
QUALIFIED NURSES FOR THE AIR FORCE: THE ORGANIZATION OF A MILITARY GROUP FOR THE SECOND WORLD WAR¹

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ABSTRACT: The objectives of this historical and social study were: to describe the circumstances of the case that prompted the establishment of relations between Anna Nery School and the Brazilian Air Force, during World War II, and analyze the organization process of the Nurses Group of the Air Force Reserves, which consisted of alumni from this School, to work with the Brazilian Air Force's 1st Hunting Group on the Italian front. The historical sources consisted of written and photographic documents. For the analysis and interpretation of the data, the concepts of Pierre Bourdieu's Social World Theory were considered. The results showed the active participation of this School in the official incorporation process of nurses in the Air Force during the war, which permitted the conquest of a unique space for professional practice at a historic moment of extreme drama, when the honorable and necessary actions of nurses were observed in military scenarios.

DESCRIPTORS: Nursing. History of nursing. Military nursing. World War II.

ENFERMEIRAS DIPLOMADAS PARA A AERONÁUTICA: A ORGANIZAÇÃO DE UM QUADRO MILITAR PARA A SEGUNDA GUERRA MUNDIAL

RESUMO: Estudo histórico-social, cujos objetivos foram: descrever as circunstâncias que ensejaram o estabelecimento de relações entre a Escola Anna Nery e a Força Aérea Brasileira, durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial, e analisar o processo de organização do Quadro de Enfermeiras da Reserva da Aeronáutica, que foi formado com alunas egressas desta Escola para atuar junto ao 1^o Grupo de Caça da Força Aérea Brasileira, no Teatro de Operações Italiano. As fontes históricas constaram de documentos escritos e fotográficos. Para a análise e interpretação dos dados, foram considerados os conceitos da Teoria do Mundo Social de Pierre Bourdieu. Os resultados evidenciaram a participação ativa desta Escola no processo de incorporação oficial de enfermeiras na Força Aérea durante a guerra, o que viabilizou a conquista de um espaço inédito para a prática profissional em um momento histórico de extrema dramaticidade, quando se evidenciou a atuação honrosa e requerida de enfermeiras em cenários militarizados.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Enfermagem. História da enfermagem. Enfermagem militar. II Guerra Mundial.

ENFERMERAS DIPLOMADAS PARA LA AERONÁUTICA: LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE UN CUADRO MILITAR PARA LA SEGUNDA GUERRA MUNDIAL

RESUMEN: Estudio histórico-social, cuyos objetivos son: describir las circunstancias del establecimiento de las relaciones entre la Escuela Anna Nery y la Fuerza Aérea Brasileña, durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, y analizar el proceso de organización del Cuadro de las Enfermeras de la Reserva de la Aeronáutica, que se formó con las estudiantes graduadas de esta escuela para trabajar con el Grupo del Caza de la Fuerza Aérea Brasileña, en el Teatro de Operaciones Italiano. Las fuentes históricas consistieron en documentos escritos y fotográficos. Para el análisis y la interpretación de los datos, fueron considerados los conceptos de la Teoría del Mundo Social de Pierre Bourdieu. Los resultados mostraron la participación activa de esta Escuela en el proceso de incorporación oficial de enfermeras en la Fuerza Aérea durante la Guerra, que permitió la conquista de un espacio único para la práctica profesional en un momento histórico, de extremo drama; cuando se evidenciaron las acciones honorables y necesarias de las enfermeras en escenarios militarizados.

DESCRIPTORES: Enfermería. Historia de la enfermería. Enfermería Militar. Segunda Guerra Mundial.

INTRODUCTION

In this study, the contribution of Anna Nery School (ANS) to the Health Service of the Brazilian Air Force (BAF) is discussed, which culminated in the organization of the Nurses Group of the Air Force Reserves. Including six graduates from ANS, this Group worked with the Brazilian Air Force's 1st Hunting Group at the Italian front.*

Getúlio Vargas' New State and the Second World War are part of the political-social context that served as the background for this process, through the favorable position towards the possibility of female nurses' active participation in military scenarios. In fact, the war the New State press disseminated contained such drama that countless nurses put themselves at their country's disposal.¹

During this interval, the ANS attempted to legitimize its participation in the organization of the first female group of nursing officers in the Air Force. Hence, while the School responded to the appeals of war, it also attempted to join symbolic profits for the construction of an altruistic but also emancipated nursing model.¹

In that sense, the following objectives were outlined: to describe the circumstances that led to the establishment of relations between Anna Nery School and the Brazilian Air Force during the Second World War, and to analyze the organization process of the Nurses Group of the Air Force Reserves, including graduates from the School, to work with the Brazilian Air Force's 1st Hunting Group at the Italian front.

