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Rádio Inconfidência: the historical path of a Brazilian public broadcaster

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Abstract. The paper aims to present a historical overview of *Rádio Inconfidência* in Belo Horizonte (Brazil), which despite claiming to be the first Brazilian public broadcaster, its history has not attracted the interest from researchers. Prepared through documentary research in collections of the official press and other periodicals, previous works and testimonies from radio hosts, the presented overview begins with the first efforts to create the radio, continues through the first years of operation, through the golden times and by the times of crisis on the radio since the Military Dictatorship period in Brazil. Finally, it reaches the current challenges related to political issues that have been threatening the existence of *Rádio Inconfidência* and other Brazilian public broadcasters in 2021.

Keywords: public radio; *Inconfidência* Radio; Brazil.

[es] *Rádio Inconfidência*: el camino histórico de una estación pública brasileña

Resumen. El artículo tiene como objetivo presentar un panorama histórico de la *Rádio Inconfidência* en Belo Horizonte (Brasil), que a pesar de afirmar ser la primera estación pública brasileña, su historia no ha despertado mucho interés por parte de los investigadores. Elaborado a través de la investigación documental en colecciones de la prensa oficial y otras publicaciones periódicas, trabajos previos y testimonios de locutores, el panorama presentado comienza con los primeros esfuerzos para crear la radio, continúa por los primeros años de funcionamiento, por los tiempos dorados y por los tiempos de crisis en la radio desde la Dictadura Militar en Brasil y, finalmente, llega a los desafíos actuales que amenazan la existencia de *Rádio Inconfidência* y otras estaciones públicas brasileñas en 2021.

Palabras clave: radio pública; *Rádio Inconfidência*; Brasil.

Sumario. 1. Introduction. 2. State of the Art – The Historicity of Public Radio in Brazil. 3. Methodology. 4. *Rádio Inconfidência*: a Historical Overview. 3.1. Political Articulation for the Creation of the Radio and the First Years of Operation. 3.2 The Golden Years: on the Air, Popular Programs with Audience Participation. 3.3. Dark Times, Times of Crisis. 4. Conclusions. References.

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1. Introduction

In the 1920s, while in the United States the first commercial radios were inaugurated, in Brazil the first official radios appeared, supported by the country's government. In the 1930s, radio was preparing to assume, in the following decades (1940/1950), the role of a vehicle for national unification. Advertisers soon realized the potential of radio to promote its products to a much larger contingent of people than that reached by the printed newspaper, aimed only at the more educated layers of society. Through radio, Brazilians (mostly illiterate) got in touch with what was happening in the country, without needing to know how to read or write, just listening. Radio was able to attract the attention of individuals, to amuse them, to thrill them and to win the listener's adherence to a brand or ideal. This radio's ability to mobilize the masses was used not only by private companies to sell products, but also by politicians, in attempts to gain adherence to a certain ideology. The President of the Republic Getúlio Vargas himself, who authorized radio publicity and propaganda in the early 1930s, used, in the then new media, political propaganda to publicize the achievements of the Estado Novo.

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Rádio Nacional, taken over by the government of Getúlio Vargas in 1936, was a station that marked the Golden era of radio in Brazil. In the 1940s, he had numerous talents in Brazilian music in his casting, one of the factors that made his innovative programs deserving of a captive audience. In order to win over listeners, his shows had a popular tone. In this context of expansion of the radio medium in Brazil, Rádio Inconfidência emerged.

“Give the people of the mountains a magnificent vehicle of culture and dissemination and become the voice of their progress”³. The radio’s mission was thus defined by the radio host Francisco Victor Lessa, at the inauguration ceremony of Rádio Inconfidência on September 3, 1936.

In 1930, Minas Gerais – an extensive and rich Brazilian state with an area of 586,528 km² - was still lacking in paved roads and telephone lines. In addition, it had a predominantly rural population and agriculture was the activity that had driven the economy. In the halls of the Liberty Palace (*Palácio da Liberdade*), seat of the state government, the creation of a radio was then considered, a channel that could unite the municipalities of the state and establish a connection between the capital Belo Horizonte City and the interior (countryside) of the state.

The political articulations engendered in the government of Minas Gerais - for the creation of a public utility broadcaster linked to the State in the 1930s - are the starting point for the historical overview of *Rádio Inconfidência*, that will be presented in this paper, from the first years of opening operation until nowadays.

In order to contextualize the developed overview, it will be presented the state of the art of research on the history of public radios in Brazil and, more specifically, on the history of the radio that interests us as an object of study and research. It will be also presented the methodology used in the research carried out. And finally, our final conclusions will be presented.

2. State of the Art – The Historicity of Public Radio in Brazil

According to the Brazilian radio researcher Valci Zuculoto⁴ (2012), in her research on the historical construction of Brazilian public radio programming, it is necessary to understand that even the stations linked to governments had a public mission, and that, therefore, are classified by Brazilian researchers as public broadcasters. According to Zuculoto, until the 1990s, most designated themselves as part of the radio education system. At the time of the development of her research (2010), most broadcasters were already considered as public ones, as is the case related to *Rádio Inconfidência*.

