

## **MEDIA DEBATES ON AGRARIAN REFORM IN CONTEXTS OF INSTITUTIONAL BREAKDOWN: 1932–1936 IN SPAIN AND 1964 IN BRAZIL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article aims to develop a comparative analysis of press discourses concerning the agrarian reform issue in two critical events that marked the 20th century: the failed attempt of a coup d'état that triggered the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and the 1964 civil-military coup in Brazil. The study objects are journalistic texts published by the monarchic periodical *ABC* in Spain and the Brazilian newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* on the agrarian reform. That was a central proposal of the reformist governments in question and, consequently, a critical media discursive axis. Within a methodological proposal for articulating the fields of communications and history, we attempt to demonstrate the interconnected plates that help understand the two events: the political environment of antagonistic pluralism, historical consciousness, the coordinated discourse of the mainstream media, and finally, the conception of change as a media event boosted by an ideology of public transparency in this type of discourse.

### **KEYWORDS**

press, agrarian reform, Brazil, Spain, 20th century

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## **DEBATES MIDIÁTICOS SOBRE REFORMA AGRÁRIA EM CONTEXTOS DE RUPTURA INSTITUCIONAL: 1932–1936 NA ESPANHA E 1964 NO BRASIL**

### **RESUMO**

O objetivo deste artigo é realizar uma análise comparada de discursos da imprensa em relação ao tema da reforma agrária em dois importantes eventos que marcaram o século XX: a tentativa fracassada de golpe de Estado que deu início à Guerra Civil Espanhola no ano 1936 e o golpe civil-militar de 1964 no Brasil. Nossos objetos de estudo são textos jornalísticos publicados pelo periódico monárquico *ABC* na Espanha e pelo brasileiro *O Estado de S. Paulo* sobre o tema da reforma agrária, proposta central dos governos reformistas em questão e, consequentemente, importante eixo discursivo midiático. Como resultado, procuramos demonstrar, em uma proposta metodológica de articulação dos campos da comunicação e da história, placas de encadeamento que ajudam a compreender os eventos em questão, como o ambiente político de pluralismo antagônico, a consciência histórica, o discurso coordenado da grande imprensa e, finalmente, a concepção da mudança como um acontecimento midiático, impulsionado por uma ideologia da transparência pública desse tipo de discurso.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

imprensa, reforma agrária, Brasil, Espanha, século XX

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### 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

This article aims to undertake a comparative analysis of the Brazilian and Spanish most representative newspapers' performance in two critical events that marked the 20th century: (a) the failed coup attempt that triggered the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), allowing the establishment of the most extended fascist regime in Europe, and (b) the civil-military coup in April 1964 in Brazil, the inaugural act of a dictatorship that lasted 21 years (1964–1985). Despite the geographic distance and nearly 3 decades between these occurrences, they hold different aspects in common: among the most important, the decisive participation of the mass media in the process of delegitimizing the democratic institutions of both countries and their determined commitment to authoritarian solutions (Barreiro, 2004; Chammas, 2012; Lorangeira, 2014; Luis Martin, 1987; Silva, 2014).

In Spain, the frustrated coup d'état confronted two opposite world views since the new regime proclamation in 1931: central and progressive leftist ideologies supporting the democratic government and conservative fascist positions supporting the insurgent military. Since April 1931, the subsequent war episode revealed a symbolic and ideological conflict, during which strategies, techniques, and communication technologies were developed and tested for political propaganda purposes (Pena-Rodríguez, 2014). The event helps understand — for its media, political and ideological aspects — other events that marked the 20th century, including dictatorships spread across Latin America between the 1960s and 1970s.

The civil-military coup that established Brazil's dictatorship (1964–1985) can also be called a media coup (Silva, 2014). The media have actively contributed to the atmosphere of political instability and legitimization of unconstitutional acts that led to President João Goulart's ouster. Similarly, in the Second Spanish Republic, we observe the media framing the events as a "historical crossroads". According to the Brazilian press, the country was harassed by the communist threat, with no alternative but the intervention of forces in defense of legality and democracy (Silva, 2014).

This article is structured into two main sections. Firstly, the discussion about the comparative method and how to advance research by approaching the media from a historical perspective, bringing communication and history together. Secondly, empirically applying the method to study the proposed discourses, first, examining the bibliography about the press performance in the Second Spanish Republic and the 1964 coup in Brazil. Next, we comparatively analyze the Spanish texts published by the monarchic newspaper *ABC* (<http://hemeroteca.abc.es/nav/Navigate.exe/hemeroteca>) and the Brazilian newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* (OESP; <http://acervo.estadao.com.br/>) on agrarian reform, the core proposal of both reformist governments and a crucial discursive axis.

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<sup>1</sup> An expanded version of this article was presented at the "8th Congress of the Consejo Europeo de Investigaciones Sociales en América Latina", organized by the Instituto de Iberoamérica at the University of Salamanca between June 28 and July 1, 2016.

Finally, we conclude with a self-reflection on the comparative experience and its results, aiming to contribute to the encouragement of new experiences dedicated to “comparing the incomparable” (Detienne, 2002/2004).

## 2. THE COMPARATIVE METHOD AND ITS RELEVANCE TO MEDIA STUDIES FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

We worked with a comparative theoretical-methodological approach. Thus, the two events (Veyne, 1971/2008) are understood as specific and, at the same time, as reflections of broader contextualizations, accessible by comparison: “certain elements of comparative abstraction allow us to understand the complexity of particularities. Mainly, it prevents the historian from viewing *a priori* specificity as exceptionality, originality, uniqueness” (Lima, 2007, p. 28).

In *Comparar o Incomparável* (Comparing the Incomparable), French historian Marcel Detienne (2002/2004) advocates the use of the comparative method in the history field, based on the critique of unrestricted adherence from some of its studies to the construct of its place as “science” and “national”. He proposes a closeness to the anthropology field, which, in its turn, does not respect predetermined boundaries in the comparative exercise.

The author identifies the Renaissance historians — like explorers of the so-called “new world” — as those that paved the way for an approach to the “criticism of traditions and all that is handed down to us” (Detienne, 2002/2004, p. 21). In search of “historical perfection”, historians such as La Popelinière (1541–1608) proposed on-site exploration of places and humanities that inhabited there, an ethnographic disposition, and a “wish to experiment on both oneself and others, whether far away or closer to hand, and whether alive or dead” (Detienne, 2002/2004, p. 22). The first ethnological experiences appeared at the beginning of the 18th century. The studies were framed into an evolutionary perspective; cultures range from the most primitive to the most evolved, and the Hellenic world is banned from the comparative exercise.

