

# Professional and political education at Realengo Military Academy

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## RESUMO

O artigo aborda a primeira etapa do processo de formação profissional de oficiais do Exército Brasileiro que iniciaram suas carreiras no decorrer da década de 1920. Abordando fundamentalmente a Escola Militar do Realengo, instituição que pretendia formar oficiais ‘apolíticos’, investiga-se, a partir de depoimentos e relatos biográficos, aspectos organizacionais e experiências que teriam marcado mais profundamente as primeiras articulações entre a formação profissional e as inclinações para agir politicamente dessa geração. Constatou-se que Escola constituía um espaço politizado no qual os alunos cultivavam disposições para ação política em nome de uma ‘tradição’ oriunda da Escola Militar da Praia Vermelha e de uma missão regeneradora do país.

Palavras-chave: ensino militar; militares e política; ideias políticas.

## ABSTRACT

This article analyses the education of the Brazilian Army officers in the 1920s. Focusing on Realengo Military Academy, it argues that the intentions of the military authorities to provide apolitical training for Brazilian officers were not successful. The sources, testimonies and autobiographies drawn on show the Realengo Military Academy to be a place of political socialization where students shared dispositions for political action on behalf of a ‘tradition’ inherited from the Praia Vermelha Military Academy and a mission of national regeneration.

Keywords: military education; military and politics; political ideas.

This article analyzes the first stage in the professional education of a generation of Brazilian army officers who started their careers in the 1920s. The focus of the investigation is essentially Realengo Military Academy (*Escola Militar do Realengo*), an institution which in this period became exclusive for

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the training of future army officers. Its establishment in 1911, in a then distant suburb of Rio de Janeiro, aimed to meet the demands expressed in successive reforms of military teaching which intended to train new officers who were not politically engaged like their predecessors. These had been trained in Praia Vermelha Military Academy and had had an intense participation in the advent of the Republic and in the Vaccine Revolt. Despite this the generation of officers trained in Realengo Military Academy, which functioned until 1944, did not show themselves to be less inclined to political action. Many of the so-called *tenentes* of 1922 and 1924 started their military lives there, as well as the younger men who were engaged in the 1930 Revolution or the 1935 insurrection. Some of these officers had long political careers parallel to their military careers, so to the contrary of the expectations of the education reformers, a highly politicized generation of officers was produced in Realengo. The focus of this article is the aspects which, based on the sources mapped out, most deeply marked the training of these individuals as army officers and identifies in them the first connections established between the professional training of this generation and their inclination to think and act in relation to political questions. The primary sources used include ministerial reports from the period which directly refer to the Realengo Military Academy, and memoirs or statements made by officers of this generation. Memoirs and statements are considered to be evocations and reworkings produced spontaneously or by the stimulus of mediators/interviewers and talk about both what is being narrated and the narrator himself. As a result, these sources are used to take into account their condition as rationalizations which intend to unify trajectories and legitimate actions and positions which are not anonymous, but are from soldiers with well-known political careers. The reading of these texts, generally produced with temporal distancing and intentions convenient for their protagonists, allow us understand precisely which *experiences* were considered most relevant by the agents. These preparations by soldiers with different trajectories and political positions allow the filtering of what was really striking for soldiers of their generation. This filtering can be done based on the convergence of texts about the relevance and intensity of experiences in Realengo Military Academy.

The research on which this article is based seeks to follow the studies of military education which, in addition to the organizational dimension, seem to understand the particularities of the actors in focus.<sup>1</sup> It is sought here to link the study of institutional aspects (reforms, regulations, curricula) with related experiences, in order to compose a more precise framework of the connections

between the professional and political education of this generation which showed such a strong disposition for political activity. It is thus argued that the Military Academy reverberated part of the crises and political effervescence of the period, however, rather than simply reproducing what was going on outside its walls, the academy constituted a space in which the cadets cultivated dispositions to act in the political sphere as members of the profession of arms. While they learned military knowledge and built up a professional identity perceived to be distinct from previous generations (neither '*doutores*', nor '*tarimbeiros*'), the documents researched allowed the understanding that a vision was built up there of how the cadets and future army officers should implement a transformative mission of the country.

## REFORMS IN MILITARY EDUCATION

The period defined here – which runs from the closing of Praia Vermelha Military Academy, after the 1904 Revolt, includes the functioning of the Porto Alegre School of War (1906-1910), and extends throughout the effective functioning of the Realengo Academy between 1911 and 1944 – covers five reforms of army teaching regulations. Although very different provisions were stipulated about the number and location of establishments for training officers and about the predominance of 'theoretical' or 'practical' disciplines in curricula, all the reforms pointed in the same direction. This involved expanding the troops available, guaranteeing recruitment through obligatory military service, modernizing the organization and armaments and giving future army officers a more professional character. It was the end of the '*bacharéis fardados*' (uniformed graduates) who rivaled those who graduated from law schools and liked to be called *doutores* (doctors). The perception that the new weapons and means of transport would affect how bellic conflicts would be waged and the fear of new military uprisings such as that of 1904 meant that the 1905 regulations no longer trained these 'bachelors of science' in favor of an amplification of 'practical teaching.' Jeová Motta emphasized that the objective of the reforms was to train the *trupier* with a strong military spirit and skilled in shooting, tactics and the rules of service on campaigns.<sup>2</sup> To achieve this a more severe disciplinary regime was established, as well as a curriculum in which the 'professional' disciplines predominated and a complementation of studies in special schools. The dispersal of the academies in distant suburbs in Rio de Janeiro and in Rio Grande do Sul (in Porto Alegre and in Rio Pardo) was

meant to meet the demand for the de-politicization of future officers, which in practice was far from happening.