At that moment in Brazil, which corresponds to the creation of the Brazilian Communication Company (EBC) in 2008, radio researchers became interested in public radio and TV stations. In 2011, Brazilian Professors created the Public Broadcasting Observatory of Latin America, with support from the Ford Foundation. In 2014, the Observatory developed a mapping of research carried out on public broadcasting between 1997 and 2013 in Brazil. This research identified 213 works by Brazilian researchers on public broadcasting among published scientific articles, theses, dissertations, books, and reviews. Among these, 17 articles were about the historical processes of broadcasting and 8 articles on studies of specific programs and broadcasters (Curado, Del Bianco, 2014). Although some are interested in historical processes and broadcasters considered as public broadcasters, the history of Rádio Inconfidência is unknown to most Brazilian researchers. The few previous works (Campelo, 2006; Cota, 2016; Carvalho, 2014) have as their object historical periods or specific programs, carried out mostly by researchers from Minas Gerais, who also know the station as listeners. Therefore, this article aims to fill the gap perceived in studies on the history of Brazilian public broadcasting, by choosing as object the historical path of *Rádio Inconfidência*.

Many academic articles suggest that the first public radio would be Rádio MEC. However, *Rádio Inconfidência* was inaugurated on September 3, 1936. Since its foundation, Rádio Inconfidência was already linked to the Government of Minas Gerais, and, therefore, it also claims the title of the first Brazilian public broadcaster. The *Rádio Sociedade do Rio de Janeiro*, owned by the pioneer of Roquette Pinto⁵, was only donated to the Government on September 7, 1936, four days after the inauguration of *Rádio Inconfidência*. Four months later, the law 1.378 (January 13, 1937) made official the station donated by Roquette-Pinto, as Ministry of Education and Culture’s Radio (*Rádio MEC*).

In this paper, is not intended to problematize the concept of public radio, as several previous works have already done. This present paper has a more modest aim of shed light on the history of *Rádio Inconfidência*, a fundamental part of the history of Brazil’s complex public broadcasting system.

3. Methodology

To reconstruct the station’s fragmented history, we worked with three methodological procedures.

Firstly, it was carried out a bibliographical research about the history of *Rádio Inconfidência*. However, we only found few previous works done on the subject.

³ Folha de Minas. Untitled. 07 Sep. 1958, p. 7.

⁴ Valci Zuculoto is a journalist, Professor and a researcher specialized in radio in relevant research groups in Brazil such as Intercom, SBPjor and Alcar.

⁵ Roquette-Pinto (Edgar R.-P.) (Rio de Janeiro 1884 - 1954) professor, anthropologist, ethnologist. In 1923, he founded Rádio Society of Rio de Janeiro, which is known by its exclusively educational and cultural purposes.

Therefore, it was searched then other sources to fill in the gaps found in the preliminary literature search. Then, a documentary research in the collections of state agencies was developed, the official press, local newspapers and periodicals specialized in radio.

Finally, we conducted an in-depth interview with the oldest employee of Rádio Inconfidência, who has worked at the station since the 1940s and, in 2021, continues to present a radio program there. The employee's oral testimony was collated with the results of the bibliographic research to trace the historical overview that we present below. This overview is part of the master's research already completed by one of the authors of the paper.

3. Rádio Inconfidência: a Historical Overview

The historical overview is divided into three sections, corresponding to the main moments in the history of *Rádio Inconfidência*. The first section presents the political actions for the creation of a broadcaster, which would allow establishing the connection of the new Capital to the extensive territory of Minas Gerais State and, finally, the inauguration of the station and its first programs, which privileged the educational function of the radio.

Then, in the second section, it is presented the broadcaster's golden years, the time of popular programs with high ratings of audience. Finally, the third section is about the station's long periods of crisis related to Brazilian political contexts until the current issues which are being faced by the radio.

3.1. Political Articulation for the Creation of the Radio and the First Years of Operation

The greatest articulator of creating a radio station project in Minas Gerais state was Israel Pinheiro, Secretary of Agriculture of the State of Minas Gerais. In May 1935, he sent a document to many Minas Gerais city halls asking for money to set up a broadcasting radio in the state. In the following months, it was found in the official newspaper Minas Gerais several references to mayors that helped in that funding for the radio transmitter.

The edition of the newspaper Minas Gerais published on October 22, 1935, had already listed 72 city halls in the State, which contributed to Israel Pinheiro's project. As the money was raised, it was possible to buy the necessary equipment. The Gameleira farm, which belonged to the João Pinheiro Institute, had received the first radio transmitter system (in Belo Horizonte city).

Inconfidência's first studios were located in the Permanent Fair of Samples (*Feira Permanente de Amostras*) building, in Rio Branco Square, a cultural center in Belo Horizonte downtown, also inaugurated in 1936, where merchants and industrialists from all over the state came to exhibit their products. Ricardo Parreiras, employee of the radio since the 1940s⁶ describes the building, in an interview given to one of the authors of this article:

It was a beautiful, wonderful building. (...) It was a showy tower, where the riches of Minas Gerais were exposed, such as wood, hardwood trunks, such as jacaranda. There was also an aquarium with fish from the São Francisco River and precious stones from Minas Gerais. It was a mandatory place for tourists arriving in Belo Horizonte (Parreiras, 2019).

The Permanent Fair of Samples building was also an initiative of Israel Pinheiro. According to the historian researcher Leide Cota (2016) on the early years of Rádio Inconfidência, the Secretary of Agriculture was the main secretariat of Minas Gerais State, and Israel Pinheiro's administration (1933-1942) was marked by many investments that sought the modernization of agricultural production. Minas Gerais had as a characteristic of its productive sector the absence of a main product in the economy, as in others Brazilian States. Its production was diversified, which required political efforts to train personnel and teach different techniques that could increase production. The Permanent Fair of Samples was intended to publicize the economic wealth of the State, promote the economy of Minas Gerais through the sale of inputs at more earning prices, improve rural people literacy and attract investors to the new city of Belo Horizonte⁷.

