then in 1990). The script is punctuated by important moments that transformed the course of these bones, such as: the discovery of a ditch by the former administrator of the cemetery, its opening during the Luiza Erundina's mayor's term, the first analysis, negligence and, finally, the beginning of the work of the Peru's Working Group. The latter is the focus of the documentary. In addition to presenting the articulation, techniques and objectives of the Perus' Working Group the documentary also analyzes the actual problems regarding police violence, public security policy, and also the burial of indigents in the state of São Paulo. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NIGV3Mbrbg&t=66s> [Accessed on 16.08.2018]

<sup>5</sup> Comissão da Verdade do Estado de São Paulo "Rubens Paiva". (2012). *Vala Clandestina de Perus. Desaparecidos políticos um capítulo não encerrado da história brasileira*. 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Instituto Macuco. Available at <http://www.justica.gov.br/central-de-conteudo/anistia/anexos/livro-vala-de-perus.pdf> [Accessed on 22.08.2018]

<sup>6</sup> Comissão da Verdade do Estado de São Paulo "Rubens Paiva". (2015). *Verdade aberta*. Online platform. Available at: <http://comissadaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/#itens> [Accessed on 20.08.2018]

**Note to the source:** #VerdadeAberta is the platform for the dissemination, distribution and public sharing of the content generated by the Truth Commission of the State of São Paulo "Rubens Paiva". Each section of the Report, released on March 12, 2015, has its multimedia version on this site, with hundreds of complementary materials – images, videos, audios, maps.

<sup>7</sup> **Note:** It is worth noting the struggle of family members who through the search in the registration books of the Dom Bosco cemetery identified their loved ones, who had been buried individually: Antônio Benetazzo, Alexandre Vanucchi Leme, Antônio Sérgio de Matos, Eduardo Antônio da Fonseca, Pedro Estevam Ventura Pomar, Ângelo Arroio, Carlos Nicolau Danielli, Joaquim Alencar Seixas, Luís Eurico Tejera Lisboa, Yuri Xavier Pereira, Alex Xavier Pereira, among others. **Retrieved from:** Comissão da Verdade do Estado de São Paulo "Rubens Paiva". (2015). *Relatório - Tomo I - Parte I - A formação do grupo de antropologia forense para a identificação das ossadas de Vala de Perus*. pp. 2. Available at [http://comissadaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/relatorio/tomo-i/downloads/I\\_Tomo\\_Parte\\_1\\_A-formacao-do-grupo-de-antropologia-forense-para-identificacao-das-ossadas-da-vala-de-perus.pdf](http://comissadaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/relatorio/tomo-i/downloads/I_Tomo_Parte_1_A-formacao-do-grupo-de-antropologia-forense-para-identificacao-das-ossadas-da-vala-de-perus.pdf) [Accessed on 09.08.2018]

<sup>8</sup> de Almeida Teles, Edson Luís. (n/a). Vala de Perus. Available at: <http://www.desaparecidospoliticos.org.br/pagina.php?id=39&m=8> [Accessed on 15.08.2018]

<sup>9</sup> Pinheiro Machado, Roberto. (2018). Brazilian History: Culture, Society, Politics 1500-2010. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. pp. 322.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* de Almeida Teles, Edson Luís. (n/a).

<sup>11</sup> Public hearing about the dead people related to the National Liberation Action: Antônio Pires Eustáquio. (2014). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUPkdfJ907g> [Accessed on 20.08.2018]  
Transcriptions available at: [http://comissaodaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/relatorio/tomo-iii/downloads/III\\_Tomo\\_2014-Audiencias-Comissao-da-Verdade-SP.pdf](http://comissaodaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/relatorio/tomo-iii/downloads/III_Tomo_2014-Audiencias-Comissao-da-Verdade-SP.pdf) 3351 pp. [Accessed on 03.09.2018]

