

The creation of the Army's Third Corps in Rio Grande do Sul: political struggles coming out of the military administration during the critical years of the War of the Triple Alliance (1866-1867)¹

A criação do Terceiro Corpo do Exército na província do Rio Grande do Sul: conflitos políticos resultantes da administração militar nos anos críticos da Guerra do Paraguai (1866-1867)

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RESUMO

Este artigo analisa a mobilização militar a partir da relação entre o poder central, a presidência provincial e as lideranças regionais no Rio Grande do Sul. Nosso foco é o período entre outubro de 1866 e abril de 1867, quando o comando militar brasileiro, sediado no Paraguai, decidiu organizar o Terceiro Corpo do Exército. Essa arregimentação foi organizada a partir de contingentes recrutados na província sul-rio-grandense. A criação de um novo corpo militar numa província que se ressentia dos esforços continuados pelo recrutamento exigiu negociações delicadas, num movimento que expôs as principais queixas sobre a execução do recrutamento e a intervenção do governo imperial nas questões locais.

Palavras-chave: Rio Grande do Sul; Terceiro Corpo do Exército; Guerra do Paraguai.

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses military recruitment from the standpoint of relations among Brazil's Imperial authorities, the provincial president of Rio Grande do Sul, and regional leaders within that province. Our focus is the period between October 1866 and April 1867. At that time the Brazilian military command, stationed in Paraguay, organized a new regiment, the Army Third Corps, using troops from Rio Grande do Sul obtained under the quota system. Resentment of conscription already ran high in Rio Grande do Sul, however. Creating this new regiment demanded thorough negotiations that exposed major complaints about recruitment procedures and about Imperial intervention in local affairs.

Keywords: Rio Grande do Sul; Army's Third Corps; War of the Triple Alliance.

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The new army corps shall virtually be composed of volunteers, drawn by duty and prestige from the chiefs, who invite and encourage them. Such chiefs' prestige, through instances and orders from higher authorities, may also convince them to not postpone their march, in order to participate in the February elections, provided their actual desire to the point of sacrificing that urgent and sacred duty.

José Maria da Silva Paranhos, December 1866

Desires, obligations and prestige. The quotation above reveals several elements related to the military recruitment in the Imperial Brazil, especially in its strategic outskirts, the province of São Pedro do Rio Grande do Sul. In that stage of the campaign against Paraguay, volunteering no longer depended on individual decisions, but on the prestige and action of political chiefs, loyal enough to execute the orders from central authorities. Hence, it was a collective action: subordinated, coordinated and encouraged by the militia authorities, particularly the National Guard commanders, whose main political capital was the ability to enlist new soldiers or, as shown in this paper, spare some of their comrades when convenient.

The war effort in the home-front allows for the observation of the center-province relations from their main actors' perspective: the Imperial government, demanding more soldiers; and the province's president, attempting to accommodate such demands to the regional interests with the support of the arms commander and the National Guard commanders, whose prestige and influence were essential for recruitment. Such context also enables the understanding of the challenges faced by the central power in assuring provincial leadership support in a delicate moment of war management, demanding exceptional care and expertise, given the recent separatist history of the province at the time.

In the last four decades, several studies focused on the Imperial administration and the role of its main delegates in the link between center and provinces in Imperial Brazil. Many of these studies discussed the role of the provincial president, its limitations and necessary maneuver conditions between national and provincial interests. Virtually none debated the role of the commander of arms. It is Clea Sarmiento's (1986, pp. 139-175) position nonetheless that the focus invested on the short medium period of the presidents' mandates is excessive. It is undebatable that the average term of office holding (thirteen months) resulted in significant effects over these employees' abilities

to perform their duties or become politically relevant in the provinces about which they owned scarce knowledge (Wildberger, 1949; Iglésias, 1958). However, such does not imply that the presidents were politically insignificant characters in the local political game (Vieira, 2012; Izecksohn, 2014a, 2014b). As a matter of fact, few of the discussions on provincial administration move beyond the introduction of some charts demonstrating the speed with which the presidents changed their occupations, except for more recent publications (Carvalho, 1980, pp. 111-132; Barman, 1988, pp. 100-112; Graham, 1990, pp. 48-62). Moreover, Mirian Dolhnikoff (2003, pp. 116-133) emphasizes that the political elite which gravitated within the Court was not detached from the provincial ones. Furthermore, this paper demonstrates that the local elites did not sacrifice their interests. The negotiation, in this sense, was the norm, responsible for assuring the mechanisms of the political system through struggles between rival political factions and favor exchanges.

Our contribution to such debate aims at relating the bases of presidential authority to the quality of the negotiations woven with the leadership from several areas in Rio Grande do Sul, organized and regimented through the National Guard. Francisco Ignácio Marcondes Homem de Mello's presidency allows for the tracking of the war effort in the province most committed to recruitment, considering that since its reintegration to the Empire in 1845, it was considered the core of the military activities in the Rio de La Plata Basin. It was preceded by the designation of the General Manoel Luís Osório as central chief of the recruitment process of the troops to constitute the Third Corps during the War of the Triple Alliance. The actions of Homem de Mello and Osório establish a window for the understanding of the relations between the central and provincial governments, as well as the delicate bonds between the president, the National Guard commanders, and the population subject to recruitment. Furthermore, they supply an instance of the *modus operandi* of such articulation during emergency situations, given the country's involvement in an external war, until then supported by a diplomatic alliance likely to be breached. This international coalition's fragility called for a temporary increase of the state extraction's capacity. Studying the paths that satisfied such demand exposes the mishaps in affirming the Imperial authority in the region which, according to Wilma Peres Costa, was both the Empire's military nerve and its Achilles heel. What were the limits imposed over the cooperation? In what way have the war efforts affected the provincial policy? What relations could be constituted between war and nationalism in a province so strongly related to the local loyalties?

THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT AND THE MILITARY RECRUITMENT

On September 22, 1866 Paraguayan troops stationed in the Curupaiti's trenches successfully rebounded the combined attack from the Imperial fleet and Triple Alliance armies. This defeat, costing allies four thousand men, crippled the campaign for the takeover of the Humaitá's fortress, the Paraguayan defense's bastion. The situation was worsened by the subsequent retrieving of about five thousand soldiers from the Argentinean national army, reallocated in order to face internal revolts led by federalist political bosses, particularly the *montoneras* political uprisings, led by Felipe Varela in the Andean countryside.² This last movement, associated to the Emperor's insistence in continuing operations until definite victory, brought forth the necessity of recruiting new troops in the provinces. Such contingency led to preoccupation by the Imperial political elite, since recruitment was unpopular and avoided during election period.³

As the contingent of the active forces was virtually in its limit, it was clear for the closest observers that the attainment of new recruits would undergo some form of coercion. Even if hopeful that the National Guard commanders would still solicit loyalties, recruiting soldiers without resorting to violence, the political leaders of the Empire predicted potential issues that recruiting could bring to the public order. In addition, there was no certainty regarding the outcome of the war.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE PROVINCE

Born in Pindamonhangaba, Sao Paulo, a lawyer, professor, and minister, Francisco Ignácio Marcondes Homem de Mello was a typical member of the Empire's political elite. His trajectory is a symbol of the issues faced by the Minister Zacharias de Góes and Vasconcellos (August 1866 to July 1868), which encompasses the government's difficulties in mobilizing an army from a national state deprived of specialized bureaucracy. A symbol also of the relations between the Imperial government and its most militarized province, whose interests in Uruguay's internal affairs helped drag the country into a generalized war in the River Plate basin. Finally, symbolic of a liberal-progressive ministry with a member of the Conservative party as military chief, Luís Alves de Lima e Silva, also known as the Marquis of Caxias, what fomented delicate relations (Mattos, 1937; Blake, 1902, pp. 463-467).

At the age of 30, Homem de Mello had already governed Ceará during the War's initial period, when volunteer troops were still available.⁴ Despite of the initial impulse, which brought to the lines thousands of volunteers across the country, this delegate of the Imperial power was well familiarized with the problems related to the designation of national guards (militiamen) as Army soldiers. This was a delicate issue, since until then the participation in the Guard generally exempted its members from Army recruitment, exception made to Rio Grande do Sul due to its diverse logic. Such context changed in the first months of 1865 when Guard forces became constantly transferred to the front. Homem de Mello was also used to the politicization of recruitment, referring to the political resistances to the recruitment of allies and aggregates, commonly followed by allegations that it was executed over the adversaries from the party in power.⁵ Furthermore, he was equally familiarized with the issue of legal exemptions, which allowed for a myriad of professional occupations to use as justification to acquit certain individuals from recruitment. The experience with such issues was a successful guarantee for a delegate of the Imperial power. But a satisfactory performance in Rio Grande do Sul would boost his political career during a period of party life renewal due to the ascent of the Progressives in Brazil. Taking over such a delicate mission may have seemed interesting for Homem de Mello, but its execution would be hard and wearing.

Named president of the province by Imperial decree on December 27, 1866, he took office almost a month later, on January 22, 1867, at the critical stage of military recruitment. The designation of Homem de Mello was supported by Caxias and Osório, who performed the roles of mentors. It was a result of both dissatisfaction with the acting vice-president, Pereira da Cunha, not considered energetic in regards to the decisions influencing the National Guard, and personal friendship between Homem de Mello and the Ministries Council president, the progressive Zacharias Vasconcelos, who declared that "my friend in particular Mr. Dr. Francisco Ignácio Homem de Mello shall govern the province as your president".⁶ Pereira da Cunha, after being replaced, had his mandate much criticized by Caxias: "leaving in the province's presidency this administrative nullity which reined it, following the cabalists, as vice-president". Therefore, the nomination of Homem de Mello was directly related to the organization of the Army's Third Corps, despite of the resulting political and personal costs resulting from those efforts. Such determination faced embarrassment in a region already resentful due to years of considerable efforts towards recruitment. The work of troop's recruitment was also

hindered by the cholera epidemic, which raged out in the province in the first months of Homem de Mello's mandate, infecting the president himself, who would survive such personal disaster. In his speech directed to the province's Legislative Assembly, he stated that "the invaded Rio Grande submits its perverse enemy to its soil, and two years later launches against the invading country a new army. 1867 responds to 1865".⁷

THE NATIONAL GUARD COMMANDERS

The border region of Rio Grande do Sul was divided in six national guards commands (Jaguarão, Bagé, Quaraí e Livramento, São Gabriel, São Borja and Cruz Alta); the majority of the militia commanders therein were ranchers and had vast experience in the creating and managing regiments. Generally, they occupied the position for thirteen years (considering 1866 as the break's final year), varying from sixteen for the oldest (David Canabarro) to seven for the youngest (Antonio Fernandes Lima).⁸ All were ranked on the top of the provincial economic pyramid: their inventories reveals that their estates surpassed ten thousand sterling pounds while they also owned a significant amount of slaves (average of 16 by inventory), with the exception of the temporary Manoel Pereira de Vargas (2,630.00 pounds), from Jaguarão – the command was vacant during the Triple Alliance War.⁹ In their majority, they were politically associated to the Conservative Party (especially the Viscount of Serro Alegre, Antônio de Mello e Albuquerque and Antônio Fernandes Lima) – only David Canabarro could be considered a prominent liberal leader (Porto-Allegre, 1917; Vasconcellos e Vasconcellos, 1918, p. 476; Vieira, 1988, p. 42). These men knew by heart the population distribution and availability of different regions, thus representing the visibility horizon of the province, accomplishing tasks and duties which the national State was unable to execute due to lack of structure. Many of these individuals had both social and financial networks which extended beyond the province, in the tumultuous neighboring republics. The relation between presidency and commands had been consolidated during the second half of the 1840s, in the context of preparations for the interventions against Oribe and Rosas, which consolidated the relationship standards in regards to military interventions.

