

Brazilian military service and preparation for the Second World War¹

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Abstract

The objective of this work is to analyze the development of Brazil's military service during the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the impact of its recruitment structure on an expeditionary army division to fight in the Second World War. During this time, the Brazilian Army aimed to democratize the call for military service and ensure the best outcomes for the country in the case of an eventual war. However, with the middle and upper classes dodging recruitment, both in peacetime and during the Second World War, recruitment focused predominantly on the most impoverished and lowest educated groups of society. Nevertheless, the expeditionary forces constituted a better prepared group of soldiers than that of the existing military service. This paper concludes that the experience of war, however, had no broader impact on Brazil's military service in times of peace.

Resumo

O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar o desenvolvimento do Serviço Militar no Brasil na década de 1930 e 1940 e as consequências dessa estrutura de recrutamento para a formação de uma divisão expedicionária de exército para lutar na Segunda Guerra Mundial. O Exército Brasileiro objetivava democratizar a convocação para o serviço militar e promover a seleção dos melhores índices físicos e instrucionais da juventude do país para uma eventual guerra. No entanto, com a evasão das classes médias e altas do recrutamento, tanto no período de paz quanto para a Segunda Guerra Mundial, o recrutamento incidiu predominantemente nos grupos mais empobrecidos da sociedade, de baixa escolaridade. Apesar das dificuldades, foi possível fornecer um grupo de combatentes melhor preparado do que aquele originado do Serviço Militar brasileiro. O estudo conclui que a experiência da guerra, no entanto, não repercutiu no aperfeiçoamento do Serviço Militar brasileiro em tempos de paz.

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The objective of this article is to evaluate the development of Brazil's military service during the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the consequences impact of this recruitment structure for the creation of an expeditionary army division to fight in the Second World War. After a review of existing literature on the subject, the essay provides an analysis of the institutionalization of Brazil's national military service, as well as its structure on the eve of Brazil's involvement in the Second World War. The article will also show how the mobilization of people from the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB) changed over time as well as how memory of the expeditionary forces relates to the social profile of its recruits.

Literature review

Despite the importance of the subject, there are few studies on the history of military service in Brazil. The most systematic study on military conscription in Brazil is by American historian Peter Beattie, *"The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race and Nation in Brazil, 1864-1945"* (2001). However, military service is not the focus of the study, rather, it acts as an instrument through which Beattie analyze the conceptions and practices of race, honor, masculinity, and nation-building in the Brazilian Army, from the beginning of the second half of 19th century to the Second World War. In the author's words, his study "uses army enlisted recruitment and service to analyze the changing relationships between the Brazilian State and strata of the free poor from 1864 to 1945 (2001, 12)". The author, however, does not approach the role played by Brazilian military service in the Second World War in much depth.

Another American historian, Frank D. McCann, made contributed to the study of the subject through his publication, *"A Nação Armada"* (1982), a collection of original essays and previously published articles on the Brazilian military. The theme of military service appears prominently in two chapters: "O Serviço Militar Obrigatório" and "Raízes do Novo Profissionalismo". In a more recent work, *"Soldados do Pátria - a history of the Brazilian Army, 1889-1937"*, McCann takes up the theme again. In both works the author emphasizes the creation of compulsory recruitment from the alliance between the emerging middle classes and military officer corps. For the middle classes, military service was seen as a way to spread their virtuous values to the population and lead to the desired social leveling of such groups: "Military service would raise up the lower classes and level the upper classes (2004, 162)". For the army, compulsory recruitment was essential for the defense of the country and should define the institution's role in society. McCann shows that, in practice, the plans of this alliance were not successful. The middle and upper classes avoided military service as much as possible, leaving the burden of service predominantly to the poorer classes. On the other hand, there was no way to produce good soldiers without modernizing facilities, armaments, and equipment. Budget constraints were only part of the problem. The internal power structure of the



army prioritized officers' salaries, meaning low wages, poor facilities, and low social standing for graduates and soldiers.

In terms of the type of training conducted during military service and its usefulness (or not) to the Second World War, one of the main points of reference is the memories and testimonies of veterans of the Italian campaign, as the collective work entitled *Depoimentos dos Oficiais da Reserva sobre a F.E.B.* (Arruda, et al., 1949). In several excerpts from the authors' contributions, there are criticisms about the innocuous role of military service in preparing the country for a real war (Arruda, et al., 1949, 14; 17; 62; 86-87; 317-322).

The proposal of this article is to deepen some of the topics that were little addressed by the cited authors, with the addition of recently discovered documentary sources, as well as a bibliographic outline of new research on the army, the FEB, and military service.