Whereas Brazilian nursing history studies about the organization of military nursing corps during World War Two generally highlight nurses who were incorporated into the army through the Brazilian Expeditionary Forces, this study particularly focuses on the case of the air force nurses in the 1st Hunting Group, whose action differed from nurses in the army, especially because of the selection criteria, training and activities at the front. In addition, it is relevant as it reveals some excerpts from a history marked by strategies aimed at positively distinguished nursing practice, also in situations of chaos, which ended up signaling the (re)organization of female corps in the Brazilian Armed Forces as from the 1980's.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACH

A historical-social, qualitative and documentary research was developed. The primary sources were written documents located in the Documentation Center of Anna Nery School, in the series "The Mission: 1922-1931", "The Pioneers (Lays Netto dos Reys)", "Voluntary Rescuers of War (1942-1945)" and "Undergraduate Program". In the latter, data were found about the nurses who participated in the Nurses Group of the Air Force Reserves while they were students at ANS. The two photographs used here were found in the Documentation Center's image collection and in the Collection of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (Duque de Caxias Palace, Rio de Janeiro). In addition, official documents, biographical sketches, rare books and compliments published in military bulletins were consulted, the latter of which belonged to the collection of the Monument for the Dead of the Second World War (Rio de Janeiro). As regards the secondary sources, references were used that are closely linked to the theme.

The selected historical sources were treated with the help of documentary and content analysis, contextualization and triangulation, and submitted to internal and external criticism.² Next, the research findings were organized and classified. The concepts of Pierre Bourdieu's Social World Theory provided theoretical support for the historical version presented here, which considers that the agents are spatially immersed in certain social fields, and that the ownership of magnitudes of certain capitals and the *habitus* of each agent conditions his/her spatial positioning and, in the social struggle, is identified with his/her social class.

Concerning the ethical-legal aspects, the doctorate project that gave rise to this study received approval from the Research Ethics Committee at Anna Nery School and the Teaching Hospital *São Francisco de Assis*, on August 27th 2008 (Protocol 068).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relations between Anna Nery School and the Brazilian Air Force during the Second World War

After a coup in 1937, Brazil lived under the dictatorship of Getúlio Dornelles Vargas. Through

* During wars, the fronts are large physical areas that generally concentrate the military forces, works and entrenchments, where the main battles are fought.

the regime known as New State (*Estado Novo*) (1937-1945), Getúlio dominated the country's Legislative and Legal powers by closing down the National Congress and all municipal and state legislative chambers. The new constitution this model imposed was based on authoritarianism, censorship, repression and the complete centralization of power.³

At that time, the important alliance between the government and its armed forces was consolidated. Indeed, the characteristics and *modus operandi* of the military institutions regaled possibilities to maintain the order and union Vargas intended, which turned the armed forces into the support base of the New State.⁴

In the mean time, the Second World War (1939-1945) emerged in Europe, which started as a conflict of medium intensity. Led by Adolf Hitler, the Germans believed in the reconstruction of the German empire and the superiority of the Arian race. After joining with Italy, they invaded France and the United Kingdom, which joined strengths to fight their invaders. Germany and Italy gained a new enemy when they broke the pact of mutual neutrality closed with the Soviet Union, invaded in a later stage. After this attack, Japan joined forces with the two Nazi-fascist countries and attacked the United States, which expanded the conflict globally, three years after its start in 1939. Thus, the Axis was constituted, including Germany, Italy and Japan.⁵

In parallel with the formation of the Axis, the United States, United Kingdom and the Soviet Union established the Allies. Later, China and France also adhered to this block, constituting the five superpowers. The establishment of the Allies is justified not by the desire of its leaders, but by the lack of option Hitler had left to these countries, leaving no other choice in order to appease the war situation.⁵

Brazil remained neutral as long as it could during the first years of conflict. Nevertheless, the Northeast of the country occupied a strategic position for the Allies as well as the Axis, making the two blocks insist that the Brazilian government would make a decision.³ Gently pushed by political issues that tended towards the consolidation of Pan-Americanism, Brazil became part of the Allies. On the counterpart, this alliance provided the country with some agreements with the United States, including the provision of material and military training to the Armed Forces, when the direct participation of Brazilian troops in the conflict was envisaged.⁴