Such peculiarities however came with a price. The way in which Rio Grande do Sul performed war was different from the style adopted in other Brazilian provinces. In the former, the constitution of temporary Army corps, to which national guards were transferred, was executed virtually automatically.

Within such context, the company commander should march ahead of the recruited militia troops, since the ranks of the Guard and Army often coincided. Concomitantly, the interconnection between the Guard and the Army created contradictory situations in the region and contributed to solidify the commanders' loyalty to the Empire.¹⁰ These singularities, in the context of an international war, created obstacles to the effective militarization of these contingents, once there was great reluctance of these leaders in giving the command of their troops to the officials with effective professional formation, particularly in a moment in which Marquis of Caxias attempted to promote a more homogeneous format to the troops soon to resume the Paraguay initiative, merging corps, subordinating commanders and dissolving the differences between volunteers and recruits as much as possible (Uricoechea, 1978, pp. 251-252; Antunes, 1943, pp. 41-42).

“SPEAK TO THESE HICKS THAT LANGUAGE WE KNOW”:
ACTIVATING RECRUITMENT

The organization of the Army's Third Corps was initiated in October 1866, still under the vice-presidency of Antônio Augusto Pereira da Cunha. The sexagenarian Marechal Osório (Baron of Herval) was the key player of this initiative, having been simultaneously recommended by the Marquis of Caxias in October of the same year for the positions of Province's Army Commander and Commander in Chief of the Army's Third Corps. Such double authority granted Osório administrative autonomy in face of a hesitant and not energetic president. Osório's fidelity to the imperial arms was amalgamated with the country's independence itself and could not be broken even by the Farroupilha Civil War. Jonas Vargas brings attention to the fact that “Osório's trajectory helps to enlighten the one of so many ranchers (but also merchants and jerk beef manufacturers) who, even not participating in parliamentary policy, were fundamental to the win of the elections and directly influenced politics by pressuring their candidates”. For Vargas, during the War of the Triple Alliance, Osório had become a sort of “point of balance” among the allied forces who already had a good relationship with the leaders of Uruguay and the Confederation of Argentina (Vargas, 2010a, pp. 244-263). Their personal connections were important to co-opt Justo José de Urquiza, a leader from the Province of Entre Rios, to the cause for the Triple Alliance. These same characteristics were valued at a time the Empire needed a reliable leadership to raise

one more corps in Rio Grande do Sul. Nonetheless the old commander returned to Paraguay with weakened health due to a leg issue, sequel which would hinder his movements throughout the *pampas*. There were also political sequels, some older, such as the animosity with the Viscount de Porto Alegre, his Progressive League's adversary. Others arose throughout the war, mainly due to the fluctuations of the provincial policy, but also due to conflicts derived from the supply of military personnel for services performed to the Empire, certain political bosses' resistance in contributing, and the growing population's indisposition in collaborating.¹¹

Concomitantly to the nomination of Manuel Luís Osório as the province's Arms Commander, the Viscount of Paranaguá was confirmed in the War Ministry, resulting in a leadership whose administrative was more aligned to the demands from Caxias than the irascible Ângelo Moniz da Silva Ferraz. The new minister abolished the War Councils, which should prosecute National Guard officers from Rio Grande do Sul, under claims of negligence, cowardice or corruption. Such move constituted an attempt to bring the border political bosses closer again, particularly the veteran commander David Canabarro, who was answering to a lawsuit regarding his potential responsibility for the Paraguayan invasion in 1865, as a result of his carelessness in managing stationed troops. As a matter of fact, the Minister followed the advice from Caxias, who declared, in October 1866, that "my first measure was to terminate the endless war councils created by Ferraz, to lease his enemies from their current positions". Despite of the veracity of such accusations, the Councils had become a tool for political persecution, which paralyzed the actions of many commanders, fearful of the accountability for their informal actions to the professional military authorities. Simultaneously health inspections and personal reasons leaves granted to officers and soldiers were suspended, directly affecting the exercise of recruitment.

To speak to the "hicks that language we know, so that they all ran to the battlefield" was the strategy. In that sense, "riding a horse and collecting people" was convenient, even if against the will of certain recalcitrant commanders (Osório, 2008, p. 379). The meetings organized with the purpose of recruiting men for the Army were commonly referred to as "the meetings of Colonel F. de Matos" or even "of Lieutenant João Ferreira da Silva" (Osório, 2008, p. 425). These small traces revealed in the letters sent by Osório expose the maintenance of the "personalization of recruitment", as the meetings, the soldiers, and the recruits were linked to their commanders, who expected to keep such connection even after the transferring of their men to the army in operations.

If the government eased the punishment, it would also take more drastic measures in the compulsory enlistment of individuals who evaded duty, as Osório himself emphasized in a letter for the province's president:

It seems convenient to me creating in each region one or more companies with the intent of seizing deserters everywhere, of which many live in their houses, sponsored by those who should carry more effort in their capture ... with good results [such measure] was already employed in 1851, by the honorable Mr. Marquis of Caxias.¹²

Hence there was not innovation per se, but the reiteration of practices which had worked satisfactorily during the campaign against Oribe and Rosas.