In 1913 new regulations concentrated the training of officers in Realengo, maintaining as a symbolic reference the French image of the army as the *grande mudo* (literally the great mute) – professional and apolitical. The Report of the Minister of War from the same year reinforces the emphasis on ‘practical teaching.’ The 1918, and subsequently the 1919, regulations sought to understand the transformations which occurred during the First World War. Following the same general orientation of the others, the weight of military disciplines in the curriculum was increased and the military division of students into companies was reinforced. Directly subordinated to the General Staff of the Army, the Military Academy began to qualify its instructors, submitting them to a selection process intended to include practical tests. It was sought to reinforce the professional and meritocratic character, applied to both students and instructors, which opened space for the so-called *Young Turks* to be able to influence the training of new professionals.<sup>3</sup> The 1919 regulations also reorganized the training of officers who had already graduated, so that career progression came to depend on attending institutions of military education during an officer’s career, such as the *Escola de Aperfeiçoamento de Armas* (School of Improvements in Arms), afterwards called the *Escola de Aperfeiçoamento de Oficiais do Exército* (EsAO – School of Improvements for Army Officers), and the *Escola de Estado-Maior* (EEM – General Staff School). The core of this structure and the meritocratic standards that it aimed at are still in force today.

The trajectory of these reforms was not, however, linear. At various opportunities ministerial reports called attention to the precariousness of facilities in the school or the limited equipment for campaign exercises, which hindered the observance of a ‘practical spirit.’ In 1924 a new reform of military teaching sought to achieve a balance between the ‘*bacharelismo*’ of Praia Vermelha and the limiting of officer training to strictly military aspects in such a way that officers would be “up-to-date with the progress of life in the country,” as desired by the Minister of War, General Setembrino de Carvalho. ‘Scientific’ disciplines such as Analytical Geometry and Experimental Physics returned to the curriculum, while new ones became part of it, such as the Mission of the Army and the Social Mission of the Officer. It is possible that this reform was a response to the “deplorable events of July 1922.” However, the same ministerial report emphasizes that officers from the French military mission were included among the school’s instructors. In 1928 military educa-

tion was reformed once again, though the same guidelines as previously were maintained, while the position of Direct of Military Education was created, a strategic position which institutionalized the definition of knowledge to be taught to officers and cadets from then on. After the 1930 Revolution new reforms, organized by José Pessoa, sought to reinforce the identification of students with the army and with the abstract concepts of patria and nation in order to weaken student inclinations towards political involvement. An important dimension of this effort was the adoption of 'new traditions,' such as the creation of a Cadet Corps and the adoption of 'historic uniforms,' of which the handing of Caxias (the patron of the army) rapiers to cadets in a solemn ceremony was the most important symbolic element.<sup>4</sup>

The reforms were not restricted to the Realengo Military Academy, they were actually part of a broader process of successive restructurings of the army as a whole, which sought to follow similar processes underway in Argentina and Chile and to rectify the weaknesses found in internal conflicts, such as the *Contestado*. In the period covered here the military corporation adopted an organic structure similar to modern armies with large units and territorial commands, created the law of obligatory military service and with it the beginning of the formation of reserves, and also implemented the instruction and training of troops as a regular practice. It was in this context that, despite being modest in terms of resources and in an army still suffering from the competition of state police forces, the professionalization of officers took a leap forwards.

Situated in this institutional panorama related to the military training system of the period, we can look at the generation who were then trained and the experiences internalized, which, despite being filtered through the memory of those giving statements and the memoirs used as sources here, appear to have been most striking in the constitution and individualization of a determined form of perceiving the world and politics.

## TEACHING IN REALENGO MILITARY ACADEMY

When the generation being looked at here studied in Realengo Military Academy, it had already been structured in such a manner that the organization of space, time and the cadets themselves was very similar to what happened in French or US academies. The academy occupied a physical space separated from the common soldiers, distant from the center of Rio de Janeiro, and progressively adopted a boarding system. It also had a training field in which the future officers were to exercise and to put into practice their knowl-

edge of bellic operations. Students were immediately militarized, deployed in companies, and particularly after 1919, submitted to a severe disciplinary regime which exercised almost total control over their time and activities.

