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Political vision of the Colorado press during the government of Rafael Franco

Visión política de la prensa colorada durante el gobierno de Rafael Franco

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Abstract

The revolution of February 1936 led to the fall of the liberal government of Eusebio Ayala; Faced with that defenestration, the Colorado Party pinned its hopes on the new national authorities to return to power after 32 years. With the aim of demonstrating the characteristics of the partisan press in the desire to have political power, the case of the red press in 1936 is analyzed, when its printed media made different assessments when it was in circulation during the government of Colonel Rafael Franco. To do this, a documentary analysis is used using articles from diario Patria and revista Guaranía, journalistic organizations whose writer was the Colorado thinker Natalicio González, where they developed campaigns for or against the government according to the measures adopted. It is concluded that the initial support of the red press ended when it had no possibility of being part of power, showing that the expectations of a political sector regarding a new established order are favorable at the beginning; in the hope of reaching government spaces, but when they are excluded they criticize using their media, generating the reaction of the government, which ends up closing them.

Keywords: Paraguay, red press, government of Rafael Franco.

Resumen

La revolución de febrero de 1936, desembocó en la caída del gobierno liberal de Eusebio Ayala; ante esa defenestración el Partido Colorado cifró sus esperanzas en las nuevas autoridades nacionales para volver al poder después de 32 años. Con el objetivo de demostrar las características de la prensa partidaria en el afán de tener el poder político, se analiza el caso de la prensa colorada en 1936, cuando sus medios impresos realizaron diferentes apreciaciones al estar en circulación durante el gobierno del coronel Rafael Franco. Para ello se emplea un análisis documental recurriendo a los artículos del diario Patria y la revista Guaranía, órganos periodísticos que tuvieron como escritor al pensador colorado Natalicio González, donde desarrollaron campañas a favor o en contra del gobierno de acuerdo a las medidas adoptadas. Se concluye que el apoyo inicial de la prensa colorada terminó cuando no tuvo posibilidad de ser parte del poder, evidenciándose que las expectativas de un sector político ante un nuevo orden constituido son favorables al inicio; en la esperanza de alcanzar espacios de gobierno, pero al ser excluidos realizan críticas utilizando sus medios de prensa, generando la reacción del gobierno, que terminan clausurándolos.

Palabras clave: Paraguay, prensa colorada, gobierno de Rafael Franco.

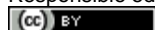
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Introduction

The press has always been a means of struggling against opposing positions. Many outlets were often shut down for their stance against a government, either defending or attacking actions and the dissemination of ideas within a given context. It must be noted that the role of the press goes beyond merely informing; it also influences the minds of readers, guiding them to interpret reality. This is done based on interests or ideals it seeks to promote, which is why, by inserting itself into that reality, the press becomes a significant political actor, as it narrates, exposes, and intervenes in political events (Gil Pérez, 2022, p.150).

With the creation of press outlets by political parties, the goal was to establish an important instrument of influence, since through their publications they revealed their political intentions, defending their own ideas and accusing their adversaries (Gándara, 2004).

Partisan press is characterized by being aligned with the interests pursued by the political sector that supports it, interpreting information in ways that promote favorable beliefs toward their own party and emphasizing the mistakes of their opponents.

This article arises from the interest in analyzing the dispute between the opposition partisan press and the government over control of power. The influence of partisan press on public opinion is evident; therefore, political parties use it as a fundamental tool of persuasion, seeking support and recognition in order to govern, given the complex relationship that exists between the press and political power.

In this sense, the objective is to demonstrate the impact of the political participation of the opposition on the government in developing propaganda either supporting or rejecting the established authorities through the power of the press. To this end, a historical event in Paraguayan politics in 1936 is studied, analyzing the interest of the Colorado press in supporting the government of Colonel Rafael Franco and the reasons that led to the end of such support.

The opinions expressed by *coloradismo* through its written media, both in the newspaper *Patria* and the magazine *Guaranía*, are examined in this work with the purpose of understanding the repercussions of the decisions made by Colonel Franco's government, which triggered a shift toward a critical stance by the Colorado partisan press in its pursuit of power.