Through Osório's nomination, Caxias centralized procedures in one military unit only. Such attitude must be comprehended within the context of the prevailing dispersal until then, when the commanders recruited and spared their units per local conveniences, in the absence of a sole command and in the administration of presidents who seemed intimidated in demanding from the commanders a more effective contribution. Rio Grande do Sul provincial situation became in practice similar to a state of siege, with suspended elections enhancing an even more effective control of the Empire representatives over recruitment.

In November 1866, Osório received a letter from the War Minister instructing him to follow to the stated place in order to organize the Third Corps as soon as his health was recovered. This task was urgent, for Caxias wrote to Osório still in Montevideo that the situation in the theater of War was so delicate that "we must walk very united and slight, so that the blood already spilled by so many Brazilians is not wasted". After that, Osório sent orders to the Guard commanders and others senior officers to mobilize men with the necessary promptness.¹³

Osório's political adversaries both local and in the capital boycotted his efforts, protecting deserters or facilitating their escape. Porto Alegre's National Guard commander himself, reformed marshal Luís Manoel de Lima e Silva, uncle of Caxias and very popular among his personnel, seemed recalcitrant in regards to new recruitments.¹⁴ Viscount de Porto Alegre (Manuel Marques de Sousa, one of the Progressive League's leader), whom Caxias had qualified as a "loser" at the time of Uruguaiiana's surrender, announced the impossibility of working under his orders "without loss of my dignity, which by no means shall I sacrifice".¹⁵ With the designation of Caxias for commander in chief and the

possibility of merging the two corps, Porto Alegre requested leave “to address family matters”, temporarily returning to Rio Grande do Sul. The assistance of the distinct general was offered to Osório, as “he enjoys influence, as you do not ignore; he has friends and no little resources ...; therefore he is able to serve as valuable assistance in the gathering and organization of forces”.¹⁶

Viscount’s network did not make him an ally; on the contrary, Osório replied to the War Minister, in December 1866: “this province has been officially set to provide that General [Porto Alegre] with all the power, and my friends have been dismissed from official positions and many persecuted by the government”. Not even the state of siege and the necessity for expansion of recruitment made Osório, the broker between the Court and parishes, sacrifice his allies or accept the cooperation of a political adversary. Accepting the assistance from Porto Alegre, a progressive-liberal, would mean to risk a political capital maintained at a hard price, especially when placed under the opposition from time to time. If the Empire’s government wished to keep him in charge, it was necessary that the former did not become an “enemy to my dignity ... forgetting the loyalty with which I serve in order to persecute me”.¹⁷

In face of all these political considerations, Osório recognized the differences between Paraguay’s campaign and the other mobilization processes in which he had been involved, requesting same diplomatic assistance to capture deserters in Uruguay:

The delay in [troops] meetings is a result of the hard circumstances to be overcome at this time; many people were hidden in the woods, many others had moved to the Oriental State, and it is difficult to promptly gather these individuals; and since I address the Oriental State, it is worth informing that I have requested General [Venancio] Flores permission to gather in that country the individuals fit for war service.¹⁸

Crossing the border with the potential assistance of Brazilians ranchers established in the other side constituted a concrete incentive to desertion. On the other hand, the existence of an allied government in Uruguay, supported by Brazilian residents, enabled the hunt for fugitives across the borders of the Empire without the need for diplomatic channels. The politicization around military service however led many bosses, feeling ineffective in their commands, to motivate their personnel to cross such border, in the hopes of escaping the despotism from local adversaries. From Alegrete, Severino Ribeiro D’Almeida, Colonel-Lieutenant of the National Guard cavalry and son of the

legendary commander Bento Manoel, described such problem, which involved his own personnel, emphasizing that “the persecutions practiced against the political adversaries, result[ed] in a large emigration of Brazilians to the Oriental State, mostly by National Guards and deserters”. Ribeiro de Almeida was a political adversary of David Canabarro, leading to his dismissal from service. The political rearrangements embedded in the nomination or resignation of officers created an atmosphere of uncertainty affecting the troops meeting. The rivalries among factions and the interference of the Imperial power, subordinating certain commanders to adversaries, limited personnel's contribution and led to suspicion that a new wave of recruits would imply in the removal of commanders and dismemberment of battalions. Ribeiro de Almeida reported this security perception in a letter to the War minister, in which he aimed at justifying his inactivity, stressing that:

These facts make me hope that soon the command of the brigade will be taken from me and again condemned to ostracism, and it is the reason to making use of your time so that I can narrate all these circumstances in order to comprehend that: not only have I not refused to render my services at this time, but also that such situation was not chosen by me nor by my friends, in which we own all sacrifices and abnegation for the good of the country to speculate in policy; and from afar preparing a new Army concerns only personal petty policy, of preparing the terrain for election victories disabling the supposed adversaries.¹⁹

The letter confirms the fear that the elections (at that time already postponed) interfered in the work of recruitment of new contingents and even in the persecution of deserters. Therefore, local issues overlapped demands from the Court to the point that subordination to an adversary authority would put local authority in check. In this manner, the disputes continued negatively influencing the process of recruitment. If complaining directly to the war Minister could be an option, the indifference from the Imperial government regarding local disputes led some commanders to publicly condemn what they perceived as persecutions. An instance of such occurred in Rio Grande, the province's main port city, with the foundation in December 1866 of a newspaper entitled “O Guarda Nacional”, whose editorial line reported the abusive power of the local military elite. The issue number two of the journal rejected the honor of the local commander, trying to convince him that recruiting men was a decision which would affect the livelihoods of a great portion of the city families: “The officious Mr. Senior Commander perhaps attempting to fall under the *good graces* of the

government, offered to the Baron of Herval soldiers of the national guard to his command in order to thicken the lines of the Army's Third Corps ... Was the senior Mr. Commander fair in his choice? No!"²⁰

Nonetheless, even in the absence of a specialized bureaucracy, the power of Osório and his allies was strong enough to persuade the weaker adversaries, as made known by the province's president in December 1866: "with the arrival however of the Marshal Baron of Herval yesterday to this city [Pelotas], the fears seem to have vanished."²¹ His personal relations, prestige and mediation capacity were paramount to the troops heading to the theater of operations.