Cota (2016) points out that Israel Pinheiro sought to reconcile the government's interest with the demands of the producing classes, and it was in this context that the idea of creating an official broadcaster emerged. In a speech to the Legislative Assembly, Benedito Valadares stated that

The formation of an environment of optimism and trust in public administration is an essential condition. And this results from the strict collaboration between the government and the producing classes and from the dissemination of administrative measures for the improvement of work processes. With this objective, the government is building the Permanent Fair of Samples and is already studying proposals for the assembly of a

⁶ Ricardo Parreiras is the network's oldest employee and is still on the air daily conducting programs. He entered radio in 1948 as a singer, was a radio soap actor, head of announcers, program presenter, artistic director, AM and FM coordinator.

⁷ Belo Horizonte is a city planned and built to be the capital of Minas Gerais State in the late nineteenth century. The new capital was officially inaugurated on December 12, 1897.

broadcasting radio station, which will bring to the populations of all Minas Gerais municipalities the thought and encouraging guidance of the government (Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais, ALMG, 1935:71).

It is important to emphasize that Benedito Valadares was the politician who governed Minas Gerais for the longest time, from 1933 to 1945, and maintained close loyalty to the Republic President Getúlio Vargas. Despite political censorship, the years from 1930 to 1940 were marked by intense public power investment in radio.

According to Cota (2016), the territorial amplitude of Brazil and the illiteracy of a considerable part of the population created the belief that radio would be a tool to establish the ties of nationality, being able to unite and develop socially and culturally the nation by an oral medium. Therefore, the radio concessions made by the Federal Government sought to ensure the broadcasting of educational content on public/state broadcasters. This educational mission is mentioned in Decree law no.921 (June 26, 1936), the legal instrument that allowed the State Government of Minas Gerais to establish a broadcaster. Three months later, Governor Benedito Valadares was already reporting the radio installation progress:

The installation of the radio broadcasting station of the State is concluded, which, due to be inaugurated on September 1st, will receive the name of Radio “Inconfidência”. Its power will be 22 kilowatts on the antenna and 140 on the base, being therefore easily captured throughout Brazil and South America. For the supply of its material, the proposal of the National Company of Communication Wireless “Marconi” was accepted, which fully fulfilled the contract it signed with the State⁸.

Cota (2016) believes that the name “*Inconfidência*” (Conspiracy) was chosen due to a series of political factors. For the researcher, christening the official radio station in Minas Gerais with the name of *Inconfidência*⁹ in the context of the 1930s was a way to reinforce the idea of national unity that was intended, around the symbolic power of Tiradentes as a myth or national hero. The work in favor of the collective, the service rendered to the nation and the sacrifice for the country, present in the speeches about Tiradentes, were perfectly adequate to the objectives of the President Getúlio Vargas, within the framework of the national ideal. Tiradentes’ emphasis on civism and patriotism, combined with the idea of sacrifice for the country, was a precious element in the pedagogy of the New State (Estado Novo)¹⁰.

Minas Gerais Conspiracy – *The Inconfidência Mineira* - was also mentioned on September 3rd, 1936, when Rádio Inconfidência was officially inaugurated. In addition to the governor of Minas Gerais State, all his government auxiliaries, including the secretary of agriculture Israel Pinheiro, were also present: former president of the Republic Wenceslau Brás, the Minister of Agriculture, deputies, senators, clergy authorities, artists from Rio de Janeiro recognized through all the country, high society people and intellectuals. Rádio Inconfidência was broadcasted for the first time at 7:30 pm that night, during a dinner offered at the Restaurant of the Permanent Fair of Samples.

The radio researcher Fábio Martins (1999) argues that from the day of the inauguration of Rádio Inconfidência, a new habit emerged in the city of Belo Horizonte: going to Rio Branco Square and staying under the *ficus* trees in the square, to listen to the radio. Powerful loudspeakers were placed in the showroom tower and the programming could be heard by anyone nearby.

People were pressed together on the stairs of the Sample Fair Building and gathered in Rio Branco Square (...). The fascination that radio aroused touched hearts and a magical curiosity brought people together and prompted questions. *Rádio Difusora Inconfidência* was broadcasting, and now the sound came out through loudspeakers scattered around the square. (Martins, 1999:108)

Cota (2016) states that the Permanent Fair of Samples became the cultural center of Belo Horizonte. *Rádio Inconfidência* could also be seen at that time as an educational locus since the station would assume educational and instructive aspects in its programming as a whole. According to the researcher, the *Rádio Inconfidência* played an important role in national education during that period, transmitting programs of different natures, which played an important role in the formation of a Brazilian national identity, based on a civilizing aesthetic, particularly through education, health, and music. She also highlights the presence of the radio at that beginning in schools in Minas Gerais capital, putting teachers and students, including children, on the radio’s microphones.

