

Experiences on the Archival Organization of the former Brazilian Communist Party (PCB)*

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Unfortunately, the Brazilian institutions of archives seem not to care about a specific part of the national memory by leaving on the sidelines the political party archives. Most of the institutions that are preoccupied with this issue generally hold only personal archives of important political characters of the national history. On the other side, those archives include some institutional papers which are the main sources to retrieve the documents of certain political parties. The Brazilian government has been preserving records of its actions at the Arquivo Nacional¹ and at the parliament archive. The main issue of those records is that they are not representative of all the party actions but only the institutional and recorded actions; in fact, they are not party archives but governmental archives. In Brazilian history, political parties have just played a secondary role, far away from the population. It contributes to a non-systematic policy of preservation of their documents.

The first Brazilian parties were formed in the first half of the 19th century – when Brazil was an Empire, ruled by an oligarchy – and had only performed a decorative role. Almost nothing of this period still exists but the governmental records.

Concerning the political parties, just a few things changed with the advent of the republic in 1889 until the turbulent movement of 1930 that established a new correlation of the political power with a large participation of different groups; those groups still represented the elite, but they were wider than the tradition oligarchy. The society claim for increased political participation began with initial organized movements by the year 1920. The Brazilian Communist Party foundation was in 1922 and it was illegal from that date until just a few months in 1947/1948. Unfortunately, the only registers that remained from that period were linked to the formal politics, being very difficult to find party records of that moment, especially those that were produced by an illegal party. About that and the consecutive period,

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¹ More information about the Arquivo Nacional can be found at <http://www.arquivonacional.gov.br/>. The site indicates thirteen holdings that may have party records: eleven personal fonds, one miscellaneous collection and just one party fond, formed by a single book of acts of the Partido Republicano Brasileiro.

there was not any systematic effort to preserve or hold party archives but, on the other hand, it is still possible to find many party documents mixed not only with official records² but also with personal archives. The material about the proliferation of non-governmental political parties that had taken place since the 1930 movement was found in personal archives. The CPDOC institution³ has plenty of personal archives of important Brazilian public men that contained party records among them⁴. A delightful exception is the archive of the Democratic Party, which played an important role during the 1930 movement, and a few years after, as well that is over IHGSP⁵ responsibility⁶. Other kinds of institutions that might have party documents among their collections are municipal archives, such as the Arquivo Público e Histórico de Rio Claro⁷ which has under its custody the archives of the Brazilian Integralist Action (AIB) and the further Party of the People's Representation (PRP), which had symbolized the Brazilian fascist movement⁸. These documents are mixed with the personal archives of its leader Plínio Salgado⁹, born in Rio Claro.

² See, for example the fond Julio Prestes, an important character of the 1930 movement, at the Arquivo do Estado de São Paulo – AESP which has its inventory already published: Silvana Goulart Guimarães & Regina Maria Teles, *Inventário do Arquivo Júlio Prestes de Albuquerque*, São Paulo, 1987. See also http://www.arquivoestado.sp.gov.br/guia_ficha.php?fundo=111&palavra=.

³ Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil, institution founded in 1973, more information can be found at <http://cpdoc.fgv.br/sobre>.

⁴ Despite 121 collections of Brazilian important public men, CPDOC has only five party holdings, and, out of those five, only two have a significant amount of documents: *Arena*, the official party instituted by the dictatorship of 1964, with 20,000 documents and *Clube 3 de Outubro*, a small and a brief regional group from the 1930 movement, with 900 documents. More information is available at <http://cpdoc.fgv.br/acervo/arquivospeessoais>.

⁵ The Instituto Histórico Geográfico de São Paulo was founded in 1894 and is experiencing great financial issues. The archives do not have appropriate finding aids. A preliminary guide was made by the students of the post-graduation (specialization) course on archive of USP in 2000. The Institute operates with some hour restriction. More information can be asked by mail: Rua Benjamin Constant, 158 – São Paulo (SP) – 01005-000 – Brazil.