HOMEM DE MELLO'S ADMINISTRATION

The arrival of Homem de Mello to the province encountered a political context characterized by the rise of the Liberal Party, which surpassed the Progressive Liberals from the 12nd Legislature on, becoming the majority of the Provincial Assembly. Among the historical liberals, one would find David Canabarro, distinguished leadership in the border and veteran of the Farroupilha Revolution, general Osório and other commanders on which the political articulation for the attainment of troops would depend. However, as it has been shown in the present paper, the majority of the border commanders were *not* liberals as Canabarro and Osório. In this sense, it is necessary to analyze the tripod's action formed by João Lustosa da Cunha Paranaguá, War minister, Caxias and the new president. His representative in the campaign was the convalescent General Osório, acting as mediator of the local political disputes. Osório stated himself that "perhaps Rio Grande cannot go through the crisis without guarantees suspension and further discipline."²² Possibly in an attempt to minimize the authoritarian impact of recruitment, the new president, soon after taking office, issued a decree that pardoned all penalties incurred to existing soldiers in the province, including desertion. Amnesty was a customary practice in Imperial Brazil, especially when the authorities wished to reinforce the execution of recruitment. In this particular case, the purpose was to resume dialogue interrupted by the supposed ineptitude of the former ruler. In other words, restrictions to the commanders were temporarily eased to fulfill a double role: conciliate in order to coordinate more consistently the cooperation of the commanders and their personnel.

Despite of Osório's prominence, Homem de Mello also made use of his contacts: men little involved in military activities, but immersed in the local networks of power and influence, thus essential for the success of the National

Guard meetings and soldier recruitment. In the first days of government, he hired “very respected and affectionate servants” throughout the province’s territory. From Tramandaí, José Pinto da Fonseca Guimarães (serviceman and dealer) made himself available. From Rio Grande, positive responses came from Cândido Alves Pereira, who, “as lawyer, I have [sic] competed with my moral contingent for the increase of the Army’s Third Corps, advising many to hire substitutes, and supporting them with my work, always crowned by fortunate results”. From Piedade’ Farm, he received support from Caetano Gonçalves da Silva, son of the former rebel leader Bento Gonçalves. A small yet so important statement of support. Several others made themselves available, responding from the border and south districts of the province.²³

As a continuous act, the new president temporarily suspended Lima e Silva from the command of Porto Alegre’s National Guard. Lima e Silva, who had not received honorary titles as his relatives, strongly disagreed of such punishment, affirming that “[this was] such a violent act [that] must have resulted a deplorable judgment against me in this capital’s population which has known me for so long ... and offered me a golden sword with a monarch title”. In spite of his dissatisfaction with the temporary removal, the veteran commander accepted the decision. During the average of six months in which he was away from office, two officials temporarily took over: one from the Army, other from the National Guard itself, Lopo Henrique Botelho e Mello and the aforementioned José Pinto da Fonseca Guimarães, respectively – their correspondences with Homem de Mello resulted in little practical outcome. Even aligned to the Imperial government, they lacked the networking necessary for mobilizing more people in the capital. Consequently, the city of Porto Alegre scarcely contributed to the formation of a new Corps.²⁴

Homem de Mello’s main task consisted of mapping regional unrest with the intent of anticipating possible conflicts. In this sense, certain regions of the province were left aside. Such was the case of the highlands, as it presented “little interest in the military service, where desertion happened easily” and therefore uniforms and weaponry should be sent only when the recruits were gathered in the border proximities. Even among those seeming willing to collaborate, certain local specificities had to be respected. The need for the presence of the captain ruling the small recruited troop in the German colony of São Leopoldo, annex location of the Senior Command of Porto Alegre, which collaborated with the government, was requested by the soldiers. After all, he was *their* captain. The same captain declared, in the theater of operations, that he was the man who

could help his personnel both in Portuguese and German as he was fluent in both languages (Becker, 1968, p. 173; see also: Mugge, 2012, p. 122).

There was still the necessity of the nomination of political allies to implement the recruiting's execution, resulting in the mentioning of the commanders of Cruz Alta, São Borja, Alegrete and Bagé in Osório's letters. The reference to the "old Baron of Serro Alegre" was not random: the meetings were concentrated in Bagé and from there orders towards other senior commands emerged. Under the authority of João da Silva Tavares, senior commander of the National Guard of Bagé and Border Commander of Bagé and Jaguarão, the western half of the province moved under uniform. From there negotiations with Uruguayan leaderships took place, envisioning both, to address the capture of deserters in the Oriental Area and the recruitment of soldiers, rural workers and aggregates, working in the Brazilian ranches located in oriental territory, organizing a contingent of around two thousand men, possibly the largest regional contribution to the composition of the new Corps. As recognized by Osório himself through a letter to Homem de Mello: "As a preventive measure, it seems convenient to me that you order the senior commanders of Piratini, Pelotas, Rio Grande and Jaguarão to obey directions from the Colonel Baron of Serro Alegre".²⁵ In Bagé, the "elder" Baron of Serro Alegre, "man of old ideas and habits", led the meetings both in the west region of the province and the Uruguayan territory.²⁶ Still in September 1866, the first intelligence on the necessity of organizing a new corps would arrive at the border, along with the authorization for horse purchase and arbitrary capture of deserters. In that sense, the recruitment of deserters and volunteers orbited in that location, making the Baron of Serro Alegre a heavy executor of the Empire's orders. In exchange, he was granted bounties: before his passing (1872), the conservative Silva Tavares received the title of Baron with greatness (1869) and of Viscount with greatness (1871). He made his son, Joca Tavares, Baron of Itaquí in 1870, and named him his successor in Bagé and Jaguarão.