Methodology

This study was carried out using the historical method, with qualitative research based on the analysis of sources, the main documentary evidence being the newspaper *Patria* and the magazine *Guaranía*, both active in 1936. The months most thoroughly analyzed were March, October, and November of that year, since they represented the periods in which the main ideas of the partisan press were evident and coincided with decisions taken by Colonel Franco's government that had repercussions in other political sectors. Books addressing the government of Colonel Rafael Franco were also consulted to complement the bibliographic work, contributing further data. Thus, the research followed a non-experimental, descriptive design aimed at understanding the complex relationship between government and opposition press.

Results

The bibliography on the events of February 1936 and the government of Colonel Rafael Franco is extensive, reflecting different political positions as well as a variety of themes. Protagonists of that event, as well as several historians, have analyzed this chapter of Paraguayan history. Works such as those of Juan Stefanich (1945), a minister in that very government, entitled *La Restauración Histórica del Paraguay*, and Juan Speratti's *La Revolución del 17 de febrero de 1936* (1984), are sources that highlight the achievements of Colonel Franco's presidency. On the other hand, authors such as Policarpo Artaza, in his book *Ayala, Estigarribia, y el Partido Liberal*, strongly criticize the actions of that presidency while defending the decisions of the Liberal representatives.

Beyond the political dimension, the government of Colonel Franco has also been studied from economic, ideological, social, and cultural perspectives. *El*

Paraguay Eterno by Natalicio González (1986) provides information on the participation of the Colorado party, and particularly the press during Franco's government.

Despite the differing positions regarding this event, there is general agreement that, at the beginning of 1936, Paraguay experienced significant change following the overthrow of the Liberal government² of Dr. Eusebio Ayala. This president had assumed office on August 15, 1932, but just months before the end of his term, he was overthrown in February 1936³. Cavalry officers led the military coup, which brought to the presidency Colonel Rafael Franco⁴, a military figure of great prestige from the war against Bolivia.

Since 1887, the two traditional parties had been the main reference points in Paraguayan politics. On the one hand, the Liberal party, which had been in power since 1904; on the other, the Colorado party, excluded from government since that same year.

After 32 years of Liberal control of the presidency, their political image had deteriorated, despite the victory achieved under their rule in the recently concluded Chaco War. Discontent with the Liberal government grew deeply within postwar society amid an effervescent nationalism that spread and contributed to the belief that the military should play a greater political role.

Regarding the fall of the Liberal regime, the American historian Paul Lewis (1986) argued that the spirit of struggle, combined with the nationalism of peasant soldiers, the demand for social reforms, and the lack of pensions for war veterans, led to the collapse of Dr. Eusebio Ayala's government.

The change of government generated high expectations in public opinion: a prestigious,

charismatic military leader, who had himself been persecuted by the Liberal regime, embodied the ideal profile to be elevated to the presidency. Colonel Rafael Franco was called back from exile and assumed provisional leadership of the government.

Colonel Franco did not belong to either of the two traditional parties. Upon assuming power, he sought to renew state structures by creating a new political group, the Unión Nacional Revolucionaria, which later became the Partido Revolucionario Febrerista, founded in Buenos Aires in 1951, with Colonel Franco himself as its first president.

The presidency of Colonel Franco lasted 18 months. During that period, both campaigns of support and campaigns of rejection of his administration abounded in the press, to the extent that the government itself resorted to closing down certain newspapers and magazines that did not agree with its decisions and political actions.

At the beginning of his administration, the main accusations in the press were directed against the deposed Partido Liberal, primarily by the *colorados*, and this became a constant feature of their writings. The propaganda led by the Colorado intellectual Natalicio González was an example of the campaign against liberalism.

In the early days of the Revolution of 1936, the *colorados* criticized liberalism for its political dominance and proclaimed themselves as the only ones capable of guaranteeing well-being, declaring that the Liberal regime, which had lived off public funds, was now forever buried, and that only the Colorado party was "...the unyielding guarantee and support of our era..." (*Patria*, 1936a, p. 1).

² With the Revolution of 1904, which overthrew the *colorado* government of Colonel Juan Antonio Ecurra, the *Partido Liberal* came to power and remained in office until February 1936. During its political hegemony, events such as revolutions, coups d'état, and the war against Bolivia took place, all within a state lacking resources and unable to adequately address social issues.

³ In that year, the changes following the Chaco War helped to strengthen nationalist discourse, as it was used as a banner of vindication for the lower classes and as a means of revaluing Paraguayan culture. Regarding the government formed in 1936, Captain Speratti stated: "its aim was the establishment of a constitutional order that would restore and safeguard popular sovereignty and the nation's economic independence, while

providing and ensuring social justice for the benefit and liberation of the working classes" (Speratti, 1984, p. 187).