French historian Marc Bloch (1886–1944) provided new insights into the comparative studies based on the working method of philologists and anthropologists. He highlighted the importance of the comparative method as a required way to develop the historiographical synthesis. Supporter of a working method that mixed division of labor and teamwork, Bloch has had a decisive influence on the current compared history, especially after the rise of historical sociology and cultural studies.

Detienne (2002/2004) shows a critical point of view concerning the comparative movements of the 20th-century historians in France, England, and Germany— including Marc Bloch — considering that these approaches are still restricted to the national character and “between neighbouring contemporary societies of a similar nature” (p. 35) — European nature, it is important to note. Commenting on the English case, Detienne (2002/2004) provokes: “no non-European country was a suitable subject when it came to thinking about what it meant to found a colony, establish a territory, or introduce ways of living together in a new space” (p. 35).

For the author, “building comparables” is an eminently collective activity based on the notion of singular-plural, favoring the work of cooperation between historians and anthropologists and breaking with preconceived limits of time and space:

the main thing, when it comes to working together, is to shake free from what is close at hand, what one is born to or native to, and recognize as soon as possible that we need to learn about all human societies, every community possible or imaginable, for as far as the eye can see, with historians and anthropologists all intermingling. Forget the lavish advice of those who for half a century have been repeating endlessly that the best thing to do is to set up comparisons between neighbouring societies, bordering one another, that have progressed, hand in hand, in the same direction, or between human groups that have reached the same level of civilization and at a first glance present enough similarities for one to proceed safely. (Detienne, 2002/2004, p. 46)

To motivate the work of comparison, Detienne (2002/2004) suggests the search for “generic enough” categories (p. 49), avoiding those very specific to a culture. For example, to answer the question “what is a place?” his research group resorted to the categories “found, foundation, founder”. They served to understand the object of study as a mechanism of thought, allowing researchers to recompose it, disassemble it, articulate it, and refine it under different configurations, conditioned by the comparative exercise.

Detienne (2002/2004) calls “comparable” the entries chosen by those who dedicate themselves to investigating and undertaking the comparative exercise. These entries should not serve the production of themes, typologies, or morphologies but rather work as “interconnected plates” that put the configurations of society into perspective. “When a society ( ... ) adopts a particular element of thought, it makes a particular choice that might have been different” (Detienne, 2002/2004, p. 58). In short, the comparison of comparables advocated by the author is concerned with detecting and analyzing mechanisms of thought (Detienne, 2002/2004, p. 65).

In comparison, there is also an ethical value that leads the researcher to critically examine his/her tradition and values, seeking to identify and interrogate his/her assumption. It means admitting that all societies are historical. It is possible, primarily through comparison, to build categories to understand what Detienne (2002/2004) calls “historical consciousness”, which manifests itself mainly through three notions: memory, change, and past.

Thus, memory is not enshrined in the realm of information storing but rather in the complex construction of human time: “a temporal apprehension of the distance between the self at one moment and the self at another” (Detienne, 2002/2004, p. 74). The researcher is interested in paying attention to the human ways of projecting this distance within different architectures of time, remembering that what we conceive as historical consciousness begins with the organization of this “present absence” (Detienne, 2002/2004, p. 76) and that this movement is not spontaneous.

The change's role in the constitution of historical consciousness is linked to the composition of critical spaces in shared experiences of change, even though "there appear to have been many societies that have been through radical upsets and changes without recognizing them or thinking and theorizing about them" (Detienne, 2002/2004, p. 77). In western societies, based on writing techniques and historical knowledge, which believes that its object is the past itself, the change is understood in a concept of linear and irreversible time, manifested in unpredictable and singular events.

Finally, the representation modes of the past are also manifestations of the historical consciousness. From the past "what has been" — radically separated from the present — to the past that teaches, authorizes, and is also opened to the future. There are different ways of approaching tradition and ancestry. It is the latter direction that points to the definition of history proposed by Huizinga (1936): "it is the intellectual form in which a civilization is accountable to itself of its past" (p. 9).

Paul Veyne (1971/2008) argues that neither universal nor singular, specific events can be considered historical events. Their specificities appear as they are inserted into the fabric of history through the organization of a plot:

what is not universal and what is not singular is historical. For it not to be universal, there must be a difference; for it not to be singular, it must be specific, it must be understood, for that sends us back to the plot. (Veyne, 1971/2008, p. 72)

When organized according to noticeability criteria — topicality and exceptionality — journalistic discourses can be taken as potential organizers of the plots that will account for the events, pre-selecting the plots that may interest history.

Using these reflections in the journalistic field, we propose a definition of journalism from the perspective of its insertion in the historical consciousness: it is a space for criticism, characteristic of modernity, in which society accounts for its present through specific professional techniques and its narrative conception of the notion of event, submitted, in turn, to capitalist market logic and, consequently, to ideological biases analogous to their conditions of production, circulation, and reception.

According to this article's conception, in modern societies, the press acts in a particular way to manifest what the change is — and, consequently, the events. The extraordinary expansion of the media in the last century inserted western civilization into an unprecedented space for the critique of change. Studying the different manifestations of social communication phenomena is essential for understanding the historical consciousness manifested in the cases we present.

For Sodr  (2009), the press, as the bourgeoisie's preferred means of communication, has its modernity "viscerally linked to the same historical demands that preside over the phenomenon of world construction through enlightened discourse" (p. 11). Its legitimacy is founded on the principle of the superiority of discursive reason, nurturing what the author calls an "ideology of public transparency" (Sodr , 2009, p. 11). The modern press establishes itself within liberal ethics as a spokesperson for civil rights and a

fundamental stronghold of freedom of expression. Sodr  (2009, pp. 13–14) portrays the ideological form assumed by the industrial press: universally bourgeois and European; technically improved by Americans; with a British contribution to the news composition as a narrative of the event rationalized as a commodity. Thus, notwithstanding the particularities of each field, Sodr ’s critique of the insertion of the press in modern societies follows the same perspective as Detienne’s (2002/2004) when he points out the emergence of history as the “national science” that studies the past in itself.

