

### **At the End of the Party**

When the dead recognized by Covid-19 reached one hundred thousand, more than one journalist recalled that it was twice the Brazilian imperial soldiers who are estimated to have died in the five years of war of the Triple Alliance against the Republic of Paraguay. The reference registered the shock caused by that death of the coeval, which was recorded in the Brazilian memory of the past. However, communicators who recorded the comparison forget that, maintaining the correction between the population of the country then and today, the war would have claimed more than one million and one hundred thousand lives and not half a hundred.

For multiple reasons, the Triple Alliance War against the Republic of Paraguay is a major success in our history. The death toll it caused in the Republic of Paraguay and among imperial soldiers was immense. With regard to Brazil, it consolidated conservatism, slavery, monarchy, the imperialist action of the Brazilian State on the Plata. Contrary to what the dominant historiographical views on its consequences for our country propose, it delayed the country's social and economic evolution. The conflict has also had historically retrograde results for Argentine and Uruguayan social formations, not to mention Paraguay.

The War of the Triple Alliance was wanted, fought and brought to the last consequences mainly by the Empire of Brazil, due to the sovereign decision of Pedro II and the monarchist-slave state. Orthodox positivists had reasons to point out as the two great crimes of the Emperor and the Monarchy the defense of slavery and the aggression and destruction of the Paraguayan national state, then perhaps the only South American nation-state, born mainly from the Revolution and the Francist Era (1813-1840).

Between 2014 and 2020, the 150th anniversary of the beginning, development and end of that conflict took place, with profound and lasting consequences for all nations and states involved in it, as just proposed. It is understandable why quality public celebrations have been more than meager. In Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, the five-year period took place mainly under social-liberal governments, when they were not liberal and emanated from conservative coups. They were all opposed to historical reflections that contributed to the understanding of the civilizing regression that befalls with special

force on our continent.

It is more difficult to explain the reasons for the Academy's silence about the course, especially in Brazil. In addition to being especially involved in military intervention in the Eastern Republic of Uruguay and in the war against the Republic of Paraguay, Brazil has - difficult to say until when - a refined network of graduate centers dedicated to the social sciences, with emphasis on the history.

Essays on explanations of the reasons for this lapse are presented in texts in the present and timely dossier. In Brazil, for several reasons, the participation of the Empire of Brazil in the War of the Triple Alliance is almost a matter of State. The roots of mythologies about the Promethean fate of the army's high officiality in Brazil's authoritarian administration are deeply rooted in those facts. The history of the barely fraternal relations, we say, of the Brazilian imperial and republican state with the Paraguayan state, are still determined by those successes.

The reality is that, for long decades, the conflict was a kind of historiographical hunting reserve for the officers of the more and less literate Brazilian land forces and of the academic intellectuals who developed and are developing under their wings and that of the Foreign Ministry.

The fact is that Brazilian historiography was little interested and wrote little about the conflict. Much less was translated into Portuguese the excellent production, mainly Argentine and Paraguayan, about that conflict, especially when oriented towards the desecration of the mystifying and patriotic explanations of the ruling classes of the Triple Alliance and the Paraguayan legionary hosts, their tributaries.

The non-translation into Portuguese of foundational works on those successes, such as those by Milcíades Peña, Enrique Rivera, Júlio César Chaves, Efraim Cardoso, Juan Crisóstomo Centurión, Richard Alan White and many others, seems to have as main reason the maintenance of the delay and the sufficiency of our historiography on those facts.

The national autism of the specialized historiography itself consolidated the strange tradition of writing about that conflict from an almost total ignorance about Paraguayan history and social formation, treated commonly and currently, from some of the most awkward and grotesque prejudices about those people and nation and a really atrocious interpretive simplism.

There is perhaps a little-explored complementary reason for the little traditional  
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interest in that conflict. Marxist historiography or claiming Marxism has barely addressed that historical success. In general, it has always been more focused on Europe than on our neighboring nations. When it was under the influence of the CPSU, it defended the theses of collaboration with the so-called progressive bourgeoisie. Soaked in bourgeois positivist views, it presented the “republican military” as champions of the progress of our nationality, generally those who carried out the massacres in Paraguay and Canudos.

More recently, valuable and creative Brazilian Marxist historians centered their studies on the Republican Period, with emphasis on the years following the Revolution of 1930. Not only this methodological aspect always had difficulty in articulating the colonial and monarchist periods of our past, under the domain of colonial slavery, with times of free wage labor, under the tendency laws proper to a capitalist social formation, even if backward. Phenomenon that has only recently been overcome.

The reasons are manifold, but the historiography of the War of the Triple Alliance against Paraguay and its multiple consequences, even if advancing quantitatively, and producing mainly valuable monographic works on Brazil, is semi-frozen, with regard to the profound interpretations of those successes and the construction of a historiography that breaks with the interpretations emanating from the dominant classes of the past and the present. In this regard, academic restorations of national-patriotic historiography built under the shadow of the imperial state and in the early days of the Republic still dominate.

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A little over a decade ago, the perhaps broadest and most organic research project on that conflict was developed in the Postgraduate Program in History at the University of Passo Fundo, with a view to producing a new revisionist, academic and scientific historiography on the Great War, from the perspective of the peoples of then and now, who have not had and continue to have no contradictions between them.

This program resulted in an essay of a general history of that conflict, in four volumes, of my own, and in master's dissertations, in doctoral theses, in seminars and academic meetings, in dossiers of the Program's magazine, etc. This effort has always had the support of the UPF PPGH, with emphasis on its coordinator, Dr. Ana Luiza Setti Reckziegel.

All this work was carried out in close contact with the archives, libraries, academic institutions in Uruguay, Argentina and especially historians in Paraguay. Much of this production, available in Portuguese, was translated into Spanish and published in

Paraguay, where UPF's PPGH researchers were received with truly unique attention and kindness.

The present dossier brings the work of some of those researchers and many others, who now embrace this battle. I would like to highlight the presence of dr. Jorge Luiz Prata de Sousa, in the last decades, author of one of the pioneering works dedicated exclusively to the theme to break with the aforementioned bonds that tied it.

With the present dossier, Revista Semina of the Association of Graduate Students in History of University of Passo Fundo celebrates the conclusion of the 150th anniversary of the Big War, by the PPGH of UPF, and in a way assumes the commitment to retake and advance the tradition already consolidated in that institution about that hecatomb, even in these dark times that we are going through.

Mário Maestri, Genoa, September 1, 2020