⁴ Rafael Franco was a distinguished military officer during the Chaco War, highly regarded among soldiers and citizens, with a discourse of social justice aimed at social sectors such as workers and peasants. He assumed the presidency of the country and remained in office for 18 months, until he was overthrown by a coup d'état on August 13, 1937. Later, together with his supporters, he founded and presided over the *Partido Revolucionario Febrerista*. Colonel Franco is considered by many to be the architect of nationalism; during his government, historical figures of the past were vindicated, and strong support was shown for Paraguayan culture (Arrúa, 2020).

Social ills, together with political crises, were blamed on liberalism. The attacks of the opposition press, such as *Patria*, lashed out at the fallen government, labeling it oligarchic. Thus, the colorados carried out a media campaign against it, accusing it of having oligarchized public power, while using workers and farmers to defend their interests with their lives in bloody civil wars (*Patria*, 1936b, p. 1).

The anti-liberalism propagated in the post-Chaco War period was so strong that accusations against the Liberal party by the active press—especially the Colorado press—were constant. Accusatory statements abounded in *Patria* (1936c, p. 1), which in its political propaganda argued that rather than seeking the people's happiness, the Liberal state had undermined it. It emphasized the need for the youth who had fought in the Chaco to embrace the nationalist ideals of the *Colorado* movement in order to finally extinguish the evils of past misfortunes, embodied in liberalism.

The Colorado intellectual Natalicio González, one of liberalism's fiercest critics⁵, made his accusations against the Liberal government his central line of protest. In his work *El Paraguay Eterno*, written during the presidency of Eusebio Ayala, González condemned the oligarchic Liberal party as being capable of acting against the interests of the Paraguayan state—for example, by handing over land to foreigners without punishment, purchasing useless weapons for the war, and engaging in profiteering with uniforms and supplies, while soldiers perished from hunger and exposure (González, 1986, p. 146).

The anti-liberalism of the time was crystallized in González's thinking, which can be summarized in his phrase: "Liberal doctrine is the poison that corrupts the soul of the nation" (González, 1986, p. 113).

In this context, nationalism within political discourse was fundamental, as it became a propagandistic tool used to justify and defend the government's actions. Furthermore, the trend in that revolutionary postwar environment was to adopt principles and conduct in

line with the nationalism that was spreading in other parts of the world.

Hopes Placed in the New President

The favorable image Colonel Franco enjoyed at the beginning of his government was mainly due to his distinguished performance in the Chaco conflict, where he eventually commanded the 2nd Army Corps. Franco was one of the military leaders who led Paraguayan soldiers to victory in the battles of Gondra and Campo Vía, later distinguishing himself in Picuiba, Yrendague, Cañada Tarija, Carandayty, Parapití, Charagua, and Ingavi (González, 2014, p. 43).

The military merit Colonel Franco gained during the war, together with his charisma, was crucial for projecting his image into the political sphere; within the revolutionary spectrum of the postwar period, he enjoyed popular support. These qualities allowed him to secure political backing, although in reality Franco was not a creator of government political strategies (Seiferheld, 1986, p. 143).

Another key element in his appointment to the presidency was that the February Revolution was rooted in the desire for change among ex-combatants, workers, peasants, and students, who regarded the new head of state as a viable, popular alternative to power—someone with patriotic conduct proven during the war and with open criticism of the liberal authorities.

In the first months of Colonel Franco's government, hopes were placed on his leadership to such an extent that, in critical moments, the Colorado press continued to celebrate the president:

"The February 17 Revolution has triumphed to safeguard the people's interests and has toppled an old regime of treachery. The name of the President has served as a banner for the crusade of liberation, in which all collaborated equally, driven by the same ideal and inspired by identical patriotism. Just as in the great Chaco campaign, the name of Colonel Franco was a symbol of selflessness

⁵ He was a doctrinaire and politician of the Colorado party, who exerted great influence in his time with his nationalist thought; he published several books in which he praised Marshal López and

rejected liberal politics. In 1948, he briefly held the presidency for a few months.

and patriotism, so too must his efforts in guiding the destiny of his people serve as an index of the popular aspirations, freely manifested through the totalitarian will of the nation” (*Patria*, 1936d, p. 1).