In this wily and tense context, the Ministry of the Air Force was created on January 20th 1941, left in charge of the civilian Joaquim Pedro Salgado Filho. Before, Brazilian aviation had been linked to the Army, the Navy and the Civil Aviation Department. Due to the war, however, an independent ministry was created for military aviation only.⁶

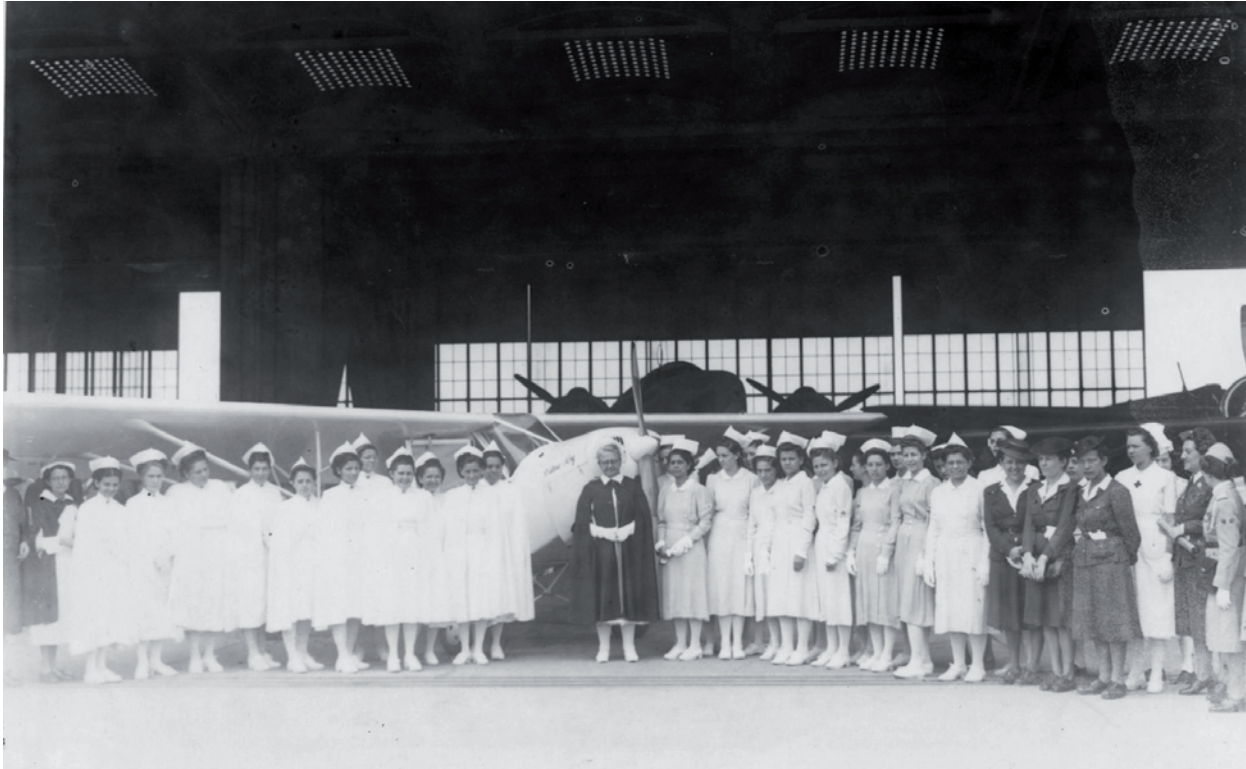
After its creation, the Ministry of the Air Force attempted to approach Anny Nery School, probably because of its renowned adherence to patriotic appeals when, during the Constitutionalist Revolution in 1932, for example, it sided with the government. For some time and clearly during the Second World War, a strong feeling of patriotism was imprinted on the School's students and employees. Indeed, this characteristic would serve as a good argument for an effective connection between these two institutions, as the love of the fatherland, in combination with the feeling of abnegation and readiness in times of chaos, were part of the discourse the School's leaderships constantly reproduced, which gained intensity during the conflict years.⁷

One example was ANS' type of participation in the preparation of girls from the *carrioca* society for the efforts of war, when it offered different extension courses on war nursing between 1940 and 1943. During that period, courses of variable duration were taught, ranging between two and ten months, with eight different names: Voluntary Rescuers, Voluntary Rescuers of War, War Rescue of the Social Institute, Voluntary Hospital Rescuer, Voluntary Hospital Samaritan, Rescuers of War, Samaritan Rescuer of the Association of Brazilian Ladies and Voluntary Rescuers of the Registration Service. Moreover, the name itself of the School underlined its vocation for war situations, by reminding the heroic figure of a woman who served as a volunteer in field hospitals during the Paraguay War (1864-1870) and was later called "the mother of the Brazilians".