From September 1936 to December 1945, *Rádio Inconfidência* broadcasted 84 programs, 25 of which belonging to the educational-cultural/entertainment genre, 23 belonging to the educational-cultural genre, 20 journalistic programs, 06 entertainment programs, 10 classified as advertising genre (COTA, 2016). Cota (2016) highlights the programs Gymnastics Class (*Aula de Ginástica*), Hygiene Hour (*Hora de Higiene*) and Public Health (*Saúde Pública*) in

⁸ Ribeiro, Benedito Valladares. Message presented to the Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais, in its ordinary session in 1936, by the Governor of the State. Belo Horizonte: Minas Gerais Official Press, 1936, p. 89.

⁹ Inconfidência Mineira or Minas Gerais Conspiracy was a unsuccessful movement seeking independence from Portugal that took place in 1789. Among the best-known participants were José Joaquim da Silva Xavier (1746-1792), also known as “Tiradentes”, a dentist who took full responsibility for the conspiracy movement. (Source: <https://memory.loc.gov/intldl/brhtml/br-1/br-1-4-2.html>. Accessed 16 June 2021)

¹⁰ “New State”: dictatorial period (1937–1945) in Brazil during the run of President Getúlio Vargas, initiated by a new constitution issued in November 1937.

the dissemination of medical-hygienist-sanitary thoughts; Educational Hours (*Hora Educativa*) and Children's Hours (*Hora Infantil*), which aligned school education objectives with values such as family, religion and homeland; and the programs Hour of Evocation of the Great Masters (*Hora de Evocação dos Grandes Mestres*) and In the Domains of Music (*Nos Domínios da Música*), which contributed to the musical education of listeners.

Four days after inaugurating the radio station, the program Farmer's Hour (*Hora do Fazendeiro*) has been broadcasted daily with the proposal to approach the city to the countryside. Without interruptions for 85 years, in 2021, the program claims the title of the oldest program on Brazilian radio station.

According to researcher Wanir Campelo (2006), the production of the program was conducted by João Anatolio Lima for 42 uninterrupted years, who had never spoken into the microphone, several radio hosts presented the show over time. Anatolio Lima had a degree in agronomy and worked as an employee of the Department of Agriculture, Transportation and Public Works, until being invited by the Secretary of Agriculture, Israel Pinheiro, to produce the program.

The Farmer's Hour was the audience leader and record holder in the number of letters. In the first three years of transmission, the program would have received 25,000 letters (Campelo, 2006). Anatolio Lima was the one who answered the listeners' letters. At a time when telephone agility did not yet exist, the program stood out in the public utility service. The editorial line established also provided music, entertainment and various information related to agriculture and livestock since the beginning of Farmer's Hour program. In October 1936, the Minas Gerais newspaper described it as follows:

Provide great services to our farmers with the dissemination of useful advice, everything related to farming, livestock, sericulture, combating plant pests and harmful insects, etc. (...) These advice and recommendations, interspersed with selected numbers of regional music, are presented in a language that is easy and accessible to everyone, without incurring in vulgarities, but also without the excess of technical terms, which would make them incomprehensible¹¹.

In addition to the Farmer's Hour, Cota (2016) highlights another program that was important to deliver the dialogue with the countryside: the *Compadre Belarmino*. According to the author, the program not only spoke to the countryside, but was also presented by a hillbilly and his partners Ximango and Paia Roxa, characters who used humor to create chronicles of rural everyday life. The language marked the characters' proximity and identification with the listening audience, especially in the countryside, although few rural households had electricity, and car batteries often powered radio sets.

In Minas Gerais capital, the popularization of the radio device had already reached layers of the low-income population in the end of the 1930s. The newspaper *Folha de Minas* mentioned the presence of the radio at that time: "In Belo Horizonte, for example, the radio is already heard in the most distant corners of the urban area, and the listener should not be surprised if one day he finds it in a house in a humble and ugly neighbourhood, in Pedreira Prado Lopes or on top of Cruzeiro"¹².

In 1939, Rádio Inconfidência was the first Brazilian radio station to receive, in Argentina, the title of "Standard of the Continent", during a radio conference.

It is also important to highlight the greatness of programs aimed to disseminate Brazilian and world literature proposal in Rádio Inconfidência educational programming, during the government of Getúlio Vargas and Benedito Valadares (Federal and Minas Gerais State, respectively). The whole Minas Gerais intellectual elite was at Rádio Inconfidência producing programs. The Literary Bulletin (*Boletim Literário*), by writer Eduardo Frieiro, which conveyed information and criticisms about the State literary production, the country and abroad; the Chronicle of the Week (*Crônica da Semana*), by journalist Jair Silva; and Sound Anthology (*Antologia Sonora*), by journalist Álvares da Silva, were examples of literary programs on the radio station at that time (Guimarães, 2014). The Alterosa Magazine (*Revista Alterosa*) of March 1945 highlighted that program and stated "the literary programs of Inconfidência continue to be the highlight of its broadcasts. Written by reputable, competent people, they are, doubtless, one of the biggest attractions of the official broadcaster"¹³. The programs used to broadcast literary and historical information on Rádio Inconfidência waves, which made such information accessible to a large part of Minas Gerais population that the press did not reach, given the high illiteracy rates in the state and in the country (Guimarães, 2014).

3.2. The Golden Years: on the Air, Popular Programs with Audience Participation

At the end of the New State (*Estado Novo*), Rádio Inconfidência underwent some transformations, replacing literary programs and starting to invest in other more popular attractions, such as auditorium shows (Bazar Sonoro, Variedades Inconfidência, Alegre Show, Feira de Amostras, etc) with musical presentations. Guimarães (2014) states that it was still in the late 1940s that the auditorium programs gained large proportions on Rádio Inconfidência and the pioneer was the Sound Bazaar (*Bazar Sonoro*) program, from 1948, which was thus evaluated by the Alterosa Magazine:

¹¹ Jornal Minas Geraes, Belo Horizonte, untitled, 30 Oct. 1936, p. 14.