This experience, collectively lived and symbolically marked by rites of passage such as the *'trote'* (hazing) of freshmen cadets, exams, the choice of Arms, maneuvers, and finally graduation, inscribed in students a strong sense of belonging to the army institution and to their class. It involved transforming adolescents and young civilians, although many of them came from military schools, into professional army officers. In addition to specific knowledge, the Military Academy was responsible for teaching them the 'military spirit,' which would be facilitated by the adoption of a teaching system with these characteristics, (Castro, 2004, p.122ss).

Professionalization and the reinforcement of the use of meritocratic criteria for progression in the career did not begin with the generation being looked at here, nor did it eliminate the traditional clientelist mechanisms which impregnated the Brazilian military institution.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the reforms in military teaching, the activism of the *Young Turks* and the contracting of the French mission reinforced the perception of this generation as being distinct from previous ones. A soldier with a long and well known political career, Cordeiro de Farias, reports in his statement that in 1919 his class was the first which "left the school with a truly military education," because until then studies of calculus and physics had been dominant without there being any systematic military instruction.<sup>6</sup> The reinforcement of military education involved the expansion of specific content (use of firearms, fortification, tactics of the different arms, etc.) and with the adoption of field instructions and maneuvers simulating war operations. The latter constituted a significant change, since even students from military schools encountered difficulties in adapting to its rigor and demands in terms of physical aptitude. João Punaro Bley, who entered Realengo in 1918 and who had studied in Barbacena Military College, described the field exercises as 'frequently inhumane,' and in 1920 Castelo Branco ended up in the infirmary after his attempt to pass the obstacle course through which cadets had to run with all their campaign equipment.<sup>7</sup>

The routine in the military academy described in many statements was intense, if not total. Both Juarez Távora (a student between 1917 and 1919) and João Alberto (a student between 1919 and 1922) reported in their memoirs that the reveille was at 4.30 in the morning; at 6, after having washed, had breakfast and presented morning formation, field teaching began, lasting until 9 am. At 10 the theoretical classes began, and only between 4 and 6 pm did

the students have free time outside school. Two more inspections and a period stipulated for studies completed the students' day, which finished at 10 pm with curfew.<sup>8</sup> Students' time and their daily activities, including permission to leave school at weekends, were submitted to the authority of the academy commander. All this discipline was intended to prepare the future officers for obedience to the strict hierarchical principles which ruled military life and for submission to the movements and designations of function which also characterized this profession.

The intense discipline and the '*trote*,' to which new students were subjected by older ones, were part of what Janowitz designates the 'violent and sudden' transition to the military academy life in which the "interminable routines and the system of intimidation of freshmen was justified as a means of self-control, as well as resistance to panic."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, abnegation and the capacity to withstand extenuating circumstances appear to have become at this time requirements for beginning a military career. Henrique Teixeira Lott, who was a cadet under the 1905 and 1913 regulations and afterwards was an instructor, emphasized that in Realengo

we had a greater possibility to educate ourselves professionally in the instruction of combat. When I was in the Military Academy, I had the rough hands that come from digging trenches. In compensation, later I made many people dig trenches, including two presidents of the Republic—Castelo Branco and Costa e Silva—, who had to roughen their hands when I was the instructor in the organization of terrain.<sup>10</sup>

The belief in the primacy of individual merit over clientelism or any form of privilege or favor seems to have been diffused among the Realengo cadets, whose results in the academy classified them for the choice of 'arms' and later for the designations of the posts in which they would serve in their last year as a cadet (as *aspirants*).<sup>11</sup> The progressive assimilation of a 'strong military spirit' included not only the individuation of disciplinary habits and new knowledge specific to the military environment. It also to a great extent occurred with the internalization of values and postures with which the cadets deemed themselves distinctive and morally superior. This distinction, invested in the uniform and by what it represented for them, was constructed in opposition to the *paisanos* (a pejorative designation which the military gave to civilians), particularly in regard to politics and civilian politicians.

## POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND CIVILIAN REPULSION

Despite the consolidation of civilian power in the First Republic during the Prudente de Moraes and Campos Sales governments and the efforts to neutralize the intervention of the military in politics, the trajectories of many cadets of this period were marked by political experience. With the closing of the Military Academy of Praia Vermelha, a large contingent of students not punished or amnestied after the inquiries following the *Revolta da Vacina* (Vaccine Revolt) were transferred to Porto Alegre. Created in 1906, the School of War, successor to the Preparatory and Tactical School of Porto Alegre, had more than six hundred students. This ‘invasion of students’ had an impact on the city and local politics, so much so that the following year a group of students was firmly engaged in the electoral disputes of the Rio Grande Republican Party, composing with the students of the faculty of law the *Bloco Acadêmico Castilhistas*.<sup>12</sup> Amongst other members of this groups were the cadets Eurico Gaspar Dutra and Pedro Aurélio de Góes Monteiro, as well as Getúlio Vargas, Maurício Cardoso, Lindolfo Collor and João Neves da Fontoura. In 1906 the cadets circulated the journal *Occidente*, in which, according to Laudelino Medeiros, Comtean positivism predominated in the social articles. In 1908 the journal *Cruzada* entered circulation, whose political engagement was not restricted to the reproductions of articles from *A Federação* – the official paper of the Rio Grande Republican Party – and praise of Benjamin Constant. In its first issue the journal advocated a ‘regenerative crusade’ and in a tone typical of Florianist Jacobinism, declared: “We have the praiseworthy intention of modestly working for the future of our dear patria, preventing the moral melt-down which has been leading the Republic into the absolute regime of demoralization” (*apud* Medeiros, 1992, p.62).