Such was the sympathy he enjoyed that, during the first months of his government, Rafael Franco received favorable acceptance from the Colorado press; his military record and charisma prompted journalistic commentaries to remain cautious in their assessments. This was not the case with some of his ministers, who became the target of criticism, as the cabinet included members from different political sectors—a fact challenged by the Colorado press⁶.

The Aspiration to Return to Power

Since the Liberals came to power in 1904, the Colorados had been absent from the spheres of government, relegating their supporters from any possibility of prominence or influence in decision-making. It was therefore unsurprising that they placed their hopes on regaining the presidential seat with the fall of the Liberals in February 1936.

The February Revolution was embraced as a political banner by the Colorados, who consecrated it as the long-awaited change. After remaining out of power for more than four decades, they accused the Liberals of governing with the old and unjust structures of the state, and even of sidelining military men who had defended the nation in the recently ended war against Bolivia, many of whom were forced into retirement.

Colonel Franco appointed Bernardino Caballero as Minister of Agriculture. With this appointment, the Colorado party secured representation in the government. Their hope of gaining greater participation in the administration was pursued through the press, which became an ideal vehicle for voicing positions of support or opposition.

With the formation of the cabinet, a column in the newspaper *Patria* (1936) insisted on greater participation for the Colorados in positions of power, arguing that they had acted selflessly to put an end to

the Liberal regime, contributing with patriotic sacrifice to the birth of the new government without seeking personal or budgetary advantage (p. 1).

The Colorados declared themselves participants in and committed to carrying out the reforms promised by the revolution, as *Patria* stated:

“Coloradismo seeks to save the Revolution by turning it into the instrument of the Nation, to create—through popular will—the native State, the State whose constitution is predetermined by the land, by the race, and by history. Such a State cannot be elaborated by a lone minister under the shelter of a dictatorial decree” (1936e, p. 1).

In response to government measures, the pages of *Patria* defended Coloradismo, reaffirming that the party had embraced its historic role and upheld nationalism as a guarantee of safeguarding the revolution. This stance was evident in another article in the same newspaper, which asked:

“Why deny bread and water to Coloradismo, which has been the only refuge of persecuted nationalism for thirty-two years? Is becoming a Colorado a crime that must be punished by the seizure of all civic rights?” (*Patria*, 1936f, p. 1).

According to historian Washington Ashwell (2010), Minister Caballero “...sought above all to secure a place for Coloradismo within the government, and it was there that he encountered the resistance and opposition of the other three ministers, who disputed the intellectual leadership of the revolution...” (p. 308).

Through their publications, the Colorados expressed disagreement with some ministers who belonged to different political sectors, such as the Freire Esteves brothers, who were Civicists; they regarded Jover Peralta as a resentful Liberal; Dr. Juan Stefanich as president of the Independent National League; and Don Bernardino Caballero as a prominent member of Coloradismo (*Patria*, 1936g, p. 1).

⁶ Within his cabinet were the Freire Esteves brothers, considered fascists; the socialist Anselmo Jover Peralta; the Colorado Bernardino Caballero; but the one who exercised the greatest

leadership was Juan Stefanich, a member of the Independent National League.

Although the Colorados also had Dr. Felipe Molas López in the Franco government as mayor of Asunción, they still aspired to greater participation in governance.

The magazine *Guaranía* justified the Colorados' presence in government on the basis of principles pursued for national well-being. It cited agrarian reform—one of the most notable aspects of Colonel Franco's government—as an example, arguing that the reform was carried out thanks to Minister Bernardino Caballero. The article stated that with this reform, the Coloradista ideal of solving Paraguay's agrarian problem, grounded in the philosophical concept of the social function of land, had been realized (González, 1986, p. 245).

Indeed, a notable feature of this government was that its cabinet lacked ministers with broad popular support; rather, it was composed of intellectuals from different political backgrounds who nonetheless coincided in their rejection of Liberal policies. However, from the outset there was competition for intellectual leadership within the cabinet, and disagreements were constant until Minister Stefanich eventually gained preeminence.

Historical Reappraisal

On March 1, 1936, Colonel Franco's government annulled the decrees that had declared Marshal López⁷ an outlaw; consequently, it proclaimed: "Marshal, President of the Republic of Paraguay, is hereby declared an unparalleled National Hero... sacrificed on behalf of Paraguayan idealism, alongside his last soldiers, in the Battle of Cerro Corá on March 1, 1870" (Rodríguez, 2011, p. 110).