<sup>12</sup> Câmara Municipal de São Paulo. (1992). CPI Perus - Desaparecidos Políticos. Relatório da Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito. Available at: <https://www.conjur.com.br/dl/relatorio-final-cpi-perus.pdf> [Accessed on 31.08.2018]

<sup>13</sup> Barcellos, Caco. O Globo Repórter sobre a vala de Perus. (2001). In: Janaína Teles (Eds.) *Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos: Reparação ou Impunidade?* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Humanitas/FFCH/USP. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/portugues/tematica/livros/diversos/impunidade.pdf> [Accessed on 30.08.2018]

See more of Cacos Barcellos' testimonial at: <https://www.redebrasilatual.com.br/cidadania/2016/06/caco-barcellos-fala-a-comissao-da-verdade-como-descobriu-a-vala-de-perus-5520.html> [Accessed on 05.10.2018]

<sup>14</sup> *Globo Repórter* is a Brazilian weekly documentary television show broadcast by Rede Globo. The journalist Caco Barcellos has done a report about the *Vala Clandestina de Perus* reconstituting at least partially the facts of this story at the time of the opening of the ditch in 1990. Although Caco Barcellos' report was already ready at that time, its broadcast was censored by the Rede Globo, and authorized only five years later, in 1995, as the Brazilian State acknowledged its responsibility regarding the issue of opponents who were killed by the repressive apparatus of the military regime. This report is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKBc7S4tSfU> [Accessed on 23.08.2018]

<sup>15</sup> **Note:** The operation of municipal public cemeteries such as the Dom Bosco Cemetery, dialogue with the principal organ of the State responsible for necroscopic reports: the Legal Medical Institute of São Paulo (IML/SP), which, among other functions, assists in the investigation of suspicious and violent deaths through the analysis of corpses and crime scenes. The IML is linked to the Public Security Secretariat of the State and works together with police agencies such as the Civil Police and Military Police and the State Department of Political and

<sup>16</sup> Comissão Especial de Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos. (n/a). Lista oficial de mortos e desaparecidos políticos. Available at: <http://cemdp.sdh.gov.br/modules/wfchannel/index.php?pagenum=11> [Accessed on 03.09.2018]

<sup>17</sup> This section will be basically grounded on the following sources:

Programa Lugares da Memória. (2014). Cemitério Dom Bosco – Vala de Perus. Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo. pp. 5-13. Available at: [http://www.memorialdaresistencia.org.br/memorial/upload/memorial/bancodedados/131445155929470000\\_FI\\_CHA\\_REVISADA\\_CEMITERIO\\_DOM\\_BOSCO.pdf](http://www.memorialdaresistencia.org.br/memorial/upload/memorial/bancodedados/131445155929470000_FI_CHA_REVISADA_CEMITERIO_DOM_BOSCO.pdf) [Accessed on 30.08.2018]

Comissão da Verdade do Estado de São Paulo "Rubens Paiva". (2015). Relatório - Tomo I - Parte I - A formação do grupo de antropologia forense para a identificação das ossadas de Vala de Perus. Available at: [http://comissaodaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/relatorio/tomo-i/downloads/I\\_Tomo\\_Parte\\_1\\_A-formacao-do-grupo-de-antropologia-forense-para-identificacao-das-ossadas-da-vala-de-perus.pdf](http://comissaodaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/relatorio/tomo-i/downloads/I_Tomo_Parte_1_A-formacao-do-grupo-de-antropologia-forense-para-identificacao-das-ossadas-da-vala-de-perus.pdf) [Accessed on 30.08.2018]