These demonstrations of affinities between nursing and the military universe were strategic on both sides. As for nursing, the adherence to the patriotic appeal and establishment of female groups to act in war situations granted visibility to the profession by disclosing its humanitarian and social importance. In that sense, objective representations of military structures were explicitly incorporated, like the feeling of readiness, alertness, march and abnegation. It is not a coincidence that different photographic records of rituals held at ANS reveal the habitual and featured presence

of high-level officers. On the military side, these approximations could guarantee the intensified preparation of professional and voluntary nurses who, through the contingency of war, served the interests of the Nation, which was concretely strengthened when Brazil definitely sided with the Allies.

For the sake of an example, one of the first and significant signs of attempts to establish bonds between the newly created Air Force and ANS was the baptism of an ambulance plane named "Anna Nery". Businessmen donated this plane to the Air Force for its military exercises. The photograph pictures this occasion:



Source: Image Collection of the Documentation Center at Anna Nery School/UFRJ (n. 4.08.1125).

Figure 1 - Baptism ceremony of the ambulance airplane *Anna Nery*, 1943

The baptism ceremony of the plane *Anna Nery* took place on May 26th 1943 at Santos Dumont airport (Rio de Janeiro), including the participation of Laís Netto dos Reys, Dean of ANS at that time (at the center), together with a group of teachers and their students. According to the text that accompanied the photograph, the nurse's presence at that military event tended to value her importance at times of crisis, but also reinforced the thesis about women's integration in the job market and their emancipation.⁸

Based on the prestige and visibility (symbolic capital) ANS enjoyed until then, as guaranteed in Decree 20.109/1931, which defined it as the Official Standard School for other Brazilian nursing schools' equalization, the Minister of the Air Force sent an urgent letter to Dean Laís Netto dos Reys in December 1943, in which he requested the School's participation in the FAB's Military Service.

This proposal would take form through the activities of the teaching staff, which would accompany the students' training at the newly inaugurated *Hospital Central da Aeronáutica* (HCA). This hospital used to be a health institution for the German colony in Rio de Janeiro, located in the neighborhood Tijuca, under the administration of the Deaconess Sisters of Kaiserswerth.⁷⁻⁹

In the transformation process from health institution into military hospital, the entire specialized technical staff was replaced, when physicians from the Military Aviation were incorporated and the first exam was held for medical officers of the new Force. Then, the director, major doctor Edgard Barroso Tostes, with the support of minister Salgado Filho, turned to ANS to recruit licensed nurses, in order to support the mission of turning that health institution into a model hospital.⁹

This initiative by the Ministry of the Air Force towards further approximation with the School's teachers and students served to temporarily solve part of the lack of qualified staff for the HCA nursing service. In addition, it also served to verify whether they would truly be top-standard nurses, so as to probably serve in other Air Force actions, including war, in the near future.

Thus, one month after the School had received the letter, and had received authorization from the minister of Education and Public Health and the agreement of the rector of the *Universidade do Brasil*, Laís Netto dos Reis forwarded some considerations to the Head of the Air Force Health Service, which she defined as essential to put in practice the exchange between both institutions.

In the text, the Dean emphasized that the School felt honored to be invited to work in the Service and attempted to underline that the ideal of serving was a fundamental mission of the profession in times of crisis. She also proposed to gain total autonomy inside the HCA, in order to administer the entire Nursing Service and modify the nursing teams when necessary. Therefore, she could hire, transfer, suspend or fire any member of the nursing staff, not only School students and alumni, but also Air Force nurses. The Dean also proposed that ANS nurses and students would be granted the same treatment and consideration as Air Force officers and cadets, in the attempt to harmonize their positions in the military hierarchy.

Laís Netto dos Reis also sent a letter to the director of *Hospital Miguel Couto*, where the students had participated in surgical and medical training for about two years. In the document, she explained how the students taking their practicum at that health institution would be transferred to the HCA. In addition, she attempted to clarify that the reason for this transfer was the urge of the moment, the obligation of patriotism, and that nurses had the mission to live in order to serve, attempting to reconsider aspects of the nursing profession, based on an altruistic and patriotic model.