One cannot forget that the press, however, is based on a paradox since it does not fail to use mythological resources, such as the “construction of a narrative about itself as a mythical entity that manages the truth of social facts, and the enchanting rhetoric in the fragmentary narrative of the present” (Sodr , 2009, p. 12). The liberalism mythology covers up the disputes around the attribution of meanings that preside over the constitution of journalistic discourse while at the same time granting the news the status of neutral clarification.

It is mainly from the 20th century that change — or the mediatic reading of this notion — has emerged as a predominant value in western historical consciousness through the action of the mass media. As Detienne (2002/2004) calls it, this is the first “inter-connected plate” we used to start the comparative proposal of this article.

The military coup, whose failure led to the Spanish Civil War, came wrapped up in what we call the “placenta of the coup”, a set of activities for delegitimizing republican politics and institutions. The conservative press played a crucial role as an organ of anti-republican mobilization and spokesperson for conspiratorial plans against the legitimate democratic government. The destabilization of public opinion for coup purposes has improved over time and occurred in different parts of the world, including Brazil in 1964, where was evident the existence of this conspiratorial placenta that generated the appropriate environment for the coup. After this first notion, which is further developed in the next topic, we analyze the agrarian reform issue in two major newspapers: *ABC* in Spain, and *OESP*, in Brazil. This article is committed to the task of breaking away from predetermined geographical and temporal boundaries in performing the comparative exercise. It starts from the singular-plural dialogue between researchers from different fields of work, countries, and experiences.

### 3. PRESS AND MEDIA COUPS IN SPAIN AND BRAZIL

The press played a vital role in Spanish society in the 1930s. The arrival of the new regime represented a significant stimulus for the newspapers within the framework of a social and democratic state of law, “the first authentically democratic regime” in the history of Spain (Gonz lez Calleja et al., 2015, p. 18). The country’s overall modernization and the democratization of the power in all its aspects made the press reflect a model of government that, for the first time, gave the leading role to the most innovative sectors that demanded significant changes for the country. On the republican stage, we witnessed a golden moment of journalistic freedom despite news censorship and newspaper

suspensions due to the Ley de Defensa de la República (law for the defense of the republic) and the Ley de Orden Público (law of public order). Within the framework of democratic states at the time, those laws were not exceptional. Notwithstanding, their detractors highlighted the facts to invoke the republic as “the great frustrated opportunity of freedom of the press in Spain” (Sinova, 2006). It was a stage of unprecedented political mobilization of social and cultural modernization. Some of the greatest authors in the history of Spanish journalism wrote chronicles in the pages of different periodicals of the moment.

Since its beginning, different Spanish right-wing formations have accused the republican regime of illegitimacy. Some essential changes were described as communist in a political framework that at no point disrupted the surrounding sociopolitical reality. In the process of increasing radicalization, which would lead the Spanish right to support the intervention of the Army, and due to positions close to fascism, the conservative press very early joined the offensive against the republican state. Newspapers such as the monarchist *ABC*, *La Época*, and *La Nación*, the traditionalist daily *El Siglo Futuro*, and in a disguised way, the Catholics *El Debate*, *Ya*, and *Informaciones* fueled the offensive to delegitimize the republic, creating the ideal ambiance for the coup. Later, Francoism would use it to justify its extermination plan against a significant sector of the Spanish population and its Catholic-Fascist state model<sup>2</sup>.

The most active daily newspaper in this anti-republican campaign was the monarchist *ABC*. Founded in Madrid in 1903 by journalist and businessman Torcuato Luca de Tena y Álvarez Ossorio, the daily *ABC* — which since 1929 had a new edition published in Seville — was the organ of the Alfonsine monarchist right-wing. From the beginning, it resolutely bet on a total rupture with the new regime (Barreiro, 2004). With strong ties to the landowning aristocracy and a supporter of an authoritarian monarchy, the daily *ABC* was a significant laboratory of authoritarian ideas (Morodo, 1985). It followed the Italian fascist model experienced in Spain during the 1920s under other right-wing publications, such as the magazine *Acción Española*. These authoritarian ideas were fundamentally based on the defense of the social order inherited from the monarchy, the apology of an antiliberal nationalism, exaltation of and nostalgia for Spain’s imperial past. Its pages were converted without reference to the conservative Spanish press and were the seedbed for nurturing concepts and militants in the various right-wing formations in those crucial years. Moreover, many of its collaborators constituted the nucleus of the Spanish press during Francoism, distinguished by their passionate defense of the dictatorship (Luis Martín, 1987).

Five were the issues used by the monarchist daily *ABC* in its anti-republican campaign. First of all, the religious issue. The conservative newspaper considered the idea of building a secular State as a frontal attack on Spanish Catholics by a republic that was fiercely anticlerical and contrary to the national essence. The outcome was to engrave in the collective memory of many Catholics the concept that religion and republic were conflicting terms, helping to deprive the new regime of fundamental support for its survival.

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<sup>2</sup> On this particular matter, see Checa Godoy (1989) and, especially, Barreiro (2004).

Secondly, the military issue. The military reforms developed by the new government, which sought to rationalize the personnel by eliminating the existing high number of officers, were qualified as a vendetta against the honor of the army. A fact that undoubtedly contributed to heat the spirits of the military personnel and explains the newspaper's support for the coup attempt staged by General Sanjurjo in August 1932.

Thirdly, the autonomic issue. The daily *ABC* treated the Catalan subject as "treason", manifesting it by rejecting the draft Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia and later refusing to accept self-government in the region. The consequences were to revive the ghost of separatism and contribute to creating an excluding nationalism, Castilian-like, that would make impossible any rational way out of the country's multinational labyrinth.

Fourthly, the social issue. The social legislation of the first republican biennium, mainly the agrarian reform program, would become *ABC*'s major hobbyhorse. Its purpose was to consolidate the social bloc of large landowners, adding the small and medium-sized anti-reform peasants while deteriorating the image of the new regime, described as collectivist and socialist.

And lastly, the issue of public order. The conservative daily used the several disorders led by the anarchist movement to show the image of a weak regime with apparent sympathy for the insurgents, unable to maintain law and order and guarantee property rights. Later, the newspaper used the insurrectionary attempt led by the Asturian left in October 1934 to manifest the revolutionary intent of the same regime. A fact that would worsen after the triumph of the Popular Front in the February 1936 elections, when the conservative press bluntly spoke of the communist danger looming over Spain and the need to prevent it, including force as required.