Osório's networks of politically uniformed allies stimulated the flow of recruits during those months. Such process was boosted by the administration of Homem de Mello. Nonetheless these networks and their commanders did not satisfy the lack of bureaucratic efficiency. The men from the Portinho Division, attached to the Second Corps, commanded by José Gomes Portinho, from Cachoeira e Caçapava – which at the time amounted to about two thousand men, had delayed soldiers for more than a year of salaries. The stages and the horses were disbursed by the senior officers from their own payments. In February 1867, Osório worried that the same difficulties would be faced by the

men of the Third Corps. The provincial finances were exhausted: “the several collections, in addition to having low income, are already overwhelmed by expenditures ... [there is] a National Guards Battalion in São Borja [to whom it is owed] forty contos de réis”.²⁷ The costs in maintenance of the Army's Third Corps were already reaching 300 contos de réis by March 2, 1867, amount managed through “the Central Paying Authority of Alegrete” (Osório, 2008, pp. 429, 433, 435).²⁸

Despite of all these problems, recruitment continued until the desired number was reached, around five thousand men. In April 1867, the contingent of the Third Corps reached the war theater. Homem de Mello reassured his trust in Osório, showing surprise for the outreach of the old general's alliances: “the Sergeant Majors Portinho and Vitorino, belonging in the province to influence contrary to the one sympathetic towards the Baron” and “the Baron of Serro Alegre, within same situation, always gave him [Osório] proofs of trust”. It is possible that the provincial restatement of his authority in a local level and the attempt to raise personal prestige in the provincial and national circles led these commanders to set aside their political-partisan affiliations in order to honor uniformed alliances. The micro foundations of this society, meaning the strategies through which the actors exchanged favors and constituted alliances were challenged during periods of war. The market of titles and commendations certainly stirred the moods of those nineteenth-century men – and their permanent need to maintain the hierarchical status, as stressed by Homem de Mello in a letter to the War minister, stating “that the good services rendered to the State must always receive proper reward....” What Homem de Mello seems to have ignored however was the weight of family relations, particularly between Serro Alegre and Osório. The way by which Osório married his sons inserted him in a web of rich and powerful families of Pelotas. He became related to the Barons of Jarau, Butupi and Arroio Grande, all wealthy ranchers and jerked beef manufacturers. Such family bonds would in turn relate Osório to Antunes Maciel, the Tavares, powerful families of the southwest of the province, and even to the descendants of the commander Cipriano Barcellos, important branch of the community of jerked beef manufacturers of Pelotas (Vargas, 2010a, p. 257).

NUMBERS AND WAVES OF THE THIRD CORPS

The limits of the demographic contribution in the province must be researched beyond complaints and justifications from fellows. Until mid-1866,

the province had recruited more than 25 thousand men in an estimated population of 435 thousand inhabitants. If it is a fact that until then the province had already been strongly contributing, it is equally necessary to know the limits of the military capacity considering the weight of the partisan disputes in their critiques of recruitment, once these same disputes led Osório's political adversaries (and their local allies) to boycott their efforts, hiding deserters who took shelter in the woods or in Uruguay.

The 1872 Census – compiled by Cedeplar-UFMG – registers the presence of 132,151 free men from 16 to 70 years old in Rio Grande do Sul. Considering an annual population growth rate of about 2%, it is estimated that in 1869, the second-to-last year of war, there were about 124,500 men in these conditions residing in the province. Provided the data from General Paulo de Queiroz Duarte are correct, from them we extract the information that during all the War of the Triple Alliance, 33,803 individuals marched, including national guards, volunteers, recruits and freed, from the ranks of Rio Grande do Sul. These contingents were included in the three Corps designated for the theater of operations. According to the province presidents' reports, out of the almost 34 thousand, an estimate of 450 were volunteers. This number is known to be low, but it also reveals that the majority of recruited volunteers marched along with senior commanders and National Guards Corps commanders, raising the number of soldier citizens through appointment. Such phenomenon also exposes the influence of these local bosses because as aforementioned, the corps and brigades were raised and funded by these military-political leaderships. Paranhos was therefore correct when describing the manner by which recruitment would occur.

That being said, and considering the reservations in regards to the accuracy of the available data, it is possible to affirm that around 27% of the adult free men (17-70 years old) of the province marched as national guards – or were counted as such, since volunteers were sometimes integrated to the battalions commanded by Guard officers – to the theater of operations of the Paraguayan War. Bringing these numbers closer to this paper's objective, it was noted that 15,5% of all troops extracted from Rio Grande do Sul belonged to the Army's Third Corps. The numbers are impressive: beyond the vast demographic contribution, whose effect in the province economy must have been significant, it was also perceived the numbers of the Third Corps surpass contributions from other populous provinces such as Minas Gerais (4,090) and the whole Amazon region (4,532), equalizing the total contribution from Ceará with 5,646 individuals (Duarte, 1981, p. 217).