When they were transferred to the HCA, the students had contact with more modern equipment, plenty of material and comfortable facilities, as opposed to what they were accustomed to at the training sites used by ANS, including *Hospital-Escola São Francisco de Assis*, the main practicum area since the creation of the School.⁷

These are some excerpts that disclose the tight relations between ANS and the FAB, and

which months later would further the creation of a group of military nurses in the Air Force, which only included alumni from the School.

The contribution of Anny Nery School in the organization process of the Nurses' Group of the Air Force Reserves

After Brazil had openly declared war against the Axis, Navy, Army and Air Force troops were mobilized, putting in practice the country's participation in the Second World War. Thus, the FAB created the 1st Hunting Group on December 18th 1943, which would work together with the United States at the Italian front. To organize its staff, the volunteering criterion was adopted. Next, the pilots would be submitted to initial training in the United States and Panama, before departing to the front.⁶

Practically at the same time, measures were taken to organize this group's Health Service, involving physicians and nurses. Thus, the Nurses Group of the Air Force Reserves was created on July 7th 1944 through Decree 6.663. On that occasion, minister Salgado Filho issued some instructions to recruit nurses for the group. The following conditions were set: being born a Brazilian citizen; between 20 and 45 years of age; holding a nursing degree, issued by the Official Standard School of Brazil or an officially acknowledged or equivalent Nursing School; approved academic records; qualification certificate signed by the Dean of the school where she took her professional education; and certificate signed by two officers of the Brazilian Armed Forces, confirming the candidate's fundamental conditions of honorability for the exercise of the profession.

According to the instructions, ANS was defined as the reference for the candidates' professional education. It should also be kept in mind that, since its creation in 1922, this School had attempted to underline the need to gain visibility and acknowledgement as an institution that stood out because of the strict selection of its students. At that time, it drafted girls who were not only intellectually able, but came from "good families", had a calling for the profession and possessed earlier work experiences. Also, candidates had to be between 20 and 35 years of age. The Schools' first admission forms even contained space for the candidates to describe their motivations, arguments and personal merits for acceptance. It is noteworthy that, besides the contents, compliance

with orthographic rules and readable handwriting, the candidates' patriotic vocation was assessed.¹⁰

Similarities can be identified between the selection criteria for the Nurses Group of the Air Force Reserves in 1944 and ANS' selection criteria in 1923, when the first student group started. The minimum age of 20 years was a fundamental requisite for both institutions. Family antecedents were another common item both institutions considered well. In addition, candidate students for ANS would only be accepted with their family's agreement while, in the FAB, if the candidate was married, she had to provide a document with her husband's authorization.¹⁰⁻¹¹

These data about the attuned admission criteria remit to the idea that this was one of the reasons why the FAB chose ANS to organize its Nurses Group as, besides being the Official Standard School, in principle, its nurses would possess the most appropriate profile desired by the Air Force. It should also be highlighted that ANS followed the Anglo-American nursing model and that, for a long time (1923-1938), the School had been led by North American deans, who defended the incorporation of a professional model that rested on compliance with discipline and hierarchy and on patriotic ideals, characteristics that were also aspired to in the military sphere.¹⁰ Therefore, the presence of these affinities underscored the military institutions' influence in nursing management and, in this respect, the impressions about the paramilitary habitus ANS teachers and students incorporated throughout its history are emphasized.

Even before further approximations with the FAB, the Army had already tried to negotiate on ANS' participation in the organization of its Nurses Group, which would accompany the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB), created about seven months before the Air Force Group. Laís Netto dos Reis decided not to attend to the army's request though, due to the vague stance about the military position and the low pay the FEB offered, which she considered unsatisfactory.¹² One of the nurses who accompanied the army expressed this situation: "I found out that the army contacted the Dean's office at Anny Nery School to constitute the nursing staff (of the FEB). No agreement was reached, because the Dean's office wanted the nurses to participate as officers, which the Ministry of War did not accept".^{13:78}

The above allegation somewhat disclosed the suspicious form the Army assumed when it did not conveniently adapt the incorporation of the

nurses into its staff, a situation that was probably conditioned by the limits and possibilities in the relations between men and women at that time, in the social and even in the military sphere. Unfortunately, this whole situation resulted in a clumsy patch, in which the first intents were insufficient to mask the female nursing group's frailty in the Army, which would we created and organized in a hurry, weakly trained and secretly acknowledged.

