

## Publisher of Brazil's Most Important Newspaper Dies at 94

Contributed by José Wilson Miranda  
Tuesday, 01 May 2007

The Brazilian government has decreed a three-day mourning period for the death of Octavio Frias de Oliveira, the real estate man who a little over four decades ago became the owner and publisher of Folha de S. Paulo, transforming a moribund publication into Brazil's largest newspaper and arguably the most important and respected daily, where all voices from the political spectrum have a chance to sound off.

Frias, who died at age 94, was born in Rio de Janeiro, on August 5, 1912. He worked as office-boy, radio set salesman as well as civil servant and in real estate and finances before 1962 when he bought Folha in partnership with entrepreneur Carlos Caldeira Filho.

He wasn't a journalist and never tried to pass as one, but he made Folha into the flagship of a media conglomerate, which includes UOL (Universo On Line - Brazil's largest Internet portal) the Agora newspaper, survey institute DataFolha, publishing house Publifolha and the economic daily Valor, a joint venture with Globo.

"I had some success as a business man," he said on May of last year when he got the Communication Personality prize. "I managed to give my modest contribution to the large collective labor of creating wealth, generating jobs, strengthening companies and launching new products. I credit this success to persevering work and some luck."

Since November the entrepreneur was trying to recover from a surgery to remove a cranial hematoma, due to a fall he had at home. Until then he was in charge of his media empire. His health worsened considerably in the last weeks, leading to kidney failure. He had been in a coma a few days before finally dying on Sunday, April 29.

Frias was buried Monday, April 30, in the Gethsêmani cemetery, in Morumbi, in São Paulo's west side. Among those attending his funeral were Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, São Paulo governor, José Serra, São Paulo mayor, Gilberto Kassab, as well as several ministers, congressmen and São Paulo state legislators.

Lula recalled the good coverage Folha de S. Paulo gave the metallurgists strikes in São Paulo's ABCD Region during the time the president was a union leader in São Bernardo do Campo. He also mentioned the newspaper leading role during the Diretas Já (Direct Elections Now) campaign to reestablish presidential elections in Brazil after 21 years (1964-1985) of military dictatorship.

"He succeeded in making from Folha de S. Paulo an almost obligatory newspaper to those who wanted to read an impartial and critical press," said Lula. "We had a fantastic coverage during the ABC strikes. He was one of the democratization pillars in Brazil and all of us learned a lot with him."

Governor Serra called him a personal friend: "He was a great friend, one of my best friends. He was an adviser during the difficult times and those periods in which I had to take important decisions."

Even a fierce competitor, Ruy Mesquita, one of the owners of O Estado de S. Paulo, the main Folha rival, considered him a friend: "He was my friend and a great businessman. He turned an inexpressive and decadent newspaper into one of the country's best newspapers."