⁶ The archives of the Democratic Party had only survived due to the preservation effort of one of their leaders, Aureliano Leite, who was also a member of the IHGSP. In this year, the students of the post-graduation (specialization) course on archive of USP, under our supervision, made a preliminary identification of the fond, appalling the proposed typology of our book. Those documents were used in one of the most important research about the political history of that period, which was made by Maria Lígia Coelho Prado, *A democracia ilustrada: O Partido Democrático de São Paulo (1926-1934)*, São Paulo, 1985. Most of the documents are from the Central Committee and demand a complete archival organization, since their actual subject disposition does not allow understanding the documentary functions. The archive was measured in approximately eight linear meters.

⁷ Rio Claro Municipal Archive, <http://www.aphrioclaro.sp.gov.br/acervo/>.

⁸ Detailed information about those documents may be found at <http://www.aphrioclaro.sp.gov.br/acervo/arquivo-permanente/plinio-salgado/>.

⁹ The organization of the personal archive of Plínio Salgado represented a new model, in a tentative to solve many problems generated by the CPDOC proposal. For this issue, see Ana Maria de

In 1964, the democratic process was interrupted by a coup d'état, introducing a military government that lasted until 1984. During this period the participation of the political parties was toughly repressed by authoritarian methods, which included murder and torture, side by side a restrictive legislation. The status quo of a still democratic country was maintained with the formal facade of a party regimen that had only two allowed parties: one for the government and other for the opposition; this last one was hardly controlled and had very limited action. Unfortunately, no kind of preservation was made, systematic or not, of the daily documents of those parties. Once again, we can only find those documents mixed with archives from other nature, like governmental, personal, etc. Nevertheless, despite of the regimen intentions, there were many political organizations (as illegal parties, like the CP, or other kind of actors) outside formal politics, which could also be part of the allowed opposing party. Due to the repressive apparatus, the militants usually destroyed all their records afraid of the consequences.

Paradoxically, the other way to find political parties documents is searching into the records of the repression apparatus because they had archived a lot of documents of the movements against the government¹⁰. These holdings actually possess a lot of political party material but, on the other hand, they are more representative of the action of the repression than the political parties themselves and do not reflect the internal structures of those entities. Another source of political party documents is the research made by the project *Brasil Nunca Mais*. This project has made a huge contribution to denounce the torture and the power abuses (even under the military law) performed during the dictatorship period. They used official documents to prove how the State did not respect the laws that it had created. The researchers worked with the lawsuits produced by the regimen against their opponents copying and indexing those documents. The attachments of those lawsuits brought a vast amount of party documents that are very significant about the action of those political actors¹¹.

However, we have noticed a proliferation of institutions in the 1980s related to the record preservation about social movements, especially those about labor unions, political associations, and non-governmental organizations related to

Almeida Camargo, *Arquivos pessoais: uma proposta de descrição*, "Arquivo: boletim histórico e informativo", 9 (1988), 1, p. 21-24.

¹⁰ The various provincial Social and Political Order Departments (DEOPS), which had existed as a political police, collected a huge amount of political documents. The DEOPS of São Paulo was probably the most active one. A part of their documents is available to research at AESP: <http://www.arquivoestado.sp.gov.br/permanente/deops.php>.

¹¹ The Project *Brasil: Nunca Mais* [Brazil: Never more] made photocopies of all the documents, including the attachments, and distributed them for many institutions in and out of the country, like Arquivo Edgar Leuenroth (http://segall.ifch.unicamp.br/site_ael/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=107&Itemid=90). The main report of the project was published in 1985 (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, *Brasil: nunca mais*, 18th ed., Petrópolis, 1986) and translated to several countries (Archdiocese of Sao Paulo, *Torture in Brazil: a shocking report on the pervasive use of torture by Brazilian military governments, 1964-1979* (transl. by Jaime Wright), Texas, 1998).

citizenship and minorities' movements. These political actors had played an important role on the democratization process, which began facing the dictatorship in 1964. The participation of such actors had increased during the second half of the 1970 decade. With the liberalization of the political rights in the country and with the end of military government – that had its main milestone in 1989 with a general election – many scholars, scientists and citizens were concerned about the preservation of the memory and the documents of that process¹². Nevertheless, the documents that had surpassed from the military period were very poor on political party archives if we consider the total documentary production of those organizations. The only exceptions are the institutions that were formed by militants concerned about record preservation¹³.