Nevertheless, among the 67 volunteers the Army selected, six were registered/professional nurses: three had graduated from ANS [Altamira Pereira Valadares, Nair Paulo de Melo and Olga Mendes], one [Antonietta Ferreira] from the Red Cross School of Nursing (Rio de Janeiro), one [Ondina Miranda de Souza] from Alfredo Pinto School of Nursing, and yet another one [Maria Aparecida França] from the São Paulo School of Nursing. Sixteen volunteers came from the Samaritan Course, while the large majority were volunteer rescuers, who had only received about three months of training. The education of the other three could not be identified.¹⁴

Despite the difficulties with the Army, more satisfactory measures were taken during the negotiations for the ANS nurses' summoning by the FAB. Like the Army nurses, they would also be active at the Italian front, but in a supposedly more outstanding manner, clearly in function of the type of preparation they would receive before travelling and the professional capital they had previously accumulated.

The following excerpt by one of the three alumni who accompanied this group to the war front addresses the heterogeneity of the professional capital and the disagreement between the ANS Dean and the Army about the function: "[...] That was bad for the image of the Brazilian nurses. Some of the members had little or no background [...]. After what had happened to us, the FAB decided to recruit all six nurses among the graduates from Anna Nery. Some of them were even my students (at ANS). I would have liked to go with the FAB, but the 1st Hunting Group had not been organized yet when I volunteered".^{13:80-81}

Even before the official creation of the Nurses Group of the Air Force Reserves, Laís Netto dos Reis sent a letter to the minister of the Air Force in June 1944, in which she underlined the honor of having been chosen to organize that Group. In the letter, she listed the names of eight nurses she had selected, all of whom were alumni from ANS. The text underlined that these candidates had

demonstrated a great sense of patriotism and were ready to take part in the Nurses Group of the 1st Hunting Group. The following names were listed: Antonina Hollanda Martins, Francisca Sampaio Santos, Izaura Barbosa Lima, Judith Arêas, Maria Diva Campos, Ocimara Moura Ribeiro, Odete dos Reis Moreira and Regina Cerdeira Bordallo. Despite the inclusion of eight names, two did not travel to the front, nurses Francisca and Odete, for yet unknown reasons.

In the same document, ten reasons were highlighted to grant the nurses the same prerogatives, rights, advantages and official honors as the North American military nurses. The main arguments the Dean used were the emphasis on the Brazilian nurses' education, which, according to her, was similar to the North American background, mainly in function of the first ANS Deans' influence, who came from the United States; hence, the Brazilian and North American nurses had the same intellectual ability and technical skills. She also endorsed that Brazil should once again follow the United States' example, granting the air force nurses a military function as, thus, our country would also set an example for other countries and, at the same time, favor the nursing profession on a global scale.

This document clearly reveals the ANS Dean's use of strategies to serve the interests that were not only aimed at achieving certain rights for the nurses' group that would go to war, but also at following premises that sustained the development and public acknowledgement of the profession in that context.

One explanation for this type of reaction is the intended institutionalization form of the nursing profession in Brazil in the 1920's, which was concerned with the profession's inclusion and social approval, in response to the historical lack of prestige its practice was linked to. Until then, nursing knowledge in the country was considered as manual know-how, without any scientific, intellectual or political foundations, while other professions in the area were characterized as intellectual and scientific knowledge. This line of thought and posture were extremely important for the delayed political and social development of nursing.¹⁵

Indeed, as a result of the social and symbolic capital accumulated by Laís Netto dos Reis, the minister of the Air Force named the candidates 2nd Class nurses, who were incorporated into the Air Force as 2nd lieutenant, granting them conditions equal to their male peers. Initially, this was not the case for the group who accompanied the

Army to the war, which was named 3rd class, that is, without the function of officers and the rights inherent to this condition.¹²⁻¹⁴