Brazil's military service and preparation for the Second World War

Initiatives for establishing military service in Brazil at the end of the 19th century stemmed from the need to create a dependable selection of well-trained recruits, nationwide and from all social classes, for the eventuality of a conflict. At a time of mass warfare, military service was born with a dual purpose: to provide efficient military mobilization for possible military action, and to spread the notions of patriotism and civic duty among young draftees. This was the establishment of the "citizen-soldier": an individual who, when performing military service for a certain period for his homeland, in peace or in war, would acquire the qualification of his citizenship through the "tribute of blood." For such service, citizens would participate, indirectly in peace and directly in war, in line with the nation's policies. This would allow them the civic and political rights of citizenship.

In 1916, following a campaign by the military and civilians led by the nationalist poet Olavo Bilac, Brazil's military draft was created. Defenders of military service believed that mandatory recruitment would be an important step in the direction of leveling social classes and spreading values such as order, discipline, and patriotism. Another expected consequence, in an indirect way, was literacy, essential for the exercise of rights such as voting. In other words, mandatory military service was speculated as a fundamental step to forming both a citizen with a civic conscience and an efficient soldier for the defense of the nation (McCann, 2004, p. 88; 161-163).

Expectations were sunk with the first classes of draftees. There were more young people who did not attend the summons than who actually enlisted: "From 1917 through 1929, 619,753 names were drawn, of which 75,286 were exempted and of which 409,111 did not show up, leaving only 135,354 to enter the barracks" (McCann, 2004, p. 225). The difficulties in spreading and sending out recruitment calls grew with distance from the main urban centers. Cities served by railways and

highways had greater facilities for receiving summons and organizing them. Even when call notifications arrived at their destination, this did not mean that all young people in the region could be enlisted and selected. The mandatory registration document was the civil registry and not all young people had it, especially those from the countryside and from distant locations (Maximiano, 2010, 59-60; Silva, 1928, p. 23-24).

Olavo Bilac's dreams of social leveling through military service ("the complete triumph of democracy; class leveling" (Bilac, 1965, 27) did not come true. There were multiple means for dodging military service - getting exemptions from local clientelist leaders; providing service at shooting ranges; participating in Army maneuvers as a volunteer; attending schools that offered military training; taking preparatory courses for reserve officers. These means were used by the middle and upper classes, to remove them as far as possible from regular military service. The majority of those recruited belonged to the urban and rural working classes: agricultural workers (37.5%), factory workers (31.3%), and commercial employees (15.77%). These three main categories together made up 84.57% of those selected, while, in contrast, students accounted for only 3.31% (Silva, 1928, 38-39; 196; Beattie, 2001, p. 251). Military obligation was seen as cruel by young people who, at the time of the call, were just beginning their professional lives.

In its favor, supporters for military service could argue that time in the barracks transformed hundreds of illiterate young people into literate ones, through schools in the regiments. In addition to combatting the illiteracy of the soldiers, military service aimed to spread notions of belonging and civic duty to the Brazilian homeland. Indeed, the rate of illiteracy of recruited soldiers, although high (approximately 30%, between the 1930s and 1940s), was lower than the rate of the male population of military age, which, according to the 1940 Demographic Census, was 51.6%. Among the literate, the level of education of recruits was much higher in primary education (60.86%), than secondary education (6.51%) and higher education - only 1.39% (Silva, 1928, p. 48; Brasil, 1950, p. 6; McCann, 2004, p. 227).

Other ailments bothered military commanders. The main one was the country's health situation, which hampered the selection of contingents (Beattie, 2001, p. 254). According to Colonel Tristão de Alencar Araripe, who commanded the 2nd Infantry Regiment in the early 1940s, "... of the recruits presented, about 50 to 60% were refused as physically incapable, and even those who remained attested the tolerance of the medical board, because the majority brought with them the physical misery resulting from blatant malnutrition" (Araripe, 1942, p 209).

Therefore, the experience of the first two decades of organized military service showed that the reality was far below expectations of social leveling and individual development. However, the military commanders' headaches went beyond facing problems that were, in fact, structural in the country. The first problem was to convince young people and their parents that military service was not a punishment by the State for being working class, but a necessary way to exercise full

citizenship. The second issue was structural and related specifically to the Army itself. Amongst the poorest populations, the memory of forced recruitment in the past was still very much alive, as was the notorious structural precariousness of the Army, with its unhealthy facilities, deficient training, and rough treatment of recruits by sergeants and officers. To make things worse, the difficulties in waging campaigns against poorly armed groups in the country itself, such as the conflicts of Canudos (1896-1897) and Contestado (1912-1916), reflected poorly on the Army's image (Silva, 1928, p. 23-24; McCann, 1982, p. 42-47; Beattie, 2001, p. 162-163; Castro, 2006, p.7).