It was found that much of the spirit of radicalism and hostility to civilian politicians and the liberal model at the beginning of the Republic still existed in officer training spaces during the period in question. It is for this reason that Cordeiro de Farias states that his “generation became political because the previous one had been political” (Camargo; Góes, 1981, p.70). The circulation of values and attitudes contesting the current political order was also registered by Ernesto Geisel in his statement. When he was still in the Military Academy, also in Porto Alegre, Geisel and his colleagues had been contaminated by the ‘ideas of 1922’ when some older former colleagues, who had participated in the rising, returned to Rio Grande do Sul bringing with them the ‘idealism of revolution.’ This occurred in such a manner that, for him, “the generation that



was trained at that time in Porto Alegre Military Academy, and in other academies, was frankly revolutionary.” Nelson Werneck Sodré reported that when he was still a boy, he had his first contact with army officers – and with politics – due to the Copacabana Fort Rising (D’Araujo; Castro, 1997, p.28s; Sodré, 1986, p.11s). The impact of the 1922 Rising was considerable and the adhesion of cadets meant that according to the ministerial report of that year, 584 were expelled from the academy.

Much has already been said about the ideology of the *tenentista* movement. This debate probably began in 1927, when Juarez Távora published *À guisa de um depoimento...*, and decades later it was taken over by academia which discussed whether it was a middle class movement or a strictly military one.<sup>13</sup> What the statements of the agents show is that there was a strong feeling of repulsion towards the political model then in force, of generalized disbelief in the politicians of the time, and a self-perception on the part of these cadets and junior officers that they represented a type of moral reserve of the nation, whose action would not take place along institutionalized paths. “We thought that the government was corrupt and inept, that what existed was but petty politics,” and “and when we become officers, we will influence this country for the better,” Geisel stated (D’Araujo; Castro, 1997, p.29). The 1922 election mobilized the expectations of these cadets and junior officers, however the defeat of their candidate to Artur Bernardes, even before the episode of the false letters – which was the trigger for the military rising of that year, was very badly received and only increased their disbelief in the existing institutions. Cordeiro de Farias put the issue as follows:

Personally I felt frustrated in my attempts to participate in politics via normal means, through the electoral process and voting. The officers felt very bad. The young officers, such as myself, felt upset with the defeat, once more a fruit of the old arrangements of the political oligarchy. We concluded that the situation had to be changed. (Camargo; Góes, 1981, p.71)

These dispositions towards political action were distinguished from *hermismo* and the so-called *salvações*, which had marked the return of the military to the Brazilian political scene in 1910. This is because these phenomenon were perfectly inscribed in the practices of the system then in force, and the reports investigated converge towards a feeling of non-conformism and the cultivation among cadets and junior officers of dispositions to transform the political system. The sense of change was at the very minimum vague and imprecise in

terms of political programs or orientations. Once again according to Cordeiro de Farias: “We left shooting everywhere.” Nevertheless, one thing was certain: the influence of the French mission on this set of young officers guaranteed the internalization of a sense of professionalism and a standard of modern organization without, however, the adoption of the image of the army as the *grande mudo*, immune to political questions. Geisel was very explicit regarding this: “The French Mission had a strictly professional influence on us... In relation to our mentality, our political orientation, it was of no importance” (D’Araujo; Castro, 1997, p.42). Despite the emphasis on professional teaching, the academy was a politicized space in which students developed visions critical of the First Republic. This undesired effect of professional training can only be understood in part when the growing political radicalization of the epoch is observed. What also has to be paid attention to are the symbolic references which inhabited the education of new officers

## THE LONG DURATION OF POSITIVISM

Although military teaching at the time was changing constantly, there was a gap between what appeared in the new regulations and what actually occurred in the classrooms. Jeová Motta calls attention to part of the teaching staff who were not very affected of the changes and to the fact that the theoretical classes did not differ much from the model practiced in the time of Praia Vermelha. Similarly, Werneck Sodré mentions in his memoirs the continuity of a ‘scientific spirit’ unattached to any military application in Realengo at the beginning of the 1930s (Motta, 1976, p.312; Sodré, 1986, p.88). In his memoirs José Campos Aragão comments that positivism still made itself felt among the teachers and the students in Realengo. According to the latter the first year geometry teacher magnetized the students with his quotations of Augusto Comte, making them incorporate in their vocabulary clichés from positivist philosophy.