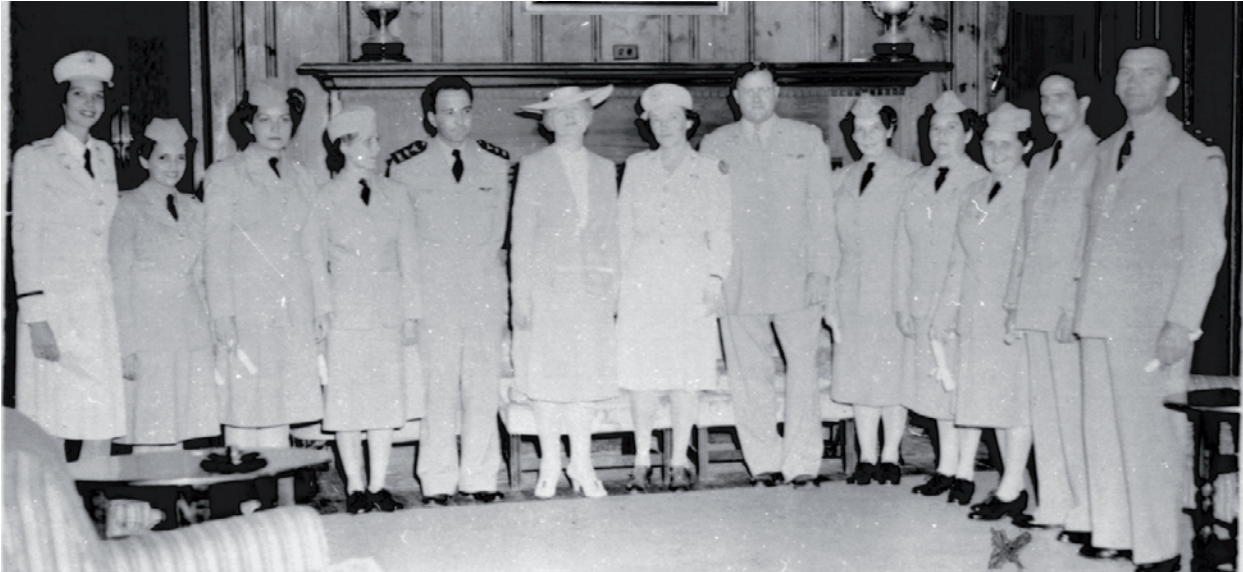
The procedures related to the distinguished treatment of the Air Force nurses certainly happened in function of the valuation of their degrees (institutionalized cultural capital, according to Bourdieu)¹⁶, which did not only formally guarantee the enhancement of a specific competence, but also determined the occupation of prestigious positions in the military context, considering that the official differences among educational degrees tend to produce or strengthen people's belief in the naturalization of these differences. Thus, the institutionalized cultural capital transforms the representation people establish about themselves and the behaviors they believe they are obliged to adopt in order to adjust to that representation, which was further enhanced by the cultural practices that were naturally imposed on the ANS students, with the signature of the "Anna Nery standard".¹⁶

Before they departed, the selected nurses went through health inspections and were vaccinated. Other preparations were related to their uniforms and identification documents, and to the power of attorney for an indicated person to receive part of their pay in Brazil. In addition, the Dean asked the Minister of the Air Force to meet with them before departure, mentioning that the nurses wanted to pay their respects and receive the moral encouragement of the Minister.

In the training phase, the FAB used the influence of the North American nurse Clara Louise Kieninger, the first Dean of ANS (1922-1925) to intermediate training for the six nurses in the United States. Thus, they travelled to the United States by plane on July 12th 1944, together with four medical officers, heading for the military base Mitchell Field in Long Island (New York).^{7,14}

Moreover, when she visited Brazil in May 1942, Clara Louise Kieninger was asked to stay in order to organize the passive defense and war volunteer courses for the Brazilian Red Cross.⁷ This situation confirms the acknowledgement of the former Dean's role in the mobilization of women for war at that time, in line with the North American government's efforts towards the considerable mobilization of its nurses during the Second World War.¹⁷

The following photograph illustrates Clara Louise Kieninger's participation in this mission to intermediate the Brazilian nurses' preparation for the war, already in the United States:



Source: FEB collection, Duque de Caxias Palace. Rio de Janeiro.

Figure 2 - Clara Louise Kieninger with the nurses and physicians of the 1st Hunting Group of the FAB, 1944

From left to right, the photograph showed the North American military nurse Joella Patterson, followed by the nurses Ocimara Ribeiro, Regina Cerdeira Bordallo and Izaura Barbosa Lima (head of the group of Brazilian nurses). Next come Lutero Vargas (orthopedist and son of president Getúlio Vargas), Clara Louise Kieninger and another North American military nurse and a Brazilian military physician, followed by Judith Arêas, Antonina Holanda Martins and Maria Diva Campos and two other Brazilian military physicians.