Throughout the 1930s, the Army pressured the government to adopt legal measures that would limit the advantages of citizenship for those who did not undertake military service. In 1933, a decree that made access to public service conditional upon presentation of a Reservist Certificate represented the first step in this direction. This rule was transformed into a constitutional principle the following year. In 1939, a Military Service Law extended the conditioning of access to political and civil rights for the adult male population by prohibiting access to justice for those who could not prove their military service or their exemption certificate. Heavy fines were imposed on those who were defiant. At least in the legal sphere, citizens were equal in the face of the "tribute of blood" requirement (Castro, 2006, p. 9-10; McCann, 1982, p. 47-48; Beattie, 2001, p. 243).

Combat training was focused on the everyday missions of a South American country of continental dimensions: the defense of borders and repression of internal conflicts. The doctrine adopted by Brazilian forces was defensive, based on the experience of the Great World War of years before. This was understandable given it was the type of combat that was envisioned at that time, and it was the doctrine adopted by the French Military Mission.² However, the development of combat strategy already implied that maneuver warfare would be implemented in future conflicts.

Regardless of the type of war to be fought, training was insufficient to producing a good standard of performance amongst the ground forces. Preparation was often affected by material problems: ammunition for infantry and artillery exercises was rationed and there was no maneuvering of large units. Not even the training courses for reserve officers contained adequate preparation for the type of war that they were about to face. This would become a serious problem in the future. In preparation for the Second World War, it was often up to reserve officers to give instruction to the draftees, rather than regular officers.

Another problem was the excessive nature of military discipline. Although prohibited, physical punishment was frequent in the barracks. The humiliations to which recruits were subjected made up part of routine sociability in the barracks (Beattie, 2001, p. 266). In this world apart, it was not uncommon to find officers and graduates who believed that this was the only way

² The French Military Mission was contracted by the Brazilian Army, to modernize instruction, combat operations, weapons, and equipment. The mission lasted two decades (1920-1940) and influenced the formation of an entire generation of Brazilian officers.



to treat soldiers, whom they considered inferior beings. However, this logic was not without opponents, as demonstrated by the frequency with which outbreaks of indiscipline, mutinies, revolts, and collective protests broke the barrack routine, as well as its repression, which was generally violent (Carvalho, 1980, p. 111-118).

With such characteristics, regular Army life made it difficult to convince individuals to face military service of their own accord. If such sacrifice had been distributed equally across society, it might have been met with less resistance. However, the military service campaigns fell almost exclusively on the lower classes. This pattern served as a prelude to what was to come should a real war emerge and a call for young people to fight became necessary. That war arrived in Brazil in 1942.

The selection process

When faced with the challenge of mobilizing an expeditionary army capable of fighting on another continent, Brazilian military leaders decided not to carry out a generalized mobilization, but rather, to select an elite group of soldiers that was built on strong foundations. In fact, such a decision was the only one possible. The Brazilian armed forces did not have enough regular personnel to maintain the defense of its own homeland *and* send large numbers of soldiers to war overseas. There was also the limitation of weapons, equipment, and, mainly, financial resources to fight a war in a distant theater of operations. Thus, the criteria for selecting young people were similar, and in some cases even more stringent, than those applied by the armed forces of belligerent powers: 26 natural teeth, minimum height and weight of 1.60 m and 60 kg, respectively. In this way, it was expected that medical and psychological examinations would promote a certain selection in the contingent of soldiers (Gonçalves, 1951, p. 67 et seq.).

As in other belligerent countries, young people between the ages of 18 and 25 were called up to fight in the conflict. The Expeditionary Corps was originally intended to contain three Army Divisions and an Air Force, totaling approximately 60,000 men. This force would be armed, equipped, and trained by the American forces and subordinate to them in the theater of operations (Castelo Branco, 1960, p. 124-125).

The gradual mobilization of the Army was authorized, and the number of personnel increased from 95,000 to 165,000 men, with draftees from 1941, 1942, and 1943 in the ranks, and with the call of reservists between 21 and 30 years old. The Brazilian military summit had the expectation, generated by the animated demonstrations of students in favor of the declaration of war, that the proportion of volunteers would be high. However, the “insignificant and painfully inexpressive” number of volunteers, “despite successive calls through wide publicity” brought the War Ministry back to harsh reality. Of the 2.4 million young people who, in 1943, were between 21 and 26 years old, only 2,750 presented themselves and only 1,570 were judged to be apt and incorporated (Brasil, 1944, p. 20-21; 35-36). In addition to the lack of enthusiasm for recruitment, the military authorities

watched with concern the exponential increase in requests for dismissal by public officials and specialized professionals. Thus, while educated personnel withdrew from the expeditionary military, those with low schooling remained mobilized (Ferreira Junior, 2007).