The continuity of references to positivism, to Florianism and to Benjamin Constant among the cadets operated as a vector of the desire of this generation for political intervention. Associating the creation of the Republic with the Army and ‘the disaster that is coming’ with ‘professional politicians,’ this generation reactivated the memory of the political activism of their predecessors in Praia Vermelha and constructed a self-image in which they felt morally superior to the oligarchies who governed the country and as such saw themselves as the ‘sentinels of the Republican regime.’ None of those giving state-

ments or writing memorials declared themselves to be positivists and in the period covered here Comtism was in decline. However, elements of positivist discourse were present in Realengo and its instrumental use mixed with other contemporary elements made sense when cadets and junior officers began to produce representations about the political role that they should occupy as soldiers.

The Military Academy prepared the future leaders of the Brazilian army, and both the institution and the students knew this. In Realengo the academic curriculum, the experience of living in a boarding system, and the strong degree of solidarity among the cadets, instilled in them the knowledge, taste, affinities, values and expectations of a future officer, at the same time that this fused with a type of commitment to the patria which went much further than defense, connecting with a republican 'tradition' of 'revolutionary leaps' in defense of the nation. In his memoirs, Campos Aragão illustrates this republican mysticism which Benjamin Constant was invoking to illustrate and legitimate the belief in the political protagonism of officers as a duty:

I felt that a pride was growing in all those wearing the khaki uniform. And the cadets knew how to overestimate themselves. For them being a student meant belonging to a very elevated caste. Furthermore, national history began to cite the name of the academy. Yes, the chapter of the Republic was known by all, with the great Benjamin Constant being a true source of pride for all the generations of Praia Vermelha. And from then on upon all those occasions when the structure of democratic principles was attacked the enthusiastic soul of the cadet did not hesitate in committing himself to the revolutionary leaps.

Campos Aragão was studying in Realengo when the French mission was already more than consolidated with the Brazilian Army and he experienced another important reform of military teaching, commanded by General José Pessoa. However, for him the continuity of the political activism of the cadets and the feeling that mobilized them was clear and immediate: "The reflections of 1889 illuminated the whole rebelliousness climate of 1922. Realengo Academy had fully inherited the conscience of Praia Vermelha."<sup>14</sup>

When he recounts the repercussions of the 1930 Revolution among the cadets of his time, once again there appears the reactivation of a 'tradition' of political engagement which intended to act in defense of the republican regime. Although the adhesion of officers to the 1930 Revolution was

only partial, the cadets did everything to also be protagonists. Aragão comments that even though the revolutionary command did not need more troops,

the mass [of cadets] was fanatic about the idea that they were responsible for guaranteeing the victory of the revolution in Rio de Janeiro. The historical 'leaps' of Praia Vermelha and even those in Realengo were the high point of the exploitation of some talented and inflamed comrades who raised their voices to show: The Academy should go down! ... We remember 1922! There is a tradition of Praia Vermelha to guard! ... Academy go down! (ibidem, p.206)

In fact the Academy did 'go down' to the center of Rio de Janeiro, guarded some points considered to be strategic, guided the traffic, and, according to Aragão, when the head of the revolution reached Rio to take power the cadets presented their 'guard of honor.'

#### THE GENESIS OF A REPERTOIRE OF POLITICAL ACTION

The years of intense experiences which the students accumulated in the institutions which trained Brazilian military officers, as was to be expected, left profound marks on the modes of being of these individuals. The experiences, nostalgically remembered in autobiographies and discourses, and the choices made there helped to train officers within determined parameters. This parameter, as we have seen, was increasingly 'professional' and 'technical' and supposed a political disengagement, something which was far from happening. Also reinforced in this process was a secular tendency of the identification of officers with their institution and the consequent withdrawal from their identities with other parts of society. For Teitler Gerke this tendency is characteristic of military professionals who, in addition to possessing specific technical knowledge linked to the exercise of their functions, shared with their peers a feeling of belonging to a distinct social group. Thus, for Gerke, the

*esprit de corps* had its roots in the period of learning common in encampments. This period nurtures a feeling of equality and of being capable of accomplishments which cannot be imitated by non-professionals ... While the idea that relationships and highly qualified functioning are increasingly important, the supervision of professional activities should not be left in the hands of intruders.

For this author, it is precisely in opposite to ‘intruders’ – in other words civilians – that the identity of the military professional is constructed:

Consciously relegating intruders expands the possibilities of creating a differentiated style of life, even apart from the exceptional, technically determined, position the professional occupies. In this way the conscious cultivation of, and the emphasis on, traditions, group attitudes, norms and values constitutes a part of the characteristics of the military profession.<sup>15</sup>

The training of its members, monopolized by the army, thereby constituted a decisive process for the consolidation and reproduction of the institution. Military education is also a form of socialization which develops in individuals the feeling of group cohesion and the adoption of shared values, which in the last instance guarantee a relative homogeneity in terms of expectations, interests and attitudes and consequently distinction in relation to civilians. The years in which they attend the military academy are decisive in the formation of officers’ identities.