This decree resonated with Colorado party thought, as its members had long defended the figure of Solano López. The repercussions in the Colorado press became evident through poems and essays recalling the War of the Triple Alliance and exalting the figures of Solano López, Carlos Antonio López, and José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, who were considered the founding fathers of the nation.

Natalicio González highlighted the achievements of the López governments, particularly their educational and cultural measures, claiming that "...There is a profound harmony between the López regime and the ideals of its people..." (González, 1986, pp. 50–51).

For this reason, sociologist José Carlos Rodríguez reflects on how the figure of Marshal López became a symbol against liberalism and foreign invaders; he argues that the Liberal "anti-hero" became a hero for the anti-Liberals (Rodríguez, 2011, p. 40).

The Franco government's historical reappraisal was well received by the Colorado sector, which at the same time used it to boost its partisan political campaign. In the pages of *Patria*, it was proclaimed that "There is no political party more Paraguayan than the Colorado party."

Thus, Colorado propaganda focused on the essence of Paraguayan identity: "The Colorado party, as a national political entity, is the most faithful and constant expression of Paraguayan-ness..." By contrast, accusations against Liberalism claimed that it "...embodies the anti-Paraguayan spirit, expressly designed to shackle the national soul and sterilize all its efforts" (González, 1986, p. 138).

Supported by historical discourse, Coloradismo grounded its doctrinal propaganda in emphasizing the differences between the "exotic" Liberal government and what the "native" Colorado government could be—an alternative which, according to Natalicio González, drew its inspiration from Paraguay's architects of well-being, José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia and the López family.

Discrepancies with the Government

The first serious questioning of the government that arose in February 1936 came on March 10 of that year, when President Franco's cabinet issued Decree 152. It identified the Liberating Revolution of February 17 with the State. However, a controversial element was Article 3, which stated: "All political activity of a partisan, union, or interest-based nature, whether existing or yet to be created, that does not emanate

⁷ Marshal Francisco Solano López was president of Paraguay during the War of the Triple Alliance. Shortly before perishing at Cerro Corá, he had already been deemed outside God's law;

nevertheless, the government of 1936 joined in the vindication of his memory, and his remains were sought at the place of his death to be placed in the National Pantheon of Heroes.

from the Revolution identified with the State, is hereby prohibited for a period of one year” (Ashwell, 2010, p. 313).

The restrictions imposed by this decree—which sought to silence dissent in order to mold public opinion to the government’s aims—generated discontent within political and union groups. The Colorado party’s reaction was immediate.

On March 12, the Colorados issued a statement claiming to defend the rights of Paraguayan citizens. They described Decree 152 as falsifying and violating the commitment proclaimed by the army at the decisive moments of February 17. They demanded that the president repeal Decree 152 to avoid “fatal and irreparable” harm to the nation (*Patria*, 1936d, p. 1).

The decree was criticized for stripping “...the Paraguayan man of the right to discern and to guide the course of his nation’s affairs...” *Patria* (1936d) addressed its readers with the following words: “Decree No. 152 falsifies, violates, and adulterates the solemn commitment of the liberating army...” (p. 1).

The campaign against the decree intensified over the following days. On March 13, the Colorados again requested its repeal, proposing a new revolutionary coalition for those who had participated in the February 17 uprising (*Patria*, 1936g, p. 1).

The rift between the government and the Colorado party materialized with this decree. From within the government arose the idea of forming a new party, aiming to consolidate itself above the traditional bipartisan system that had characterized the country since 1887. The Unión Nacional Revolucionaria was established, giving rise to the Partido Nacional Revolucionario, composed of unions and committees of the Asociación Nacional Revolucionaria.

The government’s political project of creating a new party and naming the head of state as its leader was openly challenged by the Colorado press:

“To place the Head of State and PERSONAL SYMBOL of the Revolution at the head of a party is to diminish him. In doing so, his MORAL AUTHORITY—an authority that is and must continue to be a decisive factor in

the victory of the revolution over the still-surviving forces of the deposed regime—is undermined” (*Patria*, 1936h, p. 1).