It did not take long for the Army to recognize that, under these conditions, it would be impossible to send an Expeditionary Corps. In November 1943, it was decided that the maximum that could be sent for combat would be a Brazilian Expeditionary Force, composed of an Army division and an Air Force fighter group. The two other initially planned divisions were stopped (Brasil, 1944, p. 187-191).

The recruitment for war thus repeated the weaknesses of regular military service and reproduced the country's economic and social problems of the 1930s and 1940s. The Ministry of War preferred to call units from four different military regions (1st, 2nd, 4th, and 9th military regions, corresponding to the Federal District and the States of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Mato Grosso), instead of deploying infantry units with the best equipment and training, which were stationed in the Northeast. The Ministry of War did not want to leave the Northeast without the protection it considered adequate, while German submarines surrounded its coastline and there were still large numbers of American soldiers at the bases in the region. Despite having better training and better material than the rest of the country, many of the Northeastern units did not meet the literacy and physical fitness requirements to become expeditionary soldiers. The initial selections demonstrated the difficulties that all military regions, especially those in the North and Northeast, had in being able to supply men to the expeditionary units, with a high proportion of failure due to physical insufficiency, chronic diseases, and precarious dentition, in addition to high rates of illiteracy. In this way, the FEB ended up incorporating men and officers from across all the states of the federation, whether they were conscripts, volunteers, or regular military personnel (Castelo Branco, 1960, p. 127).

Even though the criteria were reviewed and relaxed, 23,236 individuals were still recorded to have failed a total number of 107,609 health inspections (Gonçalves, 1951, p. 117-118). This meant that some groups of expeditionary soldiers that were sent to Italy needed to be treated in field hospitals, occupying beds and the dedication of doctors, dentists, and psychiatrists, whose attention should have been turned to the wounded and sick in combat.

The various means of avoiding recruitment for war

In the years leading up to the Second World War, the life of draftees did not go beyond a few months of barracks training, weapon handling, one or two shooting exercises, and performing maneuvers. With the declaration of belligerence, there would be a real war to fight. Efforts were then intensified to avoid recruitment. Representatives of the private sector and public service joined this undertaking - from employers of Companhia Telefônica Brasileira, Estrada de Ferro Central do

Brasil, Estrada de Ferro Noroeste do Brasil, Sociedade Brasileira de Mineração Ltda., Lloyd Brasileiro, Departamento de Correios e Telégrafos and from Banco do Brasil, to mothers and wives, who personally sought out military institutions to request the licensing of summons or transfers to non-expeditionary units (Ferreira Junior, 2007, p. 18-24). Even the latter, not destined for war, had their shortcomings: the mobilization for dodging the summons was intense even for domestic military service. The Minister of War, General Dutra, complained to President Getúlio Vargas of the “patricians... who claim futility and various pretexts to avoid simply going to our not-too-distant Northeast.”³

When sponsors were missing, or good relations did not work, other devices were used. Dismissals and exemption regulations were not lacking. Decrees, Reserved Notes, and Internal Notices exempted “breadwinners”, married men, brothers of convoked individuals already incorporated, civil servants, and graduates in higher education courses. If patronage and legislation did not work, there was still the possibility of escaping the expeditionary force: committing disciplinary transgressions, since only men with “exceptional” or “good” behavior could, in theory, belong to the FEB. Some of the enlisted squads managed to avoid the draft in this way, but the increase in occurrences generated a counter-order, removing elimination due to bad behavior. The consequences of this measure were even worse: several military units directed their “men of bad conduct” to the FEB, and there was even a unit that sent “condemned soldiers serving sentences and others, still in process” to the FEB⁴ It was an opportunity for commanders to “clean up” their units, sending undesirable soldiers to the expeditionary regiments. Thus, belonging to the FEB and going to war could be considered, for people inside the military institution itself, a punishment, a penalty (Amaral, 1949, p. 163; Piason, 1949, p. 85).

The “way” to not go to war and conceiving the FEB as a “punishment” consequently weakened the morale of future expeditionary soldiers. Both the men and officers who dodged service boasted that their success in escaping the war was due to the protection of high authorities (Amaral, 1949, p. 172).