<sup>18</sup> The first expression of the phenomenon that came to be known as the Death Squad emerged in Rio de Janeiro between the late 1950s and the early 1960s. These were groups of police officers involved in crime. According to the jurist and researcher Alessandra Teixeira, in testimony to the Truth Commission of the State of São Paulo, those involved acted in favor of various interests, with direct links to the criminal economic activities, such as gambling, prostitution and the traffic in narcotic drugs, as well as torture and murder. The formation of groups of similar characteristics emerged in São Paulo in the late 1960s. The São Paulo's Death Squad was justified in a kind of "offensive against crime". The agents involved were singled out as perpetrators of torture and death of civilians and political prisoners. It was under the command of Sérgio Paranhos Fleury, the feared police chief of the Department of Order and Social Policy (Dops) where "the police acted with a sort of extra-legal power that led to

the most serious forms of violence against the human person". See more at: *Repressão Política: Origens e Consequências do Esquadrão da Morte*. In: Tomo I; Part I; Ch. II: Estruturas e Sistemas da Repressão. Available at: <http://comissaodaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/relatorio/tomo-i/parte-i-cap2.html> [Accessed on 05.10.2018]

<sup>19</sup> Note: It is important to highlight that all the actions undertaken also identified other political disappeared people, who were in individual graves, like: Antônio Bicalho Lana, Sônia Moraes Angel Jones, Miguel Sabat Nuet, Luís José da Cunha, among others.

<sup>20</sup> Comissão da Verdade do Estado de São Paulo "Rubens Paiva". (n/a). Flávio Carvalho Molina. Available at: <http://comissaodaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/mortos-desaparecidos/flavio-carvalho-molina> [Accessed on 30.08.2018]

<sup>21</sup> See more on Dimas Antônio Casimiro's case at: <https://www.icmp.int/press-releases/icmp-helps-to-identify-victims-of-1970s-military-regime-in-brazil/> [Accessed on 03.09.2018]

<sup>22</sup> Note: The [Special Commission on Political Dead and Disappeared](#) was established in 1995 as one of the first and main conquests of relatives of political dead and missing people in Brazil in their struggle for transitional justice measures. Created by the Law No. 9.140 of 4 December 1995 (10 years after the end of the dictatorial regime), it is a state body, composed in a pluralistic manner and works alongside the Secretary of Human Rights of the President of the Republic. The [National Truth Commission](#) was established in 2012 as a temporary state body created by the Law No. 12.528 of 18 November 2011 (26 years after the end of the dictatorial regime), which closed its activities on 10 December 2014, with the delivery of its Final Report. Other commissions with both political and civil biases can be found here: <http://memoriasdaditadura.org.br/comissao-nacional-da-verdade/index.html> [Accessed on 03.09.2018]

<sup>23</sup> Ambos, Kai & Romero, Eneas. (January 15, 2015). The Report of the Brazilian Truth Commission: Late Truth without Justice? Available at <https://www.ejiltalk.org/12892/> [Accessed on 23.08.2018]

<sup>24</sup> Loyola, Leandro. (11 June 2015). Investigação mostra que ainda há corpos de vítimas da ditadura no cemitério de Perus. Um time de peritos luta por uma nova escavação na mais infame das valas do regime. Available at: <https://epoca.globo.com/tempo/noticia/2015/06/investigacao-mostra-que-ainda-ha-corpos-de-vitimas-da-ditadura-no-cemiterio-de-perus.html> [Accessed on 03.09.2018]

<sup>25</sup> Robins, Simon. (2011). Towards victim-centred transitional justice: understanding the needs of families of the disappeared in postconflict Nepal. In: *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, v. 5, pp 75-98.

<sup>26</sup> Baraybar, Jose Pablo; Brasey, Valerie; Zadel, Andrew. (2007). The need for a centralised and humanitarian-based approach to missing persons in Iraq: an example from Kosovo. In: *The International Journal of Human Rights*, v. 11, n. 3, pp. 265-274.

<sup>27</sup> Cardoso, Ítalo. (2012). Mais um passo no caminho da Justiça. In: *Vala Clandestina de Perus. Desaparecidos políticos um capítulo não encerrado da história brasileira*. 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Instituto Macuco. pp. 20. Available at <http://www.justica.gov.br/central-de-conteudo/anistia/anexos/livro-vala-de-perus.pdf> [Accessed on 08.08.2018]

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* Loyola, Leandro.