The training which the generation of army officers focused on in this paper experienced combined, in a complex form, professionalism and political interventionism in the sense of developing among them the perception that only military action in the political sphere could guarantee an actually professional army safe from the influxes and co-options of the political struggle.

In part this can be explained by the discontent in the ranks of the army. José Murilo de Carvalho notes that the *tenentes* represented two thirds of the officer corps and that the reintegration of the Praia Vermelha rebels, the low level of hierarchical control and the slow promotions favored rebellion. Frank McCann emphasizes the generalized dissatisfaction among the junior officers, discontent with the military leadership, with the French mission, and with political institutions; this would not have left the military academy untouched.<sup>16</sup> The approaches focused on in the organizational structure of the army tended to bypass the dynamics that existed among the agents in question, and in fact, by and for them, it was not just an institutional project that was being forged, but a much more pretentious idea of what the country should be like. This attitude, it can be said, of defending the corporation against threats or limits imposed by the state and the civilian world was also based on the cultivation of the interventionist tradition of the army at the beginning of the republic and deep-rooted belief that, although they appropriated the specific knowledge of the ‘craft of arms’ and its deontology, while they reinforced their

ties of solidarity – ‘comradeship’ – and homogenized their affinities, the officers studied here believed that the army was the actual incarnation of the Brazilian nation, and that the young officers were the sole true defenders of the nation. In their training they developed a disposition to think and act as an exceptionally well qualified and morally superior group whose commitment to the ‘nation’ as officers would go much beyond strict obedience to the state, and called them to a regenerating mission for the country.

In his memoirs João Alberto doubts that the political events in which he was ‘involved’ would have exercised as much influence in his life, had he not been an army officer. Aurélio Lira Tavares, who stated that he became ‘increasingly more Brazilian’ in the years he studied in Realengo, between 1923 and 1925, gave the most precise formulation about how his peers resolved the apparent contradiction between professionalism and political activism. For him, his “generation, so enthusiastic with their professional duties” did not avoid its role, since “we had the conviction that the revolutionaries of ‘22, ‘24 and ‘30 represented the young elite in what they were ... most expressive and most pure,” fighting with violence to open the paths to the “generalized anxieties of the Nation.” Built into this discourse there was a belief in the moral superiority of the officers who, as an enlightened elite and with pure intentions, would modernize the country, freeing it from the social ills caused by political professionalism and the selfishness of those who administered Brazil. From the other side of the ideological spectrum, Apolônio de Carvalho also reported that as he professionally improved, he increasingly harbored the dream of a new society.<sup>17</sup>

In the years when they shared the extenuating routine of military schools and afterwards the Military Academy, the students – and later cadets – developed strong bonds of comradeship and associationism among themselves. One example of this is the Civic Literary Society of the Military College of Porto Alegre. In this the students held literary soirees and proclaimed that, “inspired by elevated sentiments of civism and patriotism”, they were engaged in local politics against those who “corrupted and misled society.”<sup>18</sup> In Realengo the associationism of the cadets was also intense. In addition to an athletic society, there was an Academic Society which published periodicals. At a time when the boarding system was more flexible, due to the precariousness of facilities or the excess of students, many cadets lived in ‘*repúblicas*’ (student housing) near to the school. Other students whose political trajectories are well known, such as Siqueira Campos, Eduardo Gomes and Luís Carlos Prestes, had a space

outside the school in which they discussed politics and questions related to the First World War, which was then attracting everyone's attention.

The ties established there are of singular importance for the accumulation of solidarity, shared experiences and a specific scheme for understanding the world. Its internalization composes the mode of being which distinguishes the military profession from the others. The strength of these ties was shown during political engagements. Cordeiro de Farias, referring to the period of the Prestes Column, attributes his success in the confrontations with the legalist forces to the ties established in Realengo: "We were incredibly united, like true brothers, and between us there was neither jealousy nor secretes. There existed an inseparable union which linked us like members of a family" (Camargo; Góes, 1981, p.65ss and 126ss).

In referring to Praia Vermelha Military Academy, Celso Castro emphasizes that a large amount of the spreading of positivism was the responsibility of students. Due to this intense associationism, what circulated among them, in their specific spaces of socialization, can have been as important as the disciplines and programs taught in the configuration of a determined type of education in the Military Academy. The associationism of students functioned in some aspects in a similar manner to the German *Kaiserreich* of dueling groups and nationalist confraternities studied by Norbert Elias. More than the discipline and the knowledge instilled by the academy, these students' association also exercised a 'strongly standardizing function,' giving a relatively uniform imprint to people from different regions of the country and cultivating a network of relations with which it was difficult for agents to break.<sup>19</sup> For the generation who went to Realengo in the 1920s, the ties cultivated there and the standards of behavior and expectations continued to work with a strong identity element. In the 1930s, in turn, there were indications that some of these ties of comradeship also involve a discrete communist militancy, the impact of which would be felt in 1935 (Cunha, 2002, p.47).