In short, recruitment for the FEB, was carried out based on the existing military service, and subject to all possible evasion strategies for the final configuration of the units to be shipped. This clearly exposes the frustrating results for the propagandists of universal conscription, social leveling, the spread of civic duty, and the exercise of citizenship. Ultimately, the Ministry of War sent to the Mediterranean Theater of Operations not the elite group sought by its leaders, but the troops that were available, composed of those who did not want or could not escape the “tribute of blood.” To

³ General Dutra ao Presidente Getúlio Vargas. Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Histórico do Exército: Arquivo Góes Monteiro, 1943. Caixa 11, Pasta 2, Subpasta 2, documento “d”.

⁴ Ministério da Guerra. Força Expedicionária Brasileira. Relatório Secreto. Arquivo Histórico do Exército, Vol. I, p. 19; See also Castelo Branco, 1960, p. 139-140.

better understand these men who were about to embark on the war - their origins, professions, ethnic profile, physical strength, and education -, a survey was carried out on the only available statistical series known for the FEB, the 1156 records of Reservists of the FEB's Replacement Personnel Unit (*Depósito de Pessoal da FEB*), a unit that brought together expeditionary soldiers from the 4th and 5th echelons of the Expeditionary Division. The results obtained show certain discrepancies in relation to some of the myths created about the nature of the expeditionary soldiers.⁵

Reviewing myths: the composition of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force

As seen so far, difficulties in institutionalizing military service and, above all, making sure it reached all male citizens of military age, contributed to determining the ways in which young people were included or discharged from being expeditionary soldiers. Before the war, it was well known that military service was preferentially directed at the poorest and least educated youth in rural and urban areas of the country. Their contemporaries, based more on personal impressions than on documentary data, contributed to the image that the FEB was composed of poor young people, coming from the urban and rural working classes, and even illiterate and toothless men. The worrying results of physical selection also contributed to this generalized image, in which some military regions, mainly in the North and Northeast of the country, exhibited alarming numbers in relation to the health status of those summoned for examination. Thus, in the collective memory, the FEB's "working class" composition allowed for the creation of a paradox: despite being toothless, squalid, thin, and illiterate, the *matutos* (country bumpkins) had overcome the powerful representatives of the "superior race."

Recent research, however, has shown that the FEB may have assembled a more selective combat group than previously thought. In the absence of systematic data, historians have been searching for other available data. Physical robustness is a good example. Unlike the draft data of the 1920s, compiled by medical colonel Arthur Lobo da Silva (1928), there are no systematic records on the anthropometric data of those recruited for the FEB. The only statistical index of the expeditionary soldiers on robustness is the height of the recruits, which appears in the files of the FEB Replacement Personnel Unit, these being copies of the files of reservists of the 4th and 5th Expeditionary Groups. These ranks arrived between December 1944 and February 1945, to replace the casualties of combat and non-combat soldiers. The 1,156 records found in the archives of the FEB Personnel Deposit correspond to approximately 12% of the contingent of soldiers for these levels. In addition to information on height, the forms contain information for each expeditionary soldier, such as name, year and place of enlistment, parents' names, date and place of birth, color, hair, eyes,

⁵ Fichas de Reservistas. Depósito de Pessoal da FEB (DP/FEB). Arquivo Histórico do Exército, Rio de Janeiro. At the moment, this is the only data series available on the profile of the expeditionaries. We hope that, with the development of research on diverse aspects of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, other sources with better data will be found.



facial markings, literacy, and data on their active service and disciplinary occurrences (*Folha de Alterações*). The results of this sampling are as follows:

Table 1 - Biometric Data of Expeditionary Soldiers – Height

Height	Up to 1.59	1.60 to 1.64	1.65 to 1.69	1.70 to 1.74	1.75 to 1.79	1.80 to 1.86	No Information	Total
Soldiers	80	250	358	273	118	37	40	1156
%	6.92	21.63	30.97	23.61	10.21	3.20	3.46	100

Source: Fichas de Reservistas. DP/FEB – Arquivo Histórico do Exército.

In this sample, the average height is 1.677m. If we understand 1.65m as the average height in Brazil in the 1940s (Nogueról et al., 2005, p. 7), almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the expeditionary soldiers (71.45%) belong to the category of medium/tall height. As a comparative parameter with the male population in the same age group, it is only possible to use the survey carried out by medical colonel Arthur Lobo da Silva with the recruits of the Military Service between 1922 and 1923, and published in 1928. According to this study, the general average height of the recruits was 1.651m. The height of the expeditionary soldiers, therefore, was above the average of those recruited from the Military Service (Silva, 1928, p. 24).⁶

Other ways of indirectly ascertaining indicators of physical robustness were made. A study by Cesar Maximiano, for example, checked the FEB's requests for shoes and uniforms for the American Intendance Service, and noted that most expeditionary soldiers wore sizes above the Brazilian average (Maximiano, 2010, p. 54-64).