This situation could be explained by the tendency of careless about records, documents and history in Brazil. Generally, some political party documents have survived due to a personal effort of some of their members and have a tendency to be mixed with the personal documents of those people. Since the Brazilian archival science is still a new area and has no tradition¹⁴ all the procedures of organization of party documents were posed by those who usually took care of personal archives who had a librarianship education most of the times. Thus, most of the political party records were taken out from their general context to satisfy some researches demands, completely destroying the archival principles by organizing the documents by subjects and neglecting their institutional origin.

The archival organization must always try to portray the real activities of the institutions and, as long as it is possible, be a faithful mirror of those actions. The documentary production can be contextualized, in accordance to the principles posed by the archival theory. The difficulty stands on the fact that the functions really developed by an institution – especially in the clandestine parties, but also in the

¹² The Arquivo Edgar Leuenroth is a good example of that tendency and congregates a large number of fonds related to the social movements. It is supported by UNICAMP, an important Brazilian public university (http://segall.ifch.unicamp.br/site_ael/).

¹³ The *Centro de Pastoral Vergueiro* was the largest institution of that kind. It was founded in 1968 by militants with the intention of creating a documentary center for the opponents of the military dictatorship. With the end of the military regimen, it was converted to an important center of political and party documentation. Today it changed the name to *Centro de Documentação e Pesquisa Vergueiro* (Rua São Domingos 224 – São Paulo (SP) – 01326-000 – Brazil, http://segall.ifch.unicamp.br/site_ael/). The Centro de Documentação do Movimento Operário Mário Pedrosa was founded in 1981 by a group of militant intellectuals with Trotskyite thoughts, who collect huge amount of leftist tendency material related to the leftist tendency (Trotskyite or not). More information can be found at http://www1.cedem.unesp.br/acervos/acervo_cemap.htm.

¹⁴ The Brazilian Archivists Association was founded on October 20, 1971 and the first experience in the direction of normalization was presented at the first Brazilian Congress of Archival Science in 1972, but published only in 1979: Associação dos Arquivistas Brasileiros, *Terminologia arquivística*, in Congresso Brasileiro de Arquivologia, 1º, 1972, Rio de Janeiro; *Anais do 1º Congresso Brasileiro de Arquivologia*, Brasília, 1979, p. 435-449. A concise history of the Brazilian archival science was made by José Maria Jardim, *A arquivologia no Brasil: breve esboço de um percurso recente*, in *Sistemas e políticas públicas de arquivos no Brasil*, Niterói, 1995, p. 57-63.

official ones – are diverse from those that are recorded or officially published. Even so, on those circumstances, the information about the activities was rare and there was also a deliberated hiding of the illegal actions shaped by the minimum production of compromising records and by their further elimination.

On the analysis of significant documents produced by clandestine parties, we noted that the outlaw condition of those groups has influenced the documentary production to their needs, without any concern with legal protocols. By the absence of other references, the clandestine parties adopted a documentary terminology very similar to the official one. For example: there were many documents named *acts*, *reports*, *notes*, etc., which were not necessarily faithful to the traditional (and official) models. We notice, indeed, a lack of standardization of the documentary production, with great contextual variations on the functions and on the range of the records, even inside or outside of the organizations. Such variety was seen not only between different parties but also between different administration periods of the same entity.

The documentary holdings originated in party organizations, mainly in the clandestine ones that are under the custody of archives, documentary centers and other similar institutions, are in general formed by documents which had the mobilization and social consciousness as their main goals. It is interesting to notice that the records related to the daily activities of material infrastructure – like paying the rent of the committee or buying some coffee, for example –, which are indispensable to support the political action, had rarely survived in this type of holding. It is impossible to determine whether the vanishing of such records had occurred during the tortuous path covered until their arrival on a documentary center or if they were discarded instead to be organized by the documentary institutions. On such holdings, most of our findings are wide instruments to achieve the population as periodicals, bulletins, leaflets, pamphlets etc. As we have already mentioned, in Brazil these “trivial” documents have the tendency to be diminished by archivists responsible for their preservation and scientific diffusion, putting them into a mysterious miscellaneous series without any functional specification¹⁵.