The relationship between professional military education and political education in Realengo involved the type of education, the reactivation of a 'tradition' coming from Praia Vermelha and the specific socialization that the agents developed among themselves. Here another factor needs to be considered, the readings and debates which circulated among them and which contributed to their dissemination of what was not exactly a specific vision of the world, but a range of possibilities of representations and the production of meaning for phenomenon which mobilized the agents. This is of fundamental importance, since it was also on the basis of these readings that these cadets

and young officers began to compose the repertoire of what they thought and frequently used in politics

However, it is prudent to question the scope of these readings. Military education, especially that which had progressively been implemented during the period being looked at here, did not require the erudition and knowledge, even though not rarely it was only ornamental – as was common in faculties of law– of the so-called classics and the philosophical currents then in fashion. The actual hierarchical structure of the barracks discourages debate. Moreover, it is also quite improbable that the majority of students, after a long day of exercises and studies for exams and questionings, would have much time for reading anything more dense than novels about chivalry or biographies of the great generals. The majority of them probably read very little; nevertheless, it would not be absurd to suppose that those who actually read were active in academic societies and edited periodicals, were capable of disseminating or reproducing authors, controversies, arguments and debates which ended up influencing the other students. Although it is difficult to quantify, some individuals counted on a more lettered family environment and called themselves ‘voracious readers’ in statements or biographies. This is the case of Ernesto Geisel, whose father bought collections of literature books annually, as well as Nelson Werneck Sodré, an admirer of Jules Verne in his childhood.

The readings were appropriated to a large extent under an instrumental prism in the sense of being ‘action orientated’ and generally speaking were critical of current institutions. Cordeiro de Farias comments that he became aware of *Os sertões* by Euclides da Cunha due to the influence of his father, a Florianist army officer, and that because there was no regular reading program in the Military Academy, they had ‘free and spontaneous’ readings. It is possible to approximate these readings based on the report of Lira Tavares, for whom the principal readings of the 1920s were: José Bonifácio, Tavares Bastos, Euclides da Cunha, Couto de Magalhães, Roquete Pinto and Oliveira Viana. Special emphasis, however, was given to Alberto Torres, who according to Lira Tavares had many followers. Reading of his work provided a large part of the content and the categories of criticism of the current political regime, as well as the practice of formulating them based on a type of diagnosis of ‘Brazilian problems.’ The correlation between reading and political action was clear in the words of Lira Tavares:

Alberto Torres’ book attracted our enthusiasm due to his ideas, but between them and what had to be done to put them into practice there was, in addition



to inexperience which encouraged us to accept them as definitely valid, the barrier of the dominant mentality and the forces which opposed large changes: political professionalism, electoral *coronelismo*, the monopoly of economic power, and much more than this, lack of knowledge of Brazilian realities, of the great national problems, as well as the lack of formulas and programs to effectively resolve them. (Camargo; Góes, 1981, p.69; Tavares, 1976, p.48)

Antônio Carlos Murici, who was a friend and colleague of Lira Tavares in Realengo, shared the same influences and readings which, according to him conferred

the will to fight for Brazil on me and my generation. Everyone from my generation who was aware began to study Brazilian problems at that time. The 1920s were a time of transformation of Brazil, of the mentality of young Brazilians fighting for Brazil. It was there we felt that we were backward, that we needed to produce in any form. Not just politically backwards, it was also economic and social.<sup>20</sup>

## CONCLUSION

During the 1920s, a period of growing political and cultural effervescence in Brazil, which ushered in a crisis of the politico-institutional model – and of society – all institutions were to some extent questioned: political parties, the state, the church, the armed forces, ‘Brazilian culture.’ In this period the training of future army officers took place under the aegis of constituting a new professional army, technically up-to-date and apolitical.

The reports analyzed here show that the belief in the imperative need for a ‘modern’ and ‘efficient’ army was incorporated as an essential part of the deontology of these new officers. Along with it, however, these individuals of this generation also built a scheme of perceiving and classifying the world in which the ‘modern’ officer believed that he belonged to an elite morally superior to the one which administered the country and lacked belief in liberal institutions. The resort to the ‘tradition of Praia Vermelha’ appeared as a rhetorical innovation to justify the political activities of cadets and young officers as soldiers. At the same time, it is also an indicator that the spaces for training officers (not only according to the curriculum or the teachers, but also according to the values and practices shared and reproduced among the cadets) in-

scribed in individuals forms of perceiving and acting marked by the belief that these officers were a type of ‘guardians of the Republic,’ and for which a moralization of the political customs of Brazil was necessary, and that this would not occur among the current institutions.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See for example, CASTRO, Celso. *Os militares e a República: um estudo sobre cultura e ação política*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1995; CASTRO, Celso. *O espírito militar: um antropólogo na caserna*. 2.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2004; and SEIDL, Ernesto. *A espada como “vocação”: padrões de recrutamento e seleção das elites do Exército no Rio Grande do Sul (1850-1930)*. Porto Alegre: Ed. UFRGS, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> MOTTA, Jeovah. *Formação do oficial do exército*. Rio de Janeiro: Artes Gráficas, 1976. p.271.