If there was a moment when *ABC* reflected all the tensions, it was the one motivated by the parliamentary sessions of June 16 and July 1, 1936, centered precisely on the deterioration of public order. The newspaper expressed its contempt for the government through its collaborator, Manuel Delgado Barreto, even accusing it of being directly involved in several events. In the following days, the diary alluded to an intervention by the leader of the monarchic right, José Calvo Sotelo, who stated that the social and political situation could not sustain itself any longer and warned of the possibility of a preventive coup d'état. Faced with the government's inertia, accused of precipitating the country into rebellion and anarchy, Calvo Sotelo demanded order and did not hesitate to declare himself a supporter of a fascist state that would end the class struggle driven by Marxism.

Thus, we can observe how a significant sector of the Spanish press at the time considered the democratic change of 1931 as a pathology, a demagogic sequel of the parliamentary system that General Primo de Rivera tried to resolve with authoritarian methods back in the 1920s. First, it proceeded to identify the republic, revolution, and democracy indistinctly in its pages and then to carry out a fierce denunciation of the iniquities of the republican regime. The revealing of the radical nature of the reformist republican program inevitably led to questioning its democratic nature and its adequacy to the national reality converted into a symbol of all the evils produced by the anti-Spain.

A fruitful discourse that later became the cornerstone of Francoism's social imaginary and whose impressions persist until today.

Later 30 years, echoes of this discourse crossed borders. In the context of the confrontation of the so-called "Cold War", the propaganda experiences developed by fascist states were used by the victorious democratic powers of World War II and, singularly, by the United States.

In its way, in the 1960s, Brazil experienced some significant global issues: the tensions of the Cold War between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the effervescence of counterculture movements. For Gaspari (2002), the Brazilian right-wing adopted a conservative and anti-communist dirigisme, manifesting itself as a planning and centralizing utopia that looked down on the popular vote. The belief in the communist threat was at the basis of that utopia, for propaganda purposes, as cement to unite diverging interests, and as a stereotype to cover up simply libertarian or reformist banners. This conservative movement found support in the "red enemy" hunting undertaken by the United States — especially, in Brazil, in the figure of ambassador Lincoln Gordon (Green & Jones, 2009) — and, in Spain, embraced by fascism that was spreading in Europe. In Brazil, the Doctrine of National Security dominated the Escola Superior de Guerra (war college). It was a set of geopolitical guidelines that, among the foremost national objectives, established the protection of Brazil against the internationalization of communism through reciprocal commitments between Brazil and the United States of America for the hemisphere defense (Couto & Silva, 1981).

João Goulart, known as "Jango", reached the presidency with the resignation of Jânio Quadros in August 1961. In the 1960 elections, he was elected vice-president by the Brazilian Labor Party. Quadros (National Labor Party) was elected president with the support of the conservative National Democratic Union, with the highest number of votes a candidate had ever received in the country: 48% of the votes (Costa, n.d.).

Quadros' government begins with difficulties. Without a majority in congress, it faces problems. He wanted to become a third world leader through a foreign policy independent of the United States. Brazil's refusal to support the expulsion of Cuba from the Organization of American States and the commendation of Cuban Minister Ernesto "Che" Guevara with the Order of the Southern Cross were some examples of his policy. The excentric Quadros had an ambiguous government, and the real motivation for his resignation is not yet transparent. History and social sciences literature agree that he intended to stage a coup d'état (Ferreira & Gomes, 2014). Quadros resigned just when Jango was on an official visit to communist China. Contrary to his plans, the resignation was accepted. Then, a military junta was formed to prevent Jango from taking office, accusing him of closeness to the communists. Congress formed a broad alliance in defense of the constitution in confrontation with the military. In the country's south, Governor Leonel Brizola headed the Legality Campaign. The vice-president took office but under a parliamentary regime.

Jango ruled in a hostile environment but kept trying to advance the labor program, the administrative and university reforms, control of foreign capital, and state monopoly of strategic sectors of the Brazilian economy.

The anti-communist right-wing had to articulate with organizations such as the Brazilian Institute of Democratic Action and the Institute of Research and Social Studies and coordinate the interests of large American corporations, national private groups, and ruralists, financing the election campaign of opposition parliamentarians in 1962 (Ferreira & Gomes, 2014). In a plebiscite held in January 1963, the population opted for a return to the presidential system.

On March 13, 1964, the Rally of the Reforms gathered around 150,000 and 200,000 people in Rio de Janeiro. On the platform, Jango defended the sergeants' eligibility, illiterates voting rights, and, mainly, the agrarian reform. The opposition reaction came on March 19. The "March of the Family With God for Freedom" in São Paulo gathered around 500,000 people — businessmen, military, priests, and Catholic women — and warned of the "danger of communism in Brazil". On March 25, Brazil's Association of Sailors and Marines ignored the ordinance from the minister of the navy and held a meeting. The military hierarchy was at stake. Jango did not punish the insurgents as the officers had demanded.

The last straw was Jango's speech at the Automóvel Club in Rio de Janeiro on March 30, 1964, when the sergeants honored him. General Mourão Filho set out on the march from Minas Gerais to depose the president. The United States unleashed Operation Brother Sam in support of the coup plotters, deploying the military force of the Caribbean fleet on the Brazilian coast (Kornbluth, 2004). In the early hours of April 2, Senate President Auro de Moura Andrade declared the presidency vacant, despite the president being on the national ground, an act with no legal endorsement (Skidmore, 1989/2000). Goulart went into exile in Uruguay. The United States immediately recognized the new government. The military would only be leaving power 21 years later.

The media actively participated in the coup. The mainstream media, which was already promoting an intense campaign to destabilize Goulart's government, contributed to making the action legitimate. As widely known, Brazilian press history recognizes the mainstream media support of the military-civil movement of 1964. Nevertheless, part of the relationship between the mainstream press and the military regime lies in a nebulous area. The emphasis on and generalization of censorship — which undoubtedly sacrificed companies, professionals, and the people, as evidenced by consistent academic research and personal accounts — has contributed to forming a mythical discourse fomented by the press and journalists. They present themselves as unequivocal defenders of freedom and legality and, therefore, victims of the coup and the civil-military regime (Barbosa, 2007). This subject has been identified, researched, analyzed, and publicized; a movement of which the works of Abreu (2004), Amado (2008), Chammas (2012), Kushnir (2004), Silva (2013, 2014), Lorangeira (2014), among others, are exemplary. This article attempts to contribute to this dis(un)covering (Silva, 2010) through a comparative methodological proposal.