Facing that situation, we had started a research with the intention to find manners to archive political party records since the Brazilian archival science has not postulated any directive to this type of holding. Besides, the directives used by some institutions were adapted from the procedures adopted on personal archives that were more closely related to librarian reference of documents than archival organization. The systematization of a documentary typology, specific for those holdings, had the

¹⁵ For CPDOC, the miscellaneous series is “[...] composed by the documents that can not fit in others series [...] like visit cards, restaurant menus, folders, notes, pamphlets, various receipts, etc.” (Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil, *Procedimentos técnicos em arquivos privados*. Rio de Janeiro, 1986, p. 11-12; Regina da Luz Moreira, *Arranjo e descrição em arquivos privados pessoais: ainda uma estratégia a ser definida?*, Rio de Janeiro, 1990, p. 32) See also Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil, *Procedimentos técnicos adotados para a organização de arquivos privados*, Rio de Janeiro, 1994, p. 11-12.

intent of solve many problems originated from a generalization of the technical procedures on the private archives¹⁶ organization. These procedures, in general, pasteurize the particularities of each variety of documentary holding, since the private archives represents, in fact, a large and heterogeneous universe. They also compromise the task of contextualize the documents. The political party organizations present specific attributes that have the tendency to be ignored with the universalizing schemes suggested by the available bibliography in Brazil about the subject.

The traditional arrangement by organizational structure in the case of the Brazilian parties' archives does not permit the retrieval of the real functions and activities developed, which also have the tendency to be dissolved when the formal aspects of the documents are prioritized. On the organizations in question, the records were produced, in principle, without any regulation, official normalization or legal concern. Thus, it is necessary to consider also the informal elements presented on the recording production of the political parties.

We detached, as an exercise and a theoretical example, a situation where all those characteristics assume extreme proportions: the clandestine political groups. They present a huge discrepancy between the formal (or normalized) functions and those that are effectively developed. Nevertheless, it is important to point that even the legal parties many times performed activities outside their official facades. In this sense, the study of the clandestine groups is justified not only to the comprehension of informal activities done by those groups but also to the understanding of the extralegal practices of the officially constitute parties.

To contextualize the archival documents of parties and political associations means, in our case, that each document will have to be grouped exclusively with those that constitute a typological documentary series. By typological documentary series, we understand the aggregation of specific documentary species with their generation activities¹⁷. In this sense, we cannot mix bulletins and pamphlets anymore into a miscellaneous series, since they must be separated. Nevertheless, we also have to apart those documentary species according to their functions, making the archival series. For example, a propaganda bulletin will constitute a different series than a bulletin made for the political discussion with the militants.

We also tested this model on a concrete situation, applying the typology that we have proposed on the archival organization of the documents of a regional (district) committee of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) – the Diretório Regional de Pinheiros (São Paulo/SP). This committee was active from 1984 until the ending of the PCB, in 1992. Their documents reflect not only the strict sense political actions of that committee, but also the daily activities related to the maintenance of the bureau, payment of the bills etc. It is probably the only case in Brazil that such daily documents were integrated to the archival organization. They

¹⁶ In Brazil, political parties are private institutions.

¹⁷ According to Heloísa Liberalli Bellotto, *Tipologia documental em arquivos: novas abordagens*, "Arquivo Rio Claro", 9 (1990), 1, p. 4-15 and *Dicionário de terminologia arquivística*, São Paulo, 1996.

also could bring important information about some political action of the party. For example, the decisions of the ninth Brazilian Communist Party Congress, in January 1990 introduced several structural changes all over the party. At the same time, the party started to decline. The falling was strongly denied by the Central Committee, especially in the official periodical of the party. However, the documents of the Pinheiros' District Committee demonstrate the opposite: since February 1990, the payment of the rent was interrupted and a lot of bills and eviction orders piled up until the end of the committee's activities in June 1990.

During the application of our functional typological proposal on the archives of Pinheiros' District Committee, we could contextualize documents that would be widely separated in a traditional structural arrangement or gathered, without any distinction into a miscellaneous series.