The regional origins of the expeditionary soldiers also show that, unlike a faithful and proportional sample of the Brazilian population (1940 Census), the FEB was composed predominantly of young people from the South and Southeast regions. In total, 82.71% of the FEB soldiers originated from the states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, and the Federal District, at the time in the city of Rio de Janeiro (Moraes, 1947, p. 304). Among the reasons for this concentration are: a) these recruits had best results in the health examinations of the medical selection process; b) the proportion of expeditionary soldiers was higher in coastal cities and where rail and road networks could be reached. The best physical selection would tend to occur where the majority of those being examined were proportionally larger than the average of those summoned; c) the order, on the part of the Ministry of War, to maintain soldiers considered “elite” in the Northeast region, to dissuade the American units stationed there from creating troubles in the region. When the bases in the region started to be emptied, young people

⁶ Although it accepted recruits of a smaller stature than the Brazilian forces (1.524m, or 60 inches), the American Army had an average height greater than that of its brothers in arms in South America (1.727m, or 68 inches). See Karpinos (1958, p. 415).



from those units were directed to the FEB, especially corporals and sergeants, who mainly composed the 5th echelon and last FEB group of soldiers to be shipped out to Italy (Silva, 1928, p. 23- 24; Maximiano, 2010, 59-61).

Regarding the levels of education, the data show that the FEB base presented better results than the average of the male population of military age. It should be remembered that, except for volunteers, the need for literacy was not explicitly established by the Ministry of War as an exclusion criterion, although the documentation indirectly refers to the need for minimum instruction for membership in expeditionary units. These references mention the need for selected soldiers to be able to perform functions such as reading instructions and signs, being guided by maps, etc. With such an informal requirement, it was possible to find illiterate soldiers within the FEB, however, at significantly lower proportions than that of the Brazilian average in the 1940s – 6.05% of the sample of the Depósito de Pessoal/ FEB (DP/FEB), against 48.15% of the Brazilian male population of military age.⁷

The study by Rodrigues and Traldi (2017), with the records of reservists from DP / FEB and information from the Brazilian Demographic Census, provided the following comparisons:

Table 2: Percentages relative to the total Brazilian population, to the male population of military age, and to the 4th and 5th echelons of reservists in the FEB, according to the level of education.

	Total Brazilian population	Male population of military age	Reservists in the 4th and 5th echelons of the FEB
Literate	32.2%	51.6%	92.5%
Illiterate	67.3%	48.2%	6.1%
No information / Not stated	0.5%	0.2%	1.4%
TOTAL	100% (41,236,315)	100% (3,485,153)	100% (1,156)

Sources: Fichas de Reservistas. Depósito de Pessoal/FEB. Arquivo Histórico do Exército; Censo Demográfico de 1940, In: Rodrigues e Traldi, 2017, p. 239.

Therefore, the literate profile of the expeditionary soldier is undeniable, in stark contrast to the non-combat population. Regarding the degrees of education, there is no reliable sample for comparison. The researchers who drafted profiles of the levels of education used the files of the association of ex-combatants from São Paulo, which is a voluntary organization, concentrated in the metropolitan area of São Paulo. This association incorporates both officers and enlisted members –

⁷ Fichas de Reservistas. Depósito de Pessoal/FEB. Arquivo Histórico do Exército, Rio de Janeiro.



and this makes a difference in the statistical survey because, with the exception of non-commissioned officers (NCOs), the officers necessarily had a higher level of education (Ferraz, 2012, p. 221; Lins, 1976, p. 96; Maximiano, 2010, p. 63).

Table 3 - Degrees of Education – Brazilian Expeditionary Force

Degree of education	Ferraz's sample (1946-1950 – All Army branches) 169 files	Lins's sample (1946-1975 – All Army branches) 500 files	Maximiano's sample (1946-2010 – Infantry) 215 files
Elementary	74.1%	76%	69.7%
Middle/High School	12.5%	17%	23.3%
College/University	13.4 %	07%	07 %

Sources: *Fichas de Afiliação – Associação dos exCombatentes do Brasil, Seção São Paulo, SP.*

These differences between samples are responsible for the different figures among the data. Ferraz concentrated on just one sample of the first five years of enrollment at the Paulista's association (1946-1950). Lins has a more significant sample (500 of 2000 enrolled, from several Army branches - infantry, artillery, health services, rearguard services), and her research covers until the 1970s. Maximiano concentrated on data from infantry veterans alone, comprising 215 enrollments until the end of the 20th century. While there is no more precise data, this question will remain pending.