<sup>3</sup> The *Young Turks* consisted of a group of officers who trained with the German army between 1906 and 1910. When they returned they strongly engaged in a campaign for the strengthening and modernization of the army and for its members to withdraw from civilian political fights. In 1913 they founded the journal *A Defesa Nacional*, in which they publicized their positions. CARVALHO, José Murilo de. *As Forças Armadas na Primeira República: o poder desestabilizador*. In: \_\_\_\_\_. *Forças Armadas e política no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2005. p.27.

<sup>4</sup> CASTRO, Celso. *A invenção do exército*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2002. p.42.

<sup>5</sup> In relation to the question of meritocracy, see SEIDL, 1999, p.44ss, and for clientelism, perceptible in various officer statements, see, for example: D’ARAÚJO, Maria Celina; CASTRO, Celso (Org.) *Ernesto Geisel*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. FGV, 1997. p.103; and SODRÉ, Nelson Werneck. *Do tenentismo ao Estado Novo: memórias de um soldado*. 2.ed. Petrópolis (RJ): Vozes, 1986. p.251 and 267ss.

<sup>6</sup> CAMARGO, Aspásia; GÓES, Walder de. *Meio século de combate: diálogo com Cordeiro de Farias*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1981. p.65.

<sup>7</sup> Manuscript with the memoirs of João Punaro Bley. CPDOC/FGV JPB d 00.00.0000/2 p.12; NETO, Lira. *Castello: a marcha para a ditadura*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2004. p.39.

<sup>8</sup> TÁVORA, Juarez. *Uma vida e muitas lutas*. v.1. Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio Ed., 1973. p.86; BARROS, João Alberto Lins de. *Memórias de um revolucionário*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1954. p.16ss.

<sup>9</sup> JANOWITZ, Morris. *O soldado profissional: estudo social e político*. Rio de Janeiro: GRD, 1967. p.131ss; in relation to the *trote*, see CASTRO, 1995, p.34.

<sup>10</sup> LOTT, Henrique Batista Duffles Teixeira. *Henrique Teixeira Lott (depoimento, 1978)*. Rio de Janeiro, CPDOC, 2002. p.10.

<sup>11</sup> At the end of the second year the cadets had to choose in which branch of the army they would complete their training and follow their career. At this time the 'arms' were Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery and Engineering, with the latter two being the most prestigious and disputed. The possibility of choice, however, depended on the position of the student in the general classification of their class.

<sup>12</sup> MEDEIROS, Laudelino. *Escola Militar de Porto Alegre (1853-1911): significado cultural*. Porto Alegre: Ed. UFRGS, 1992. p.39; LOVE, Joseph L. *O regionalismo gaúcho e as origens da Revolução de 1930*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1975. p.90.

<sup>13</sup> TÁVORA, Juarez. *À guisa de um depoimento sobre a revolução brasileira de 1924*. São Paulo: Ed. O Combate, 1927. In relation to this question, see, for example, FORJAZ, Maria Cecília. *Tenentismo e política: tenentismo e camadas médias urbanas na crise da Primeira República*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1977. p.31ss; COELHO, Edmundo C. *Em busca da identidade: o exército e a política na sociedade brasileira*. 2.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2000. p.100. For greater details on this historiographic debate, see FORJAZ, Maria Cecília. *Tenentismo e Forças Armadas na Revolução de 30*. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1988. Especially the first part of chapter IV.

<sup>14</sup> ARAGÃO, J. Campos de. *Histórias para soldados*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército, 1964. p.184.

<sup>15</sup> GERKE, Teitler. La genesis de los cuerpos de oficiales profesionales. Aspectos teóricos. In: BAÑÓN, Rafael; OLMEDA, José. (Comp.) *La institución militar en el Estado contemporáneo*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1985. p.166.

<sup>16</sup> CARVALHO, 2005, p.36; McCANN, Frank. *Soldados da Pátria: história do Exército Brasileiro (1888-1937)*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2007. p.282ss.

<sup>17</sup> BARROS, 1954, p.14; LYRA TAVARES, Aurélio. *O Brasil de minha geração*. Rio de Janeiro: Bibliex, 1976. p.38; CUNHA, Paulo R. *Um olhar à esquerda: utopia tenentista na construção do pensamento marxista de Nelson Werneck Sodré*. Rio de Janeiro: Revan, 2002. p.49.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in DULLES, John Foster. *Castello Branco: o presidente reformador*. Brasília: Ed. UnB, 1983. p.12ss.

<sup>19</sup> ELIAS, Norbert. *Os alemães*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1997. p.57.

<sup>20</sup> Statement of Antônio Carlos Murici to CPDOC, p.44.