In this vein, the Colorados argued that if the president became the leader of a political faction, it would prove harmful to his administration, undermining the broad support that had allowed the revolution to overthrow Liberalism and thus stifling the nation’s resurgence:

“Any isolated or exclusivist display of civic forces, any partial or sectarian vision of the national moment, will diminish and distort the magnificent work of the great Army of Victory. The national unity that overthrew the dictatorship must endure in civic life for the good of the homeland” (*Patria*, 1936i, p. 1).

Historian José Arce notes that, in March and April, the traditional parties suffered resignations and defections; for this reason, the Colorado party issued communiqués to its members urging them to remain loyal to their party and its cause, reminding them that “the best way to be Paraguayan was to be Colorado” (Arce, 2013, p. 71).

Thus, with the establishment of Decree 152, *Patria* published a headline message affirming that to attack the Colorado party was to attack the most genuine ideals of Paraguayan identity, claiming that Coloradismo embodied an integral nationalism that had served as a refuge during the thirty-two years of “liberal and legionarist dictatorship” (*Patria*, 1936c, p. 1).

Given the influence of Juan Stefanich, a member of the Independent National League, within the Franco government, tensions arose within the ministries. As a result of Stefanich’s growing influence, the Colorado minister Bernardino Caballero resigned, followed by another Colorado, Felipe Molas López, mayor of Asunción.

With these departures, the Colorados criticized the government for repeating the same errors as the Liberals, appointing relatives and loyalists to ministerial positions and disregarding merit as well as the legal and moral considerations of state administration (González, 1986, p. 249).

On October 20, 1936, the magazine *Guaranía* published a critique of the government's attempt to create a new party under the title "*The Ideology of the Libero-Liguista Union*." The article denounced the contradictions of the new party, which excluded the Colorados from revolutionary work while favoring members of the Independent League and other Liberals. It argued that the Colorados were the only ones who had undertaken revolutionary nation-building, whereas the other members of government had proven in only six months that they were incapable of solving the country's problems, as they had merely "...wasted their time in Byzantine disputes and bitter struggles for personal preeminence. They have done nothing else..." (*Guaranía*, 1936a, p. 17).

This criticism became the turning point that led to the definitive rupture between the government and the Colorado party. On October 13, *Patria* published its last issue under Franco's government before being shut down. Weeks later, *Guaranía* suffered the same fate. Its main editors, Natalicio González and Guillermo Enciso Velloso, were arrested and imprisoned at Peña Hermosa military prison (González, 1986, p. 237).

This confirms Alvarado's (2023) assertion that censorship is an unavoidable tool of governments to control the population against both internal and external adversaries, neutralizing political opposition while promoting narratives that validate the actions of ruling elites.

By November 1936, *Guaranía* referred to the February Revolution and the government it had produced as a looting of the people and of the plebiscitary army itself, ending up in the hands of a small group with no democratic roots, which had become an oligarchic dictatorship without moral or political authority—one that maintained itself in power through destructive measures while undermining the true revolutionary forces that could legitimately challenge it (*Guaranía*, 1936b, p. 1).

Nine months after Colonel Franco's rise to power, *Guaranía* painted a bleak picture of his government:

"The government lacks the essential foundation of all effective action: trust, public

confidence in its leadership. Absolute despair in the possibility of national renewal through government action among the neutral apolitical masses, and acute aversion within the nation's political and economic forces, are the results of these nine months. And we have surely reached a point from which no recovery is possible" (*Guaranía*, 1936b, p. 1).

It accused the government of failing to meet expectations, reproaching it for neglecting urgent national problems. It emphasized that the government had managed to alienate foreign capital, the Church, intellectuals and professionals, and even military leaders who had earned prestige in the Chaco War, all of whom had become anti-government forces.

The article condemned President Franco's image: "...It must finally, and regretfully, be admitted that Colonel Franco, owing to the unfortunate actions of his government, has lost the popular prestige with which he came to power" (*Guaranía*, 1936b, p. 1).

Guaranía went even further in its criticism of Franco's personality, asserting that he had become dependent on the will of his ministers: "...because of his cultural and political shortcomings, he surrendered himself into the hands of this intellectual bourgeoisie, which has nothing to learn from or envy in that other Liberal bourgeoisie represented by the lawyers of large foreign concessionary companies..." The article concluded that Franco's government amounted to nothing more than the formation of a new oligarchy—one even more harmful than that of the Liberals, since it lacked both popular support and the intellectual capacity to understand the scope of its responsibilities (*Guaranía*, 1936c, p. 13).