¹² Folha de Minas, untitled, Feb. of 1938.

¹³ Revista Alterosa, untitled, Belo Horizonte, mar. 1945, p. 121.

'Bazar Sonoro' is the new poster of Inconfidência, which presents it at 20:00 h every Thursday. An essentially popular program consists of anecdotes, sketches, musical numbers, light commentary, and humorous poetry. 'Bazar Sonoro' launched a contest for freshmen, which are judged by listeners, whose cards are awarded weekly. Ricardo Parreiras, Flávio de Alencar, Ubirajara, Otavinho Mata Machado and many other artists from Inconfidência sing in 'Bazar Sonoro'.¹⁴

Guimarães (2014) describes that, after Sound Bazaar, several others emerged, among them the Varieties *Inconfidência* (*Variiedades Inconfidência*), written by Roberto Negreiros and which even raffled radio sets and drums for the audience, the Joy Parade (*Parada da Alegria*), directed by Seixas Costa, Diversões I-3, which had lots of artists from the Inconfidência cast, Happy Show (*Alegre Show*), with Aldair Pinto, Samples Fair (*Feira de Amostras*), with Elzio Costa, and Only for women (*Só para Mulheres*), led by Luiz de Carvalho.

It is important to state that the structure of the radio had to change to meet the changes in programming. In 1948, another major milestone in the history of Rádio Inconfidência took place: the inauguration of the Lakmé auditorium, at the Permanent Fair of Samples. Guimarães (2014) says that it was built for radio programs and also for theatrical exhibitions, cinema, and conferences, since the Fair functioned as a cultural center in Belo Horizonte. Thus, the newspaper Minas Gerais described the importance of Lakmé:

A little while ago, we had the organization of the state symphony orchestra attached to Rádio Inconfidência, whose concerts have been completely successful, becoming one of the most perfect manifestations of our musical art. Now, another achievement of this plan is completed and delivered to the people of the Capital, which is the remarkable auditorium, large and modern, built in 60 days. Belo Horizonte thus gains a theater of vast proportions. (...) Only in its central part are comfortable seats for 950 spectators located (...) In the wide and well-delineated wings, there is space for a supplementary capacity of 500 people, which considerably increases the possibility of the auditorium, to accommodate a larger number of spectators, whenever there is a need for such measure.¹⁵

In addition to the large Lakmé auditorium, the Inconfidência also had studios with smaller auditoriums, for just over a hundred listeners. Parreiras describes the radio's presentation spaces with public access.

At the Sample Fair Building there was a restaurant on the fourth floor. There was the newspaper, Folha de Minas, which belonged to the government, there were exhibitions, the radio and there was this restaurant. The restaurant was fancy and whoever was having dinner was listening to the radio because it had a speaker, which played the sound of the radio. But beyond that, the restaurant was on a studio floor, and you could see everything. The restaurant was separated from this studio, which had a couple of microphones, by a kind of aquarium, a glass, and we sang on this side and on the other side people were having dinner and watching us. Downstairs there was an auditorium, with a maximum capacity of 200 people, which was dedicated to comedy programs. And there was also the large auditorium, downstairs, in the courtyard of the Sample Fair. Therefore, there were three ways to see a performance by the radio artists: in the aquarium, in the smaller auditorium and in the bigger one (Parreiras, 2019).

In the Lakmé, the programs were musical shows with the attendance of a large audience. Generally, they were conducted by an 'animator', the radio hosts, and often, the entering admission was charged, or a sponsorship was arranged from local merchants, due to the high cost to bring in renowned artists from outside the capital.

Then [in large shows] tickets were already charged or sold to a certain firm, such as Casa do Rádio, or A Sapataria da Cidade. They sponsored, for example, Luiz Gonzaga. Then the listener had to go to get the ticket there at the store, which was great for them, a lot of people filled the stores those days and not only to take the ticket but also taking the opportunity to buy something (Parreiras, 2019).

Cota (2016) states that, at that time, the hiring of famous artists gave broadcasters status in the Brazilian artistic-cultural scene, while these artists also sought to compose the cast of the main national broadcasters as a way to promote their career. Great names in national popular music went through Inconfidência.

Guilherme Carvalho (2014), in his research on the station's sheet music collection about the musical genres presented in these programs, describes that, from Monday to Friday, the radio programs were carried out mostly in the small auditorium and on weekends, in the large Lakmé. As one of the main attractions of the small auditorium, the author highlights the Musical Program with the participation of the station's own singers and a more restricted audience. Auditions there were open to the listening audience, and the admission was free until the seats were filled.

¹⁴ Revista Alterosa, untitled, Belo Horizonte, jun. 1948, p. 85.

¹⁵ Jornal Minas Geraes, untitled, Belo Horizonte, Sept 18th. 1948, p. 6.