#### 4. DISCOURSES OF THE GREAT PRESS ON AGRARIAN REFORM IN SPAIN (1932–1936) AND IN BRAZIL (1964)

In the early 1930s, Spain remained a primarily rural country; almost 50% of its active population worked in activities related to agriculture and fishing. Far from being backward agriculture unfit for the slightest modernization process according to the regenerationism concept, during the first decades of the 20th century, the sector experienced significant development. It became wealthy export-oriented agriculture fundamentally based on olive oil production, wine, vegetables, and fruit. The new configuration coexisted with the extensive agriculture on large landed estates, mainly in the southeastern provinces, with very low productivity and high structural unemployment rates.

Upon the arrival of the republican regime, the opening process was seriously affected by the plummeting agricultural prices due to the international economic crisis that began in the United States in 1929. The reduction in corporate benefits, falling wages, and rising agrarian unemployment caused an increase in strikes and unions' demands. Simultaneously, the new government was trying to apply advanced socio-labor-oriented legislation to satisfy the interests of *boias-frias* (follow-the-crop migrants) and other farmworkers.

One of the pillars of this program was a profound reform of land ownership aimed at ending the unfair distribution that had been consolidated in the long process of capitalism's settlement in Spain. As Robledo (2015) points out, its goal was to transform the reality of the Spanish primary sector, especially in the latifundium zones, to act as an anticyclical factor of unemployment and consolidate the political commitment of the peasantry to the new regime.

The debate over land reform between 1931 and 1932 revealed the tensions within the republican coalition government on this issue. The socialists of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), part of the coalition government, advocated an expropriation model that would put the land in the hands of the union-organized laborers, thus indicating their preference for collective cultivation and modern, efficient, and mechanized farming. In contrast, the other parties in the government considered this proposal rather radical. Finally, in the debate that preceded the approval of the agrarian reform in September 1932, the socialists moderated their stances, opting for a compromise solution with the rest of the republican forces, supporting the proposal of the minister of agriculture, Marcelino Domingo. A pragmatic and ambivalent program encompassing the sharing of the latifundia into small lots and the collective management of peasant settlements (Malefakis, 1971).

Despite these moderate proposals, the right, in its different strands — from the catholic-agrarian to the monarchic-authoritarian — radically opposed any reform program. In the view of the monarchists — that had never accepted the results of the plebiscite elections of April 14, 1931 — the Second Republic was an illegitimate regime, and any bill coming from the new authorities should be called illegal. In this line, the great conservative press, led by the monarchist daily ABC, made agrarian reform its hobbyhorse against the republican regime. In its view, the republican government only pursued

the dissolution of traditional values, starting with private property enshrined by the right. It did not prevent the press, at specific moments, from adopting an opportunistic and apparently conciliatory stance within the accidentalist politics sponsored by the Catholic-Agrarian right in terms of the political conjuncture and the balance of power between the different conservative families.

During this first stage, *ABC* struggled to describe agrarian reform as the spearhead of the collectivizing project pushed by the republic and, mainly, the reformist cabinet headed by Prime Minister Manuel Azaña, whom it did not hesitate to criminalize, accusing him of being responsible for the violent wave of the anarchist movement in the countryside, contrary to the reformist project. The newspaper's strategy had multiple objectives: on the one hand, to discredit the republican government in the eyes of the small and middle peasantry, accusing its policies of being the cause of the recurrent episodes of agrarian violence that took place during the first republican biennium; and, on the other hand, to demand an iron fist policy against the excesses of the unions, and the return to the traditional order in the countryside, with the annulment of all the policies promoted by the republican authorities. In its Seville edition, *ABC* showed its sympathy for the attempted coup d'état of General Sanjurjo in August 1932, who used the agrarian reform, and the military reforms, as a pretext for his plan to restore the monarchy. It was to occur within the conspiratorial action that the Alfonsino right had sustained nearly since the collapse of the monarchy and would have resulted in a new closure by the republican authorities. Later, the newspaper would enthusiastically join the project of rebuilding the traditional agrarian order promoted by the right-wing government between 1933 and 1935.

In June 1932, *ABC* covered the parliamentary debate on the agrarian reform program. On June 29 and 30, after several articles highly criticizing the minister of agriculture, *ABC* (*ABC* of Madrid) addressed the debate on a seemingly conciliatory note. It chose a particular schematic structure: reproduction of the parliamentarians' speeches, with few comments that attempted to emphasize a rectification posture on the part of the government after Minister Marcelino Domingo had opted for a more restricted and ambivalent project. It also used ideological expressions in an allegedly neutral note. The elected syntax intended to reinforce the assumption that the republican government had finally opted for common sense, limiting the reform's most progressive effects. The newspaper intentionally chose moderation at a moment when the power game between several right-wing formations seemed to lean toward the accidental and opportunistic path of the Catholic-Agrarian bloc, given the weakness of the conservative-authoritarian Alfonsino parties at the time.

The second stage began in February 1936, after the triumph of the Popular Front and the return of the left and Prime Minister Azaña to power. By this time, the republicans already had a better understanding of how to implement the agrarian reform and its effects. Then, the goal was to try a peasant way, that is, to make Spain a country of small farms through the redistribution of large estates in the first phase, providing it with an institutional framework. It would increase productivity in the countryside, transfer

the agrarian population to the secondary and tertiary sectors, and create a base of small landowners committed to republican values, following the French model.

At this point, the objectives of the republican parties clashed with the right-wing, which began the conspiratorial process that ended in the frustrated coup d'état of July 1936. In this context, *ABC* — and the rest of the right-wing press — played an essential role in creating what we call the “placenta of the coup”, that is, the ambiance for delegitimizing democratic institutions in which the conspiracy develops and the arguments are created. Later, these arguments would serve as the basis for legitimizing the coup. In those decisive months, both the forms and the lexicon of the conservative daily showed it. To agitate the landowning classes, mainly in the south and east of the country — where some of the worst massacres perpetrated by the Francoists would take place — they resorted to fear, and mobilized the landowners against the danger of a communist revolution and paved the way for a future coup d'état. A resource magnified in the context of a polarizing campaign that aimed to create a climate in favor of military intervention and prepare consciences for the subsequent bloody repression (Espinosa Maestre, 2007).

