

## **Podcast Transcript w/ Translations:**

**HOST:** Welcome. My name is Ana Luiza Ramos, and today we will do our best to answer the question, “How has growing up in a military dictatorship government affected people’s views on democracy, civil engagement, and sharing of political ideals?” We will be chatting with three Brazilian citizens: Carlos Alberto Spironelli Ramos, who lived under the military dictatorship throughout his childhood, adolescence, and part of adulthood. His father, Dalmo Borges Ramos, who has memories of both the time before and after the authoritarian regime, and Dalmo’s wife, Norma Spironelli Ramos, who provides us with a similar experience yet different view as a woman living at that time.

In 1961 Jânio Quadros adopted policies that were, by nature, markedly populist, nationalist and reformist. João Goulart in 1961 to 64 re-enforced and took those policies a step further. Goulart needed the support of the working class, and that fostered a political climate that favored their formation of professional unions. This, in the eyes of the American superpower, seemed too much like communism for comfort.

**CARLOS:** I don’t believe that João Goulart was a communist. I think that Goulart was a socialist with a far-left positioning outside his party.

**NORMA:** He was a weak man, someone who let themselves be lead, and he was ill intentioned.

**CARLOS:** There were other options to be more moderate in the face of the communism expansion at that time.

**HOST:** Starting in 1964 and spanning over 20 years, the military of Brazil, backed by the United States government, took over all government workings in the nation and instituted policies that allowed for terror, torture, disappearances, and lack of freedoms to rule the country. Institutional Act 5 disbanded Congress, suspended habeas corpus for political crimes, and stepped up censorship all across Brazil.

**NORMA:** I was angry because that was something very hard for all of us, but we remained quiet. I taught my kids to stay quiet at school. My husband worked for the National Bank and had to work with a lot of people who had other ideas and in there, there were a lot of feds and others from the secret police who would arrest anyone without cause. In the bank there were a lot of people that were arrested.

**HOST:** Education in Brazil was completely re-vamped under the regime. “Under the pretext of freeing the country from the communist threat, the State justified a veritable "cleansing operation" unleashed in various sectors of society with a view to eliminating, at all costs, any obstacle in the path of National Development and Security.”

**CARLOS:** It is very hard to tell if I feel my education was bias or not completely true because of the dictatorship mindset. Since I don’t have a clear vision of the possibilities on my elementary education, I think it that it is very hard to respond. But definitely my education was affected.



**HOST:** The military dictatorship affected the Brazilian people in many different ways. Stories of horror, fear and oppression left families shaken and broken because loved ones were arrested, tortured, and killed under the regime of the time. Others, such as the author of the book “K. Relato de Uma Busca” exemplify quite vividly the plight of a father who never got to find out what happened to his beloved daughter, never so much as pronounced dead, but missing for over forty years.

**NORMA:** No, it was really unjust. We weren't used to this. It was a terror. They imposed a regime of terror. But the newspapers, for example the state paper or the So Paulo paper, when they would publish the news there were censors, so they would place a cooking recipe or a poem instead of the article as a protest, and then everyone knew that article was censored.

**CARLOS:** I think that my leadership aspirations were somehow damped during my childhood.

**NORMA:** They would walk into busses with heavy weapons and would ask for our documents. I would take my daughter to the doctor in Sao Paulo already with documents in hand because I was terrified of them.

**DALMO:** I knew 3 colleagues of mine from the National Bank that were arrested.

**CARLOS:** Prominent voices were persecuted and my parents tried to keep us out of the danger zone.

**DALMO:** We oriented them [our kids] in a way of them abstaining from commenting anything, and everything they heard that was about the military regime, for them to stay silent.

**CARLOS:** I personally don't know anyone that was tortured or had disappeared. My city was not important enough to gather the military hardcore police attention but definitely there were hundreds of them.

**NORMA:** But one day a person came to my house, a book seller, and I had a big shelf of books, so I asked him innocently and I said I didn't want to buy any books. He saw my shelf and saw my Dostoyevski collection, that has nothing to do with Communism, nothing! On the contrary, they are wonderful romances that should still be read today. And I said I liked him a lot. That was all that was needed for them to break into my house, turned everything upside down, but I wasn't at home at the time, neither was my husband. It was a terror. But we got over it and we continued quiet and didn't say anything.

**DALMO:** They didn't steal anything, not jewelry, or money, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing... but they flipped the whole house upside down. And we never saw any other blowback from it.

**HOST:** In the midst of this, many families tried to live as if this was not happening to them. Coping methods became the norm for the injustices and the silence that was instituted into society. Songs with hidden meanings and agendas played on the radio, censored, while their authors either fled the country or faced torture, castration, or simply and darkly even, disappearance.



**CARLOS:** Alongside many innocent people there were bad intentioned terrorists that aimed only to disturb the regime by creating chaos. Nobody deserves torture and any kind of violent treatment.

**DALMO:** Torture, I think, is never necessary in any situation. I am virtually contrary to this type of procedure.

**HOST:** Today, as the citizens who lived through this dark time grow older and forget, the new generation begins to overlook the oppression and remember only what came after: corruption, distrust in governmental institutions and politicians, and skepticism in democracy as a whole. Many believe a far-right politician like Jair Bolsonaro, the current president, is the only solution—even if he is openly an avid supporter of the military regime and its policies.

**DALMO:** I used to think it was a good choice... but during the exercise of the presidency, he has been horrible. Maybe the worst here in South America.

**NORMA:** Well we had no other choice. We wanted to get out of that misgoverned government, and then we placed this demented person. He really is demented. He is a man without scruples. He is a totally crazy man because his attitudes are not of a normal person. All of Brazil is regretting this unhappy choice of ours.

**CARLOS:** I don't think that Jair Bolsonaro was and is a good example of a presidential candidate, and his performance as president is showing how unprepared he was to president. But the question is which were the other options? To choose between the socialist, corrupt regime, or to try a more balanced option—the options at that time were the bad and the awfully bad.

**HOST:** Political Engagement in Brazil most likely has been affected because the majority of the adult generation reached maturity during the oppressive regime, where staying silent about politics was one of the only ways to be safe.

**NORMA:** They taught us to shut up. And the people are until today silent because of their parents being like me, who are the children of the dictatorship.

**HOST:** This podcast was done with information from research conducted by the PEW research center, The Economist, Silveira from Paedagogica Historica, Andrew from the Foundation for Economic Education, and Kucinski authors and news published by Parvaneh from VOX and Uchoa for BBC News.