In a 1952 edition, *Revista do Rádio* interviewed Luiz de Carvalho, who presented the program *Only for women* on Saturdays. Luiz de Carvalho was the radio president's brother, Ramos de Carvalho, and told that when they arrived on the radio, in the early 1950s, they found *Inconfidência* full of serious programs, very official ones. Ramos de Carvalho would then have asked the governor of Minas, Dr. Juscelino Kubitschek, if he would have enjoyed keeping that erudite programming and he would have answered no, that a radio was needed to cheer up the melancholy population of Minas Gerais. Luiz de Carvalho (1952) states that a huge change in radio programming was then carried out, which, in his words, shook the radio station in Minas Gerais and, in ten months, the income from *Inconfidência's* auditorium programs went from 300 thousand cruzeiros to 1,200,000 cruzeiros¹⁶.

The station had a cast of around thirty singers, sixteen comedians, in addition to five fixed orchestras: the Popular or Dance Orchestra; the Melodic Orchestra; the Ballroom Orchestra, performed a more "erudite" repertoire and international songs – French and Italian – followed by opera singers; the Typical Argentina and the Children's Orchestra. *Rádio Inconfidência*, as well as other Brazilian stations, also had a Regional Band.

The Children's Orchestra, by Elias Salomé, was mentioned lots of times in the *Revista do Rádio* throughout the 1950s. Generally, the orchestra used to perform on the *Pinduca* Program, a children's program broadcasts by *Inconfidência* on Sundays, at ten o'clock a.m. It is interesting to note that even in this most popular time, which range from the early 1950s to the early 1960s, *Rádio Inconfidência* continued to consider the educational function of radio for children.

The *Radio Inconfidência* Orchestras were extremely important for the development of music in Minas Gerais, including the current music schools. Unfortunately, there are no records from this period, except for a Long Play recorded by Copacabana, in celebration of the 25th anniversary of *Rádio Inconfidência*¹⁷.

Seeking to please new listeners, *Inconfidência* also formed theater and soap opera groups, hiring authors, musicians, and actors, such as the program Radio School (*Escola de Rádio*), conducted by Elias Salomé. For several years, the program launched new talents not only for *Inconfidência*, but also for the entire artistic scenario in Minas Gerais. "They were actors who also worked in radio soap operas, but they had the gift of create characters and then they were used in comedy programs. (...) We had comedy shows every night" (Parreiras, 2019).

The period from the end of the New State (*Estado Novo*) (1945) to the beginning of the military dictatorship in Brazil (1964) can be considered the golden age of the broadcaster. But the success of *Rádio Inconfidência* also created challenges. The Radio Magazine (*Revista do Rádio*) mentioned that there was a possible proposal to buy *Inconfidência*, in 1957, and a campaign of great pressure to limit the radio by competing stations, in 1962:

There were rumors that Mr. Victor Costa was interested in leasing Radio *Inconfidência*, the official state organ, for some time. (*Revista do Rádio*, *untitled*, issue 00392, 1957)

A campaign is being carried out in Belo Horizonte against the commercial competition that *Rádio Inconfidência* makes to other stations. They think that being this official broadcaster, it should not compete with the others. (*Revista do Rádio*, *untitled*, edition 00657, 1962).

3.3. Dark Times, Times of Crisis

In 1964, Magalhães Pinto inaugurated the new shortwave transmitter, of 25 KW, of *Rádio Inconfidência*, and from the 1st of July 1965, *Rádio Inconfidência*, for the first time, broadcasted 24 hours of programming a day¹⁸. However, the biggest challenges were to come with the establishment of the military dictatorship in Brazil from 1964 to 1985. In 1965, *Rádio Inconfidência*, which since its creation was linked to the Secretariat of Agriculture, began to operate linked to the Secretariat of Government, which exerts greater control over the programming¹⁹. In the same year, the demolition of the Fair of Samples Building, the radio's headquarters, is also announced.

In an interview given to *Revista do Rádio* in 1965, Elzio Costa, the president of *Rádio Inconfidência*, said that he was studying a temporary location for the station, since the government's promise was that the radio would return to that same place, in a large skyscraper, which would be built by the Department of Roads and Highways (DER), next to the new bus station. But that was not what happened.

In July 1966, *Rádio Inconfidência* moves to the mezzanine floor of the Dantés building, on Amazonas avenue. According to Guimarães (2014), the audience of *Rádio Inconfidência* is threatened for the first time, as the programs of auditorium disappear almost completely when the *Inconfidência* loses its headquarters in the Sample Fair Building. At Dantés, the radio had a single auditorium and that one was very small, with a capacity of less than a hundred people. The radio was forced to leave a place that was the cultural center of the city to a place where its employees barely fit.

In the 1967's editions of Minas Gerais newspaper, we still found a note about the Orquestra da *Rádio Inconfidência*, in the celebration of the anniversary, then the news about the radio disappeared. The last big anniversary of *Rádio*

¹⁶ *Revista do Rádio*, *untitled*, edition 00134, Year 1952.

¹⁷ The LP entitled *Os vibrantes 25 anos da Rádio Inconfidência* (1961) featured the participation of the *Rádio Inconfidência* orchestra, conducted by conductor Moacyr Pôrtes and singers who were part of the broadcaster's cast.

¹⁸ *Revista do Rádio*, *untitled*, edition 00832, Year 1965.

¹⁹ *Diário de Minas*. *untitled*, 3 set. 1966, p. 3.

Inconfidência was the 32-year-old show at the Minas Tennis Club Gymnasium, already without the presence of the Orchestra, but which had nationally recognized popular artists like Elis Regina and Roberto Carlos as attractions.²⁰

In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, there were serious changes in the characteristics of *Rádio Inconfidência's* programming, which can be explained by several factors. In addition to the lack of an auditorium space and the censorship imposed by the military dictatorship, television became a vehicle for mass cultural production in the 1960s. Multinational majors record companies set up in the country and discs replaced popular artists live in the broadcaster's studios.