Notwithstanding these differences, the essential conclusions are almost the same: the overwhelming majority of the expeditionaries had elementary education and very few had higher education. Among them, the majority were FEB officers. However, if we compare the sampling time chronologically (Ferraz sampling) with the 1940 Census (Brasil, 1950), some surprising findings emerge. For the military-age male group (the closest to the expeditionary profile), the Census presents 70.3% for elementary education, 22.6% for middle/high school, and 7.1% for higher education. The FEB had almost twice as many graduates from higher education than the average Brazilian population (13.4% compared to 7.1%). It should be noted that, in Ferraz's sampling, regular and reserve officers, who necessarily had higher levels of education, were included. On the other hand, the number of expeditionaries who had completed elementary education was slightly larger than that of their population group in the Demographic Census (Brazil, 1950, 30).

The civilian occupation must be added to the profile of the recruits. As with other items, the search for the professional profile of recruits is hampered by the precariousness of the data. DP / FEB sampling remains the most reliable source. The problem with this sampling is that the annotations on the forms do not include specific professional categories. Historian Patrícia da Silva Ribeiro (2013, p. 160-161) found 160 different types of occupations, and grouped them into eight



categories: farmers, commercial employees, workers, construction and maintenance services, civil servants, drivers, students, and “other occupations.” The results obtained are shown below:

Table 4: Civil occupation of the recruits- Survey by Patrícia S. Ribeiro

Occupations	Percentage
Farmer	25.6 %
Maintenance Worker	10.3%
Commercial Employee	19.9%
Other Occupations	21.9%
Factory worker	9.0%
Student	4.7%
Civil Servant	4.5%
Driver	4.1%

Sources: Fichas de Reservistas. Depósito de Pessoal/FEB, In Ribeiro (2013, p. 160).

As stated by Ribeiro, occupations also varied according to the graduating rank: among privates and corporals, the number of students is very low (3.3%), in contrast to the number of farmworkers, commercial employees, and construction and maintenance service workers (together, 48.43%). On the other hand, a quarter of sergeants were students before the war (24.2%) and more than a third of them were engaged in commerce (34.7%). In general, the overwhelming majority of soldiers recruited had professions with an urban profile (73%) (Ribeiro, 2013, p. 161).

Using the DP / FEB reservist files, Rodrigues and Traldi used the 1940 Census profession criteria to compare the expeditionary professions.

Table 5: Civil occupation of the recruits - Survey by Rodrigues and Traldi

Professional Area (criteria used in the 1940 Population Census)	Percentage (absolute numbers)
Agriculture, livestock, forestry	25.7% (297)
Manufacturing industries	21.1% (244)
Commerce	20.4% (236)
Services, social activities	6.7% (77)
Transport and communications	6.1% (70)
Domestic activities, school activities	4.1% (47)
Public administration, justice and public education	3.3% (38)
Liberal arts professions	3.3% (38)
Inactive conditions, activities not included in other areas, poorly defined conditions or activities	1.3% (15)
Trade in real estate, securities, credit, insurance, capitalization	1.0% (11)
National defense and public security	1.0% (11)
No information / unreadable	5.9% (68)
Total	100% (1156)

Sources: Fichas de Reservistas. Depósito de Pessoal/FEB, In: Rodrigues e Traldi, 2017.



The authors then compared the DP / FEB data with the statistics for the male age group of military age and the general population, and grouped the results into urban professions, rural professions, and other professional conditions (inactive, non-discriminated professions in both groups, etc.).

Table 6: Percentages relative to the total Brazilian population, to the male population of military age and to reservists of the 4th and 5th echelons of the FEB, according to the area of professional activity.

	Total Brazilian population	Male population of military age	Reservists of the 4th and 5th echelons of the FEB
Rural professions	23.8%	65.4%	25.7%
Urban professions	39%	31.1%	67.1%
Inactive conditions, activities not included in the other areas, ill-defined or undeclared conditions or activities	7.5%	3.5%	1.3%
People under 10 years of age	29.6%	-	-
No information	-	-	5.9%
TOTAL	100% (41,236,315)	100% (3,485,153)	100% (1,156)

Source: Fichas de Reservistas. Depósito de Pessoal/FEB, In: Rodrigues e Traldi (2017); Brasil (1950).

As with Patrícia Ribeiro's research, the results obtained by Rodrigues and Traldi show that, inversely, in relation to the occupations of the Brazilian population, FEB expeditionary soldiers were employed in more urban than rural professions.