As shown in this paper, a considerable part of the capacity of extraction of recruits and officers had already been exhausted before the beginning of the mobilization managed by Caxias, Osório and Homem de Mello. In 1865, for instance, virtually 18 thousand national guards had been gathered for the campaign in Rio Grande do Sul.²⁹ In that same year, the total number of qualified national guards was, according to the province's presidency, of 43,510 men. Out of this force, more than three thirds (76,7%) marched, demonstrating the impact of the need for soldiers over the citizen militia in Rio Grande do Sul. The Third Corps basically held as target the senior commands of the national guards, following the tradition and the recruitment style of Rio Grande do Sul. These men were sent to the forefront of the battlefields. The majority originated from efforts and meetings of commanders and officers subordinated to the Baron of Serro Alegre, from Bagé, in the province's west border. Those commanders intended that these men continued under their leadership, or at least under the custody of recently formed allies.

Such situation led at times to the fraying of local alliances, due to the dissatisfaction of the village and parish authorities whose perception opposed the reinforced efforts of the Imperial government. In order to overcome these obstacles, the connections of Homem de Mello with the non-militarized sectors of the provincial elites and alliances of the Baron of Herval with the leaders of the Liberal Party were essential, in addition to his cronyism and friendship connections with men who, besides being ranchers and merchants, lived for war. In April 1867, Osório wrote to the commander of Bagé, Baron of Serro Alegre, informing that:

I am thankful to your efforts; still today Joca [son of Serro Alegre, João Nunes da Silva Tavares, also colonel, Baron of Itaqui to be] told me he was waiting for three more days one more contingent sent by you. He still misses Chico de Mattos, Mello Brabo and Feliciano Dias, the latter having left S. Martinho with 300 men, the others I do now know how many they will bring. If it were not for the serious illness of Coronel Mello Albuquerque, Coronel Lago and lately Canabarro, he would have more than two thousand men, if the senior commanders from the inside [referring to the province's countryside, not the border] copied you ten or twelve times.³⁰

In Rio Grande do Sul the War of the Triple Alliance was the peak of the influence of the "militia system". The surviving officers of the battlefields returned home and obtained government responses: they received insignias,

medals, and honors. Of the 58 men from the extreme south who received aristocratic titles between 1860 and 1880, 26 were National Guard officers. Such data reveals the important role played by the militia not only for politics but also for the military interventions. The higher commanders were then placed on the top of the eighteenth-century hierarchy due to their actions while in uniform of the National Guard. Considering the results computed by Jonas Vargas, 65% of the nobility group had direct relation with the conflict of the War of the Triple Alliance. For the first time, individuals from Rio Grande do Sul reached the top of the political careers, participating in the high positions of the Empire as ministers and senators: from 1871 to 1889, the presence of Rio Grande do Sul natives among the ministers was much superior to the previous decades (eight against three); the same happened with the participation in the Senate. In this sense, “Rio Grande do Sul had never been closer to the Court” as in the last two decades of the Empire (Vargas, 2010b, pp. 68-76).

Nonetheless the National Guard was no longer an option for military mobilization. The peak and end of the war also marked the beginning of such system’s decadence. Gradually the affairs in the Rio de La Plata Basin were no longer a priority in foreign policy. Diplomacy started to dominate in a scenery of increasingly organized state building. The Empire, after years of wear and exhaustion, tried to release the base of military recruitment from the calculations and future projections of the localist sentiments, warrior spirits of the south “hicks” and their own “language”, in the words of Caxias.³¹ The same Caxias, after the end of the war, would propose a law of military lottery, the famous Law of Cumbuca, in an attempt of universalizing the service in the content of the growing bureaucracy of the 1870s.

The daily competition for the control of means of violence and the interconnections between political matter and military needs, within a dispute between formalism and irregularities, shed light to diverse jurisdictional levels, especially when we consider the forms through which the small localities also influenced the execution of policies conceived by the national political center. The relations between commanders and personnel, influencing the troop’s behavior stationed in aforementioned border areas, exposed interests that exceeded the limits of the national borders but also influenced the government’s behavior in Brazil. At last, the government acquired enough soldiers to deal with the following steps of the campaign and win the war. The political and social costs of these efforts would place new challenges to the process of State building, the Imperial solution and the semi-centered political order which had been consolidated two decades before.

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NOTES

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² See: GUAZZELLI, 2009, p. 74; DE LA FUENTE, 2000, pp. 164-180.

³ In 1864, Colonel Antônio de Mello e Albuquerque, commander of the National Guard in Cruz Alta, sent a letter to the President of the Province, Souza Gonzaga, stating that in the area under his command “the interest of the Nation has been sacrificed, owing to the 1866 elections”. Arquivo Histórico do Rio Grande do Sul (AHRS). Fundo Guarda Nacional. Comando Superior de Cruz Alta. Maço 10. Dec. 2, 1864. The congealing of the political situation in Rio Grande do Sul during the Paraguayan war impeded the ascension of the so-called Historic Liberals. See: PICCOLO, 1991, p. 56.

⁴ On Homem de Mello, see: MORAIS, 2007, pp. 25-84; SOUZA, 2007, pp. 71-101.

⁵ See: BEATTIE, 2001, pp. 38-64; MENDES, 2010, p. 46; MUGGE, 2012, chapt. 3; FERTIG, 2010, chapt. 4; MUGGE, 2016, pp. 35-141.

⁶ Z. De Góes e Vasconcellos to Manuel Luís Osorio. Rio de Janeiro. January 08, 1867. In: OSÓRIO, 2008, p. 403.