This picture was taken at a North American military institution. The image shows the presence of nurses from the 1st Hunting Group with prestigious characters, revealing: the presence of a male figure who, besides his credentials as a FAB physician, added the social and symbolic capital of his condition as the son of the president of the Republic, Getúlio Vargas, as well as the noteworthy presence of Clara Louise Kieninger. Hence, at the same time as the photograph confirms the Brazilian nurses' prestige through their occupation of a military and international space, it also reaffirms the symbolic power of that group, which granted the nurses that distinction, as the agents can use the proximities or distances to gain certain advantages.

During the military training, the nurses got support from North American captain Joella Patterson as the connecting officer. After this phase, they were transferred to the base Suffolk Field in

Virginia, and then to camp Patrick Henry, from where they travelled by boat to Italy on September 19th 1944. They reached the Italian front on October 6th, where they were active in care delivery to the Brazilian staff of the 1st Hunting Group in the backup hospitals.¹⁴

The fact that these six nurses' military and technical training took place in the United States facilitated their performance during the campaign. Upon their arrival, they were already familiar with the entire hospital and work routine, which initially happened at the 154th Station Hospital. In that unit, located between the cities Cevitavecchia and Tarquínia, they stayed for about two months, delivering care to Brazilian and North American military staff. On December 12th 1944, they were installed in the 12th General Hospital in Livorno, where they remained until June 19th 1945, attending to clinical and surgical cases in the 1st Hunting Group, which was incorporated into the United States' 350th Group, part of the Allied Air Force of the Mediterranean.¹⁴

At the end of the war, the Air Force nurses left the Italian front on June 20th 1945, by plane, stopped in Northern Africa and arrived in Brazil on July 3rd 1945. On that occasion, they were released from Active Service in the Air Force as 2nd lieutenants, and excluded from the effective staff of the 1st Hunting Group upon the orders of the Minister of the Air Force, similarly to the Army nurses.¹⁴⁻¹⁸

While hardly anything was done in Brazil to use the Army and Air Force nurses' experience in war practice, in the other allied nations, mainly the United States, the material and human reconversion for times of peace was already studied since the start of the war.¹⁷⁻¹⁸

According to Elza Cansanção Medeiros, one of the Brazilian nurses who participated in the war through the Army, "the six heroes of the FAB did not receive the kindness and honors they were entitled to. They were greatly forgotten by the Force itself. [...] Most of the nursing officers today are not even aware that, if they are part of the Air Force today, it's thanks to those forgotten precursors. [...] Therefore, glory to the nursing officers of the 1st Hunting Group of the FAB".^{19:43}

These are some excerpts from a history that combined nursing practice with the appeals and demands of a wily war context. These situations underline the profession's vocation to attend to human needs in times of chaos, like in the emblematic cases of Florence Nightingale, during the Crimean War, and Anna Nery, our national example, during the Paraguay War. The difference here is precisely the primacy of six female nurses who were incorporated into the Brazilian Armed Forces as officials, an unedited fact until then, as well as the nursing leaderships' involvement at that time, who manifested themselves to contribute to achieve a good position for the profession in the military sphere and, consequently, a good image for nurses in the social context.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When Brazil declared war against the Nazi-fascist countries, the government took various military initiatives, including the creation of the Ministry of the Air Force and, later, of the 1st Hunting Aviation Group, for which a Nurses' Group was created to be part of the Air Force's Health Service during the war.

To organize this Group, the Ministry of the Air Force attempted to tighten its relations with ANS, considered the country's Official Standard School at that time. The school's status, the points the FAB and the School shared about admission criteria and the previous friendly and strategic relations between these institutions were fundamental for ANS to satisfactorily accomplish the entire organization process of the Nurses' Group of the Air Force Reserves.

In this process, Laís Netto dos Reys imposed conditions that favored the alumni's outstanding action in that military context, when she guaranteed that the selected nurses would get the function of officers, a remuneration in line with their responsibilities, and the honors and rights inherent in their function, following the example of the North American case. Thus, the creation of this group represented the first initiative to officially incorporate women into the Brazilian Air Force, organized by a Nursing School, which defended a firm position in defense of the interests of the profession at that time, but without ignoring the mobilization efforts of the New State, attempting to underline the women's extremely noble contribution of abnegation, devotion and dedication to the causes of war.

This intervention ended up providing ANS and, in a way, Nursing itself with certain symbolic gains that influenced the representation of its activities and the public image of registered nurses, underlining the discourse about the social function of the profession and the need for appropriate preparation for its practice, with a view to satisfactorily responding to the dramatic demands of war.

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