The last topic to discuss on the profile of FEB recruits is the most controversial and the one that leaves more doubts than certainties: the ethnic composition of the expeditionary soldiers. The FEB holds - correctly - the reputation of being the only combat soldiers of the Second World War that were racially integrated. Other Allied units included soldiers of varying ethnicities, but these were segregated from the white troop majority. This was the case for a unit of the Allied Army that fought alongside the FEB, the 92nd American Army Division, nicknamed the "Buffalo Soldiers." This division had enlisted men and low-ranking black officers and was commanded by senior white officers. The fact that the FEB brought together the various ethnicities in their combatant units, without segregating them, provided a very positive self-image of the FEB and of a supposed racial democracy of the country that the expeditionary soldiers represented (Oliveira and Maximiano, 2001; Rosenheck, 2015; Ferraz, 2020).

This image is also present in the written memories and testimonies of enlisted men and officers. Even when episodes of racism (veiled or not) occurred, the standard image of the

expeditionary profile remained untouched: they were poor, poorly educated, with a proportion of blacks and mestizo (mixed ethnicity) similar to that of the Brazilian population.

However, documentary sources show a slightly different profile. Taking the data from the Demographic Census, those from the Military Service in the 1920s, and the records from the DP / FEB for comparison, it is possible to note that there is a slight difference between ethnic profiles.

Table 7 - Comparison of the ethnic profiles of the pre-war military service, the FEB, and the Brazilian male population of military age

	Demographic Census 1940	Military Service	DP/FEB
White	63.65%	59%	64.5%
Black	14.60%	10%	05.3%
Mixed-race	21.02%	31%	27.3%
No information	0.73%	-	2.9%

Source: Brasil (1950); Silva (1928, p. 19); Fichas de Reservistas. Depósito de Pessoal/FEB -Arquivo Histórico do Exército.

The white population varies relatively little between samples. It can be said that the proportion of white expeditionary soldiers was close to that of the Brazilian male population in the same age group (64.5% of the FEB, 63.65% of the general population). However, when compared to the Military Service, the difference is more noteworthy. This discrepancy was explained in the late 1920s, by medical colonel Arthur Lobo da Silva, as a result of the dodging of the military draft by young people from the middle and upper classes, predominantly white (Silva, 1928, p.19). As shown in this study, this practice was not only repeated, but accentuated for the recruitment of the FEB. However, the physical and intellectual selection criteria for the war were much less lenient than those of regular military service, and although evasion was still significant, the recruitment practices enables that the remaining soldiers presented a proportion of white expeditionary soldiers similar to that of the Brazilian population.

The same did not happen with mestizos and blacks. Together, they made up 41% of those recruited into regular military service. With the FEB selection criteria, which favored literacy (of the military-aged Brazilians who were literate in 1940, only 15.42% were of mixed race and 8.06% were black), residency in the southern and southeastern states, as well as better results in health examinations (proportionally better in young people from middle- and upper-class families, predominantly white), their representation dropped to 32.6%. Despite being a symbol of racial integration, the FEB did not emulate the ethnic proportion of the Brazilian population, but reproduced the social ailments that, in a “cordial” way, were covered with the class difference what was experienced daily as a color difference of the skin (Ferraz, 2020, p. 270-271).



Final considerations

Since its foundation, the Military Service aimed to constitute the necessary bridge for male citizenship. More than forging soldiers, it planned to form complete men, capable citizens aware of their civic duties. However, at the time of the greatest ordeal of the Military Service, which was recruitment for war, the social leveling, the equality of all in the face of the "tribute of blood" succumbed once again to social practices in which some were more eligible to be entitled to the rights of the citizen than others.

Active participation in the war could change that. The armed forces had the intention of making the FEB an elite unit, recruiting groups through schooling and physical strength qualifications above the national average. From a truly national and extensive recruitment of all social classes, the cream of the crop of young men would be selected. However, using various maneuvers, the middle and upper classes managed to dodge recruiting expeditionary units, which was not new, since they had always practiced this dodging of the "tribute of blood", even in times of peace. Thus, the image was created that the FEB was composed of the disinherited of any fortune: young people from urban and rural working classes, with low education and physical conditions inferior to other allied soldiers.

This image, of country boys and beach boys facing and beating the Aryan giants, is very pleasing to national self-esteem, but questionable based on the documentation currently available. It was shown in this article, based on recent research by the author and other historians, that contrary to what is conceived in the traditional historiography on the FEB, its soldiers had better levels of education and physical conditions than the average Brazilian population. In other words, despite the challenges faced, it was possible to pull together a group of combat soldiers that were better prepared than those originating from the Brazilian Military Service. After the conflict ended, however, these efforts did not improve the structure of the Brazilian Military Service in times of peace, which returned to pre-war practices. Thus, neither the desired training of the citizen nor the efficient soldier for the defense of the nation were achieved.

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