Rádio Inconfidência thus gained several phonographic programs, such as Philips Melodies (*Melodias Philips*), Disc Club (*Clube do Disco*), Bemoreira Discotheque (*Discoteca Bemoreira*). Another highlight is the Belo Horizonte ABC (ABC de BH), which content was music, curiosity, news, and information. The journalistic part was reduced, always meeting the government's wishes, such as the coverage of the official events of the Independence Week (Guimarães, 2014).

The great highlight of this period was the sporting journeys, which gained ground. Pedro Luiz Rodrigues, programming coordinator for Rádio Inconfidência in the early 1970s, adopted the slogan "The Giant on Air", which quickly became popular.

In the early 1970s, two other major changes were registered at Rádio Inconfidência. The first was the integration of the radio with the Pandiá Calógeras Foundation, and from then its new mission consists in "the station will now operate with exclusively educational programming, within an eclectic line, catering to all students' tastes, whether at primary level, secondary or university"²¹.

The other change was once again to physical space. In October 1972, the Inconfidência studios were transferred to a house on Rua São Paulo, separated from the administration, which was operating in another house on the same street, in very precarious conditions. The administrative staff stayed for a while in another place, called Mesbla building. That place was still much precarious and smaller than the Dantés building. It was almost a shack at the back of a property, with just a single studio. Some employees used to comment that the Farmer's Hour program, one of the only ones on the grid, in addition to the musical program, was presented under a mango tree in that land.

At the end of 1978, *Rádio Inconfidência* also rented the front house, for the installation of what would become the *Inconfidência* FM station. Former employees claim that it was from this place that the slogan of Inconfidência FM until nowadays, - the home of MPB - was born. The idea arose from a visit to the radio by Caetano Veloso, popular artist with an international career, in its first year. When he arrived at the radio, he asked: "is this where the home of Brazilian popular music is"?

A survey commissioned by the station indicated that audience would support a radio that played exclusively Brazilian music. From the beginning, therefore, its programming was exclusively of Brazilian popular music, which was a novelty at the time. After 40 days of experimental work, on February 2, 1979, Rádio Inconfidência's FM, *Brasileiríssima*, was inaugurated. It was born revolutionary: the first song broadcasted was *When the Carnival arrives (Quando o Carnaval Chegar)*, by Chico Buarque, a popular artist persecuted by the military regime.

Brasileiríssima won the first position in the IBOPE audience surveys, receiving, in the first years of its life, many pressures from multinational groups, which used the political situation to try to put an end to the project. But the radio had the support of two musicians from Minas Gerais, Milton Nascimento and Fernando Brant, who actively participated in Tancredo Neves' campaign for the Government of Minas Gerais in 1982. With the candidate's victory, the new elected governor began to respond to the demands of improvements to radio.

In addition to *Brasileiríssima*, *Rádio Inconfidência AM*, in June 1980, held another memorable inauguration. Rural Wave (*Onda Rural*) is launched, an exclusive program for Short Waves and aimed at rural people. In its fiftieth anniversary, *Rádio Inconfidência* returned with its initial proposal in 1936, to serve the 277 municipalities of Minas Gerais, with a public utility service (Guimarães, 2014).

The Rural Wave has been reaching the entire State of Minas Gerais and a large part of Brazil, with a program specifically aimed at rural people. (...) The program has been trying to fill the needs of the countryman, with several programs that start at 3:00 am and go on until 10:00 pm and are: 'Awakening the countryside' [*Despertar sertanejo*], with Tião Moreno, currently champion of letters, who wakes up his listeners with the crowing of the rooster, bringing music, messages, replies to letters and a dialogue with the country man. 'Time of Faith' [*Hora da Fé*], with Achilles Junior. 'First-rate ball' [*Bola de primeira*] with the sports department. Great *Inconfidência's* Newspaper [*Grande Jornal da Inconfidência*], a complete newscast. Delmário is spectacular [*Delmário é espetáculo*], the only shortwave program in Brazil, talks about circus shows. 'Caxangá's Village Camp' [*Arraial do Caxangá*], also with country music. Public utilities' [*Prestação de serviços*]. 'Train of eleven o'clock' [*Trem das Onze*]. (...) *Inconfidência's* Rural Wave is carrying out work on the roads of Minas Gerais. The radio intends to place a reporter for each highway that crosses the state. (...) A radio that entertains, distracts, and mainly informs (...).²²

²⁰ Jornal Minas Gerais. untitled, Sept 5, 1968, p. 4. Minas Tênis Clube is a traditional Minas Gerais club founded in 1935.

²¹ Diário de Minas. 05 May 1971, p. 11.

²² Jornal Minas Gerais. Untitled. 12 Sept. 1987, p. 12-13.

A pioneer in Brazil, with an exclusively rural work, the short-wave radio of *Rádio Inconfidência* for 15 years dedicated 18 hours a day of programming to Rural Wave, developed by a team of twelve people. Rural Wave (*Onda Rural*) received the Science and Information Award from EMBRAPA – Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation.

Brasileiríssima and Rural Wave (closed in 1995) also boosted new times for *Rádio Inconfidência* AM. On April 1, 1984²³, Fernando Brant, who was already a renowned composer, takes the position of the artistic direction of *Rádio Inconfidência* and promotes significant changes in the entire programming of *Rádio* AM, short waves and FM, preparing *Inconfidência* for the station's fiftieth anniversary.