The examples, in this case, are numerous and related to the fact that the Popular Front government was determined to resume agrarian reform and farm occupations together with farmworkers and unions. We highlight one significant *ABC* issue. On March 28, 1936, the daily reports on the personnel increase of the Agrarian Reform Institute, the agency in charge of the reform. Suddenly, the note of the news and the page layout changed to inform that an assembly of mayors in the province of Seville had agreed to request the government the reestablishment of the *Ley de Términos Municipales* (law of municipal terms). The Azaña government had adopted that measure in its first months in 1931 to remedy the forced unemployment of many follow-the-crop migrant farmworkers, mainly in the south of the country. The subject choice was not innocent since the law was a measure against the practices of agrarian chieftainship and the one that most upset the landowners by forcing them to hire unemployed workers from the towns and villages where the agricultural properties were. Considering the news referred to the occupation of agricultural properties by out-of-control laborers, it is understandable how the information circle ends. It is an attempt to reflect a scenic fear that mobilizes the landowners against what would be considered a communist revolution under development, tolerated by a weak government, in the face of urgency for taking exceptional measures, including resorting to the army. In this sense, the action of the conservative press, presenting the follow-the-crop migrant farmworkers as a threat, would have devastating effects on the future. The dehumanization of large sectors of the low income and working classes is a necessary step to understanding the subsequent bloody repression by the Francoist regime (Langa Nuño, 2007; Preston, 2011).

Next, we analyze the same theme, now in Brazil, in 1964. The long-lived and traditional newspaper *OESP* was founded in 1875 by a group linked to the interests of the Paulista coffee oligarchies committed to a liberal program. A historical adversary of the labor movement represented by the governments of Getúlio Vargas (1930–1945 and 1951–1954), from 1945 on, the daily politically aligned itself with the conservative wing

of national politics organized into the National Democratic Union. When Jânio Quadros resigned in August 1961, the newspaper reacted following its historical anti-Varguism, placing itself against the inauguration of the Vice-President João Goulart, the parliamentary solution, and the plebiscite that restored the presidential system.

The OESP went beyond political and media opposition, contributing to the destabilization of Goulart's government, mainly through Júlio de Mesquita Filho, director of the newspaper at the time, in a conspiratorial manner together with political, economic, and military groups in favor of the coup. He was the editor of a document known as "Roteiro da Revolução" (Roadmap for the Revolution), which guided some of the first actions of the coup plotters.

The 1964 coup was well-received by the newspaper, a fact acknowledged by the Grupo Estado in the historical summary on its website:

editorially, the newspaper has always maintained its support line for representative democracy and a free-market economy. In 1964, "O Estado" supported the military movement that deposed President João Goulart after realizing he no longer had the authority to govern. However, it assumed that the military intervention should be transitory. When it became evident that the extreme right-wing radicals were increasing their influence to perpetuate the military in power, "O Estado" withdrew its support and turned to the opposition. (Grupo Estado, n.d., para. 2)

We analyzed texts published by the newspaper OESP in March 1964. According to the newspaper's online archive, the search results for the terms "agrarian reform"<sup>3</sup> indicate that March is the month of the year with more references: 63 results. In order to narrow the clipping, we selected the texts published on Page 3, the traditional space for opinion and politics, on the eve and immediately after the Rally of the Reforms, when Goulart announced the signing of the decree of the Superintendence of Agrarian Policy (SUPRA; Rio de Janeiro, March 13, 1964).

It is worth noting that the agrarian reform issue was very relevant to the online collection of the OESP in the early 1960s, a fact that would only be repeated after 1985, with the end of the dictatorship. In Brazil, in the early 1960s, social reforms were on the agenda of several political forces. Political parties, labor unions, the Church, military, and civil society discussed the need for comprehensive reforms to overcome Brazil's most serious structural problems: hunger, poverty, and social inequality. Among them, the agrarian reform was the most emblematic.

In the context of the Cold War, the United States government, with John Kennedy at its head, saw reforms as a possibility to combat movements of communism internationalization in Latin America. For this purpose, the United States of America committed

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<sup>3</sup> The search for accurate descriptors produces distortions. The theme of agrarian reform is debated in other newspaper spaces beyond those presented by the online archive search with these terms. "Decreto SUPRA" (SUPRA Decree) or "reforma do campo" (rural reform) would be acceptable terms to produce a more comprehensive result about the coverage on the subject. In any case, we believe that the sample selected, although partial, is consistent with the objectives of this article.

itself, through the Alliance for Progress program (August 1961), to encourage reforms that would promote economic and social development in the region. The program was a chance for Goulart's government to overcome economic and political problems, besides moving forward with the reformist commitment defended by his government and assumed before his voters (Yamauti, 2005).

On April 15, 1963, Jango proposed a constitutional amendment that would allow the indemnification of expropriations with public debt bonds (payment in cash was the only option). The conservative party, the National Democratic Union, took a stand against the amendment. Goulart was pressed by the left (sectors that considered the imperialist reforms — excessively moderate, to the liking of the Yankees) and by the right (that by upholding cash compensation and “inviolability of the constitution”, was able to block the reforms and, at the same time, destabilize the government, deepening the economic crisis). This political node nurtured the strong antagonism in the Brazilian political scene. It was one of the press discursive keys of that period since it articulated an argumentation that disguised the coup as if it were legal while imputing dictatorial and totalitarian tendencies to the Goulart government.

Jango chose to make the reforms his political instrument of communication with the masses, neutralizing the conservative discourse along the same lines as Kennedy (misery and inequality do not make a country prosper). He blames the conservative congress and the archaic Brazilian institutions for resisting the reforms.