⁷ Fala dirigida à Assembleia Legislativa da Província de S. Pedro do Rio Grande do Sul pelo presidente Dr. Francisco Ignácio Marcondes Homem de Mello, em a segunda sessão da 12ª Legislatura. Porto Alegre: Typ. do Rio-Grandense, à Pç. da Alfândega, n. 4, 1867.

⁸ Center for Research Libraries, doravante CRL. Brazilian Government Documents. Ministerial Reports. Ministério da Justiça, 1867. Annex D, pp. 168-195.

⁹ Arquivo Público do Rio Grande do Sul (APERS). David Canabarro. Sant’Ana do Livramento. Transmissão de Notas, 1871, Book 10F, Sheet 3; Manoel Pereira Vargas. Jaguarão. Vara de Família e Sucessão, 1866, 501; João da Silva Tavares. Bagé. 1º Cartório do Cível, 1872, 62; Tristão José Pinto. São Gabriel. Cartório de Órfãos e Ausentes, 1868, 207; Antônio Fernandes Lima. Itaquí. Cartório de Órfãos e Ausentes, 1875, Processo 234.

¹⁰ A notorious case occurred during the Farroupilha War (1835-1845). Lieutenant José

Joaquim de Andrade Neves (soon to be Baron of Triumph and Commander of Rio Pardo) refused to be transferred to the Army as “alferes”, fearing that this change would cut short his action ray (HOMEM DE MELLO, 1869, p. 6).

¹¹ See FARINATTI, 2010, p. 221.

¹² Osório to Homem de Mello. Pirai. February 10, 1867. In: OSÓRIO, 2008, p. 419.

¹³ Marquês de Caxias to Manoel Luís Osorio. S/L. November 4, 1866. In: OSÓRIO, 2008, p. 380; Manoel Luís Osorio. S/L. S/D. In: OSÓRIO, 2008 p. 384.

¹⁴ The substitute of Lima e Silva was a reliable man for Osório. Homem de Mello stated “the urgency made me nominate the Marshall Lopo de Almeida Henrique Botelho e Melo ... who, by his actions during this days, justified the trust that the Baron of Herval [Osório] had on him”. Homem de Mello to João Lustosa da Cunha Paranaguá. Porto Alegre, February 22, 1867. AHRS. A-2.32.

¹⁵ Viscount de Porto Alegre to João Lustosa da Cunha Paranaguá. Curuzú (Paraguai). November 9, 1868. Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, IHGB, folder 30, sheet 5.

¹⁶ J. L. da Cunha Paranaguá to Manuel Luís Osorio. Rio de Janeiro. January 6, 1866. In: OSÓRIO, 2008, p. 387.

¹⁷ Manuel Luís Osorio to J. L. da Cunha Paranaguá. S/L. December 10, 1866. In: OSÓRIO, 2008, pp. 387-388; Manuel Luís Osorio to J. L. da Cunha Paranaguá. S/L. December 10, 1866. In: OSÓRIO, 2008, p. 388.

¹⁸ Osório to Marquês de Paranaguá. s/l, s/d. IHGB. Coleção Paranaguá, Lata 312, Pasta 24. (Quoted in IZECKSOHN, 2002, p. 95).

¹⁹ Severino Ribeiro D’Almeida to J. L. da Cunha Paranaguá. Alegrete. December 31, 1866. IHGB. Coleção Paranaguá, Lata 32, Pasta 24. (Quoted in IZECKSOHN, 2002, p. 96).

²⁰ Museu de Comunicação Social Hipólito José da Costa. *O Guarda Nacional*, Rio Grande, ano 1, n.2, December 14, 1866.

²¹ Pereira da Cunha to Paranaguá. Porto Alegre. December 14, 1866. AHRS. A-2.32.

²² Luís Manoel Osorio to Homem de Mello. February 7, 1867. Biblioteca Nacional (BNRJ). Seção de Manuscritos, 4,3,2.

²³ AHRS. Fundo Documentos de Governantes. Maço 28. 1867.

²⁴ Luis Manuel de Lima e Silva to Homem de Mello. Porto Alegre. February 20, 1867. AHRS. Fundo Guarda Nacional. Comando Superior de Porto Alegre e São Leopoldo. Maço 28. Ofício 39.

²⁵ Osório to Homem de Mello. Piraizinho. February 2, 1867. In: OSÓRIO, 2008, pp. 416-417.

²⁶ Arquivo Nacional (ANRJ). Série Justiça, Gabinete do Ministro. Homem de Mello to Martin Francisco Ribeiro de Andrada, Ministro da Justiça. Porto Alegre. October 29, 1867.

²⁷ This sum was relatively small if compared to the Imperial budget. But one could buy

several properties in Rio Pardo (eight houses) with it in 1867. In that same region, 2,500 cattle could be bought (15\$222 each) or even forty able-bodied captives (1:000\$000 each).

²⁸ The expenditures with the Third Army Corps are difficult to trace. One of our conclusions is that the Presidency of the Province managed it through the creation of “pagadorias”, but also using existing agencies, such as “coletorias” and “alfândegas”. Debts were then collected from the Ministries (of Justice and War).

²⁹ BNRJ, Hemeroteca Digital. Relatório do Presidente de Província do Rio Grande do Sul, 1865. Anexo 1.

³⁰ Barão do Herval to Barão do Serro Alegre. Itaquá. April 10, 1867. AHRS. Fundo Guarda Nacional. Comando Superior de Bagé. Maço 4.

³¹ Caxias to Osorio. Rio de Janeiro. October 20, 1866. In: OSÓRIO, 2008, p. 379.