During Brant administration, there was a new change of headquarters and the *Inconfidência* recovered the operational fullness of the premises. Changes address again twice more until the construction of the new headquarters at Centro Cultural Itamar Franco, inaugurated on June 12, 2017, in the same building as Rede Minas Television. In the current installations, although there are no auditoriums to receive the public during the programs, the studios and spaces allow, as in the old days, the live participation of artists, in small groups. There is no space in the studios for orchestras as in the heydays of *Rádio Inconfidência*, but the new headquarters of the radio is located next to the new headquarters of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Minas Gerais, inaugurated in 2015.

On September 20, 2016, Communication Company of Minas Gerais (*Empresa Mineira de Comunicação* - EMC) was created through Law No. 22,294. The idea was to accompany the “administrative reorganization” of the national government. EMC would be the regional version of the federal state-owned EBC and brought together *Rádio Inconfidência* and *TV Minas*. *Rádio Inconfidência*'s nowadays aims to provide broadcasting services with a cultural, informative, educational, entertainment, services related to its social activity, and others assigned by the Executive Branch of Minas Gerais State. The FM station has continued since its inauguration with an essentially musical program – with the exception of some journalistic and service programs – and broadcasts only Brazilian music. The AM station, in addition to music, currently has three daily newspapers in its grid and news throughout the daily programming, sports programs and maintains a programming aimed at rural audiences, such as the program *Farmer's Hour* still on air. Since 2010, the two stations (AM and FM) has been streamed on the *Inconfidência* website²⁴.

Currently, the Law 22,257, of July 27, 2016, which establishes the organic structure of the public administration of the Executive Power of the State, binds EMC to the Secretariat of Culture. Throughout history, *Rádio Inconfidência*, which was born linked to the Secretary of Agriculture, became linked to the Secretary of State for Government, in June 1978, then linked to the Secretary of Culture, in December 1983²⁵, to the Secretary of Communication, as of July 1992²⁶, and again to the Department of Culture, in January 2003²⁷.

In 2019, the state government even announced the extinction of the AM broadcaster and the future closure of the FM, if the radio did not become profitable within a year, following similar to the commercial broadcasting system, predominant in the country. However, due to the mobilization of civil society for the preservation of *Rádio Inconfidência*, who launched the *#ficaInconfidência* movement, the decisions were temporarily revoked.

4. Conclusions

In the golden years of Brazilian radio, between the 1930s and 1950s, the country was provided with an incredibly vast amounts of benefits. Music, information, entertainment, general culture, national feeling, and Brazil's own linguistic unity owe a lot to radio (Prado, 2012). The auditorium programs, which were high successful and public, certainly contributed not only to the consolidation of Brazilian radio stations, but also to the dissemination of Brazilian Popular Music. The radio soap operas stimulated the listeners' imagination in an unprecedented way, based only on voices, soundtrack, and a good story.

The history of *Rádio Inconfidência* is part of the history of Brazilian radio and, in addition to popular programs that followed the models of programs broadcast by other Brazilian stations, it has the specific role of symbolically reducing the distance between the municipalities and the capital of the extensive state of Minas Gerais, through programs that dialogue with the rural public.

Talking about the time of *Rádio Inconfidência*, which runs from the end of New State (*Estado Novo*) to the beginning of the Military Dictatorship (1964), is simply to talk about its best time. Crowded auditoriums, the presence of great national artists, birthday parties that lasted weeks. During that time, *Rádio Inconfidência* was only threatened once in the 1960s, on IBOPE in 1959, when it lost to *Rádio Mineira*²⁸. In several audience surveys found in the issues of *Radio Magazine*, *Inconfidência* appears as the leader at all times, morning, afternoon, and night and also in all social classes during its heydays.

If, in the period following these golden times, during the military dictatorship in Brazil, the station faced the precariousness of new installations and censorship by the military, currently, new challenges are on the horizon. Both

²³ Fernando Brant left office on March 12, 1987.

²⁴ Available at <www.inconfidencia.com.br> Accessed on June 16, 2021.

²⁵ Law 8502 of December 19, 1983.

²⁶ Law No. 10827, of July 23, 1992.

²⁷ Delegated Law No. 55, of January 29, 2003.

²⁸ In 1959, *Revista do Rádio* named *Rádio Mineira* as the most listened to radio station, even so losing at some times to *Rádio Inconfidência*. (*Revista do Rádio*, issue 00518, 1959).

the far-right federal government and the state government intend to conduct a radical extinction of AM frequencies, without the migration to FM, which would mean the loss of the oldest public radio stations in the country. The Federal government in 2019 already extinguished Rádio MEC AM. In 2020, the Government of Minas Gerais State expressed their intention to do the same with Rádio Inconfidência AM, which provoked the mobilization of local civil society and made the State Government to step backward in the process of extinction and, for the time being, keep the broadcaster.

The challenge is to maintain the population mobilization for the cause of radio, with the recognition by the citizens that both MEC Radio and *Rádio Inconfidência* constitute the nation's cultural heritage. Heritages that are part of our history, either as characters or, as the slogan of the *Repórter Esso* program used to say, as eye (and oral) witnesses to history, who cannot be at the mercy of the political leaders who govern the country. Heritages ought to be recognized, protected, and valued by public policies and civil society on a permanent basis.

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