In the discourse of the OESP, confronting and pressuring congress became synonymous with disrespect for the political game and, therefore, would confirm Goulart's supported totalitarian and demagogic tendencies. It became evident on the March 4, 1964 issue, on Page 3: “Goulart Decidido a Realizar Consultas Sobre as Reformas” (Goulart Decided to Hold Consultations on Reforms) reports that the president has decided to conduct officially — through the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics — a national consultation of public opinion about the essential reforms, especially the agrarian reform. About this initiative, the newspaper states: “but obviously, Mr. João Goulart wants to obtain an instrument of political pressure to be skillfully maneuvered and imposed on Congress, *drawing out from its reforms in revolutionary terms* or serving for intrigue with the armed classes [emphasis added]” (“Goulart Decidido a Realizar Consultas Sobre as Reformas”, *O Estado de S. Paulo*, March 4, 1964).

The survey was performed in eight state capitals between March 9 and 26, 1964. The results were not publicly disclosed at the time but were rescued in the 1990s by researchers from the University of Campinas archives. The survey indicated that 70% of Brazilians considered it necessary to implement an agrarian reform in Brazil (Dias, 2014). On the eve of the reform rally, the OESP speculates: “are some of Mr. João Goulart's advisors stimulating him to make a frontal attack on Congress, even with the very suspicious objective of testing people's reactions” (“Goulart Ainda Não Fixou as Diretrizes de Seu Discurso” [Goulart Has Not Yet Set the Guidelines for His Speech], *O Estado de S. Paulo*, March 6, 1964).

The constructed discourse regarding a possible popular consultation on the reforms illustrated one of the strategies of negative representation of the outgroup (van Dijk, 2005). It occurred in this case by projecting the unfolding facts from the government's actions. The latter, objects of intense speculation, were scrutinized and projected in a framework that placed Goulart in the position of an opportunist, demagogue, and anti-democratic. On the contrary, it did not occur with the opposition articulations, causing silencing of its potential consequences. The projection of the future is one of the ways through which journalistic discourses state an opinion (van Dijk, 2005). When commenting on the election of then-Minister of Labor Almino Afonso to the leadership of the Brazilian Labor Party in the house, the OESP stated:

the objective now ( ... ) is a new plebiscite, euphemistically called inquiry, or "poll", scheduled for May, from which Mr. João Goulart hopes to extract the constitutional reform that will allow him to enter the electoral campaign with the JG-65 "slogan" already printed on posters. ("A Penetração Lacerdista no PSD Preocupa Kubitschek", *O Estado de S. Paulo*, March 5, 1964).

Thus, according to the newspaper, the consultation is directly related to the political electoral purpose. Here we emphasize the choice of the word "plebiscite": it was the democratic instrument that restored the presidential system in Brazil, giving back to Goulart the powers taken away from him through the parliamentary solution of 1961. The OESP was against this plebiscite and unfavorable to its result. "Plebiscite" in the highlighted passage refers to the popular consultation that resulted positive for Goulart's government, against the OESP's wishes: a new plebiscite could only result in a new victory for the situation. The opposition had already clearly demonstrated its contempt for popular consultations.

The expectation about the reform rally that would take place on March 13 spread through the pages of the OESP:

the days of expectation preceding March 13, the day of the SUPRA decree signing, have been alarming in some political circles and, particularly discouraging, in the most expressive centers of business classes, which some and others indicate as a likely bloody and sad date in the history of the Republic. ("A Penetração Lacerdista no PSD Preocupa Kubitschek" [Lacerdista Penetration into the PSD Worries Kubitschek], *O Estado de S. Paulo*, March 5, 1964)

Besides resorting to the expedient of projecting the (gloomy) future, the OESP used the resource of subject deletion in this excerpt, revealing the dynamic ingroup versus outgroup. "Some and others", "political circles", and "business classes" refer to vague, generic, undefined groups; on the other hand, the government's actions were embodied in the figure of the chief executive. "The simple signing of the decree would provoke land invasions in those areas of more acute friction, where the matter was posed in revolutionary terms" ("A Penetração Lacerdista no PSD Preocupa Kubitschek", *O Estado de S. Paulo*, March 5, 1964).

On March 13, 1964, at the reform rally in Rio de Janeiro's Central do Brasil railway station, Goulart announced the signing of the SUPRA decree, which established the expropriation of rural properties larger than 500 hectares along federal highways, railroads, and dams.

The next day, March 14, the OESP stated that the country lives in a "pre-totalitarian regime" and that after the rally, "it no longer makes sense to talk about democratic legality as an existing thing".

When the head of the executive allows himself to make the apology for subversion in public squares and incite the masses against the powers of the Republic that hinder his March toward Caesarism, one can assume the dictatorship, although not institutionalized, is a "de facto" situation. ("O Comício" [The Rally], *O Estado de S. Paulo*, March 14, 1964).

Goulart dedicated a good part of his speech at the rally to explaining that agrarian reform would not subvert the capitalist relations of production. The model of indemnification proposed by the decree (public debt bonds) was current in several countries that had implemented reforms, such as Japan, Italy, and Mexico:

agrarian reform with pre-payment of unproductive latifundia, cash on signing, is not agrarian reform. It is an agrarian business that interests only the large landowners, radically opposed to the interests of the Brazilian people. That is why the SUPRA decree is not agrarian reform. (EBC, 2015, para. 43).

For the OESP, the president's speech gathered "confused considerations" that "demonstrate false erudition". The indemnification in debt securities would constitute "pure and simple spoliation of the legitimate landowners" ("O Comício", *O Estado de S. Paulo*, March 14, 1964).

The OESP insisted on associating reforms and communism: "under the banner of 'reforms', the slogans of the revolution spread all over the country". For the newspaper, the "revolution was preached" with some "minor variations according to the needs of revolutionary strategy and tactics". As for Leonel Brizola, governor of Rio Grande do Sul and Jango's brother-in-law, who also spoke at the rally, "one would say he believed he was in the Russia of 1917" ("O Comício", *O Estado de S. Paulo*, March 14, 1964).

We see, therefore, that the analyzed journalistic discourse on agrarian reform allows access to the complexity of the political disputes of the period and reinforces that a better understanding is an essential aspect of public debate. Dezemone (2016) points to the need to broaden the understanding of "agrarian reform" at that historical moment. Unlike other issues, such as containing the rural exodus and economic development, property distribution did not always result in a consensus.

## 5. COMPARISON AND HISTORICAL AWARENESS: A PROPOSAL FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE FIELDS OF COMMUNICATIONS AND HISTORY

We proceed to the comparative exercise: searching for the interconnected plates proposed by Detienne (2002/2004).