After the closure of the Colorado press, Colonel Franco would not remain in the presidency for even another year, and the social and political hopes invested in his government came to an end in August 1937.

Discussion

The revolution of February 17, 1936, was a momentous event in Paraguayan history for the signs of political and sociocultural change it represented. Studying it from the standpoint of the partisan press in

relation to the government is important, as it highlights the impact of the press on public opinion and underscores political actions within the complex processes of seizing or maintaining power.

Partisan press explains “truth” from the perspective of its own ideals, which are tied to its political doctrine, with the clear intention of influencing public opinion. Hence the clash among media outlets aligned with different political stances, each defending its own version of the truth.

As Gándara (2004) explains, partisan press propaganda defines its ideas or doctrines and seeks to appeal suggestively to the emotions of its readers in order to gain adherents.

The Colorados, from their position as the opposition, raised their voices in protest to undermine liberalism, calling into question the actions the Liberals had carried out during their years in government. For this reason, they enthusiastically supported the formation of a new government in February 1936, led by a prestigious military officer closely connected with the people, who delivered a nationalist discourse that praised historical figures—something the Colorados themselves had also done.

The written media outlets *Patria* and *Guaranía* represented the partisan press of the Colorados, where demands were made for greater participation in government. The government's need for support and political unity, and the Colorados' hope of returning to power, defined the variables in this relationship.

The Colorado campaigns in support of Colonel Franco during the first months of his presidency, carried out through their press outlets, did not influence the government's decision to grant them greater political prominence. This generated disagreements and eventually led to the closure of their media outlets due to their criticism of the government.

The limitation faced by an opposition partisan press emerges when it confronts a government seeking to stabilize itself in power; in such cases, governments take over the media to impose conditions of conduct or close them down altogether. By contrast, newspapers aligned with official positions remain

active, seeking in turn to influence public opinion with propaganda favorable to the authorities.

During Colonel Rafael Franco's government, opposition newspapers appeared for a time, but were later shut down due to their criticism of the regime. The newspaper *Patria* and the magazine *Guaranía* were not spared this fate, as their disparaging articles undermined the government's image.

The Colorado party's support for Colonel Franco's government began to erode over the months. The Colorados saw themselves as participants and architects of the February 17 revolution, and therefore believed it was fair to hold greater political prominence within the spheres of power. However, the government relied instead on figures aligned with other political ideas. By sidelining the Colorado party, President Franco lost the possibility of counting on this political force to face the Liberals in his attempt to consolidate power, as both traditional parties had deep roots among the population. Instead, the government sought to build a new movement under the banner of the February Revolution and the figure of Colonel Franco himself. Yet these efforts were insufficient to overcome the country's socioeconomic problems, or to remain in power and break the two-party system.

Within just six months of February 1936, the Colorados withdrew from government. From then on, criticism of President Rafael Franco increased. His once-praised image was later lamented by the Colorado press, to the point of being portrayed as a man of cultural deficiencies—an assessment that contributed to the closure of their media outlets.

In Paraguay, freedom of expression and freedom of the press had a long road to travel. In fact, Franco's government did not change history in this regard, nor did it bring it to an end. This period under Colonel Rafael Franco represents yet another example of how the relationship between opposition press and government develops into complex dynamics: the role of criticizing and the role of governing.

Conclusion

This study has shown how the Colorado party acted from the opposition through the power of its partisan

press. At first, praise and support were constant, to the point of identifying themselves with the government and the revolution. This remained so until measures contrary to their partisan interests emerged, distancing the Colorados from the circle of power.

The political role of the press is clear in its reach over public opinion. From what may be considered a privileged position, political parties seek to impose their ideas through their newspapers, making them both social and political actors.

It has been demonstrated that the press faces limits to its stability when shut down due to its criticism—an action that reflects the lack of political imagination of governments contrary to democracy. Censorship and persecution are tools employed by governments in their eagerness to maintain and consolidate power.

Different political conceptions and positions within a system of government determine how parties orient themselves within the State. Through the press, they transmit their objectives, struggles, and platforms—whether to attain power or to retain it.

Another salient aspect is how political propaganda seeks to persuade public opinion, while nationalist discourse becomes a key factor in influencing the population. From the opposition, solutions are proposed with the aim of shaping opinion to gain political power. Paraguayan history reflected this situation in various political episodes, such as in 1904 and 1936.

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