In the internal political environment, there are many similarities. In both countries, the progressive governments, committed to unions and popular movements, are in power now and are experiencing severe economic crises. In the face of that, we can assume that the responses presented by these governments point to a change in production structures that are considered archaic, unfair, and inconsistent with the economic, social, and human development projected by these leaders.

The oligarchic and conservative sectors articulate themselves around the defense of traditional values and the maintenance of privileges, supported by a discourse that naturalized injustices around conservative pragmatism, an instrumental legalism, and an authoritarian policy. In this sense, the agrarian reform issue takes on the leading role in the internal scenario and exposes the confrontation of the political forces in question.

In this comparative exercise, the political environment of antagonistic pluralism is an important interconnected plate. It places the progressive governments in Brazil and Spain in a delicate situation, pressured by the left and the right. In Brazil, the more radical left criticized the Yankee-style reforms. On the other hand, the conservative sectors, in any case, would prevent the Goulart government from accessing the resources of the Alliance for Progress, for it would make a leftist candidacy unbeatable in the 1965 elections. If implemented in Goulart's proposal, the reforms would undermine the oligarchy's socio-economic bases, having, in any case, effects on political representativeness. Thus, the elites would feel threatened, even if the measures proposed by the government were progressive and not committed to a revolutionary program. In Spain, the republicans negotiated and approved an excessively ambiguous reform program, refused by the anarchist movement and whose implementation would lead to a dramatic portrait of political radicalization. In Brazil, there was no consensus on the agrarian reform program, and the decree was a challenging "first step" (in the words of Jango himself, in his speech at the rally) for the elites.

The internal solid political antagonism brings us to another critical interconnected plate: the historical consciousness (Detienne, 2002/2004) of each period analyzed. In Spain, the context is the rising of fascism. This authoritarian wave engulfed the Spanish progressive movement and led the European continent to be the stage of a tragic world confrontation once again. In the Brazilian case, the external situation issue manifests itself in the direct intervention by Washington, reflecting the World War II results. On the one hand, the United States of America wooed the Goulart government with the promise of resources from the Alliance for Progress since Brazil was a strategic territory in the Cold War scenario; on the other, they financed congressmen and conservative organizations committed to maintaining "order" and representing North American economic interests in the country. In this international context of polarization, and with the press

support, the assumption that the reforms Brazil needed to overcome its economic difficulties and misery would happen peacefully or through a communist revolution became commonplace. The parliamentary arena does not show itself as capable of forming a stable hegemonic coalition to carry out the reforms. The press helps build the hegemony necessary to support an authoritarian solution of institutional breakdown, in an amalgam of class interests and a privileged discursive place, supported by an imaginary that places it “outside politics” and as the voice of public opinion. The coordinated discourse of the mainstream press forms a new and central interconnected plate to the analysis proposed in this article.

The newspapers analyzed, *ABC* in Spain and *O Estado de S. Paulo* in Brazil, are oligarchic sector representatives that remain in political control in their countries even after some agricultural development, as in the case of Spain in the 1930s and the case of Brazil in the 1960s. They operate the “placenta of the coup”, that is, the set of activities to delegitimize politics and democratic institutions and anticipate and naturalize the authoritarian solution. It occurs through strategies that became evident by the discourse analysis of the selected newspapers, among them:

- demoralization of the government as a whole and the chief executive in particular. President Goulart was qualified as a coup-plotter in Brazil and was accused of ties to communism, populism, Getulism, incompetence, totalitarianism, and caudillismo. In Spain, the same is true for the republicans and their most significant leader, Prime Minister Manuel Azaña, accused of being a demagogue, chieftainship, and rancorous, and blamed for violence in the countryside;
- misrepresentation of the reform proposals, connecting them with the communist threat;
- anticipation and naturalization of the movements of conservative groups;
- erasure or disqualification of peasant and underprivileged class struggles;
- defense of instrumental legality: this is a movement that is perceived in the long term. The laws and the constitution serve the most varied rhetorical misrepresentations. In Spain, the monarchist right has not even accepted the plebiscite result of April 14, 1931, considering the republican government illegitimate. In Brazil, Jango’s inauguration and the plebiscite that restores the presidential system are a cause for revolt among conservatives and fuel a discourse that serves both to accuse the Goulart government of authoritarian and illegal and lend the coup movement a convenient veneer of legality.

In the sphere of what Detienne (2002/2004) indicates as bridges of approach to historical consciousness, we also point out the question of memory invocation. In Spain, the conservatives evoke the antiliberal, elitist, glorious, and imperial past in front of a mass democratic stage characterized by decadence and dissolution of all values. In Brazil, they focus on the articulation of Jango with the dictatorial period of Getúlio Vargas, of whom Goulart is the political heir, and above all, on the linkage of the proposed reforms with assumptions such as the communist threat, coups, and attacks on the constitution.

The relation between historical consciousness and the press is articulated — in our proposal, supported by Sodr  (2009) — in the conception of change assimilated as a media event, a position consolidated in modernity. In this sense, the comparative exercise performed in this article serves as a gateway to a specific understanding of production modes and approaches to journalistic discourses, understood as media interfaces

of the understanding of change in modern societies. In the Spanish case, a laboratory of propaganda techniques of all sorts of manipulation; in the Brazilian case, a sophisticated version of a grand ideological scheme fosters the “placenta of coups”. In both cases, by placing itself as a privileged place of speech (in the Spanish case, a European opinionated matrix) or as a place outside politics, exempt and objective (in the Brazilian case, with a North American press matrix), the press grounds its legitimacy on the principle of the superiority of the discursive reason, nurturing what Sodré (2009) calls an “ideology of public transparency”. In contrast, as we can observe in this analysis exercise, it builds a hegemony that highlights the relations between ingroup and outgroup (van Dijk, 2005) in the macro-structural level of discourse.

**Translation: Camila Garcia Kieling**

#### **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

Camila Garcia Kieling collaborated in the conceptualization, methodology and investigation of the proposed article. She participated in the overall writing process (writing – original draft; writing – review and editing). José Manuel Peláez Roperero collaborated in the conceptualization, methodology and investigation of the proposed article. He participated in the overall writing process (writing – original draft; writing – review and editing).

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