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MEMORIES REVEALED: VETERAN NURSES DISCOURSES ON THEIR FIGHT FOR REINSTATEMENT IN THE MILITARY FIELD¹

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the symbolic effects of the struggle of the members of the first female nursing group of the Brazilian Armed Forces who were reinstated in the Active Army Military Service after the end of their activities during World War II.

Method: historical-social research whose sources consisted of written, oral and photographic documents. The findings were classified, contextualized and analyzed according to the historical method according to Pierre Bourdieu's Social World Theory and Michelle Perrot's studies on the History of Women.

Results: showed that the discourses of these nurses, who worked at the Italian Theater of Operations during the war (1943-1945) and who were reincorporated into the Brazilian Army in 1957, despite reiterating vocations and stereotypes about Nursing practice, highlighted the remnants of a symbolic struggle for the unprecedented conquest of space, power, and prestige for the profession in this culturally masculinized field.

Conclusion: the reinstatement of these nurses in the Active Army Military Service served as a basis for the creation of new female military groupings within the Armed Forces starting in the 1980s.

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

MEMÓRIAS REVELADAS: DISCURSOS DE ENFERMEIRAS VETERANAS SOBRE A SUA LUTA POR REINCLUSÃO NO CAMPO MILITAR

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar os efeitos simbólicos da luta empreendida pelas integrantes do primeiro grupamento feminino de enfermagem das Forças Armadas brasileiras para serem reincluídas no Serviço Militar Ativo do Exército, após o término de suas atividades durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Método: pesquisa histórico-social cujas fontes constituíram-se de documentos escritos, orais e fotográficos. Os achados foram classificados, contextualizados e analisados em conformidade com o método histórico e à luz da Teoria do Mundo Social de Pierre Bourdieu e dos estudos de Michelle Perrot sobre a História das Mulheres.

Resultados: a pesquisa demonstrou que os discursos destas enfermeiras, que atuaram no Teatro de Operações Italiano durante a guerra (1943-1945) e que foram reincorporadas ao Exército Brasileiro em 1957, apesar de reiterarem vocações e estereótipos sobre a prática de Enfermagem, trouxeram a lume os resquícios de uma luta propriamente simbólica pela conquista inédita de espaço, poder e prestígio para a profissão nesse campo culturalmente masculinizado.

Conclusão: a reinclusão dessas enfermeiras no Serviço Militar Ativo do Exército serviu de fundamentação para a criação de novos corpos militarizados femininos no âmbito das Forças Armadas, a partir da década de 1980.

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

MEMORIAS REVELADAS: DISCURSOS DE ENFERMERAS VETERANAS SOBRE SU LUCHA POR REINCLUSIÓN EN EL CAMPO MILITAR

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar los efectos simbólicos de la lucha emprendida por las integrantes del primer grupo femenino de Enfermería de las Fuerzas Armadas brasileñas para ser re-incluidas en el Servicio Militar Activo del Ejército, después del término de sus actividades durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Método: investigación histórico-social cuyas fuentes se constituyeron de documentos escritos, orales y fotográficos. Los hallazgos fueron clasificados, contextualizados y analizados de acuerdo con el método histórico ya la luz de la Teoría del Mundo Social de Pierre Bourdieu y de los estudios de Michelle Perrot sobre la historia de las mujeres.

Resultados: la investigación demostró que los discursos de estas enfermeras, que actuaron en el Teatro de Operaciones Italiano durante la guerra (1943-1945) y que fueron reincorporadas al Ejército Brasileño en 1957, a pesar de reiterar vocaciones y estereotipos sobre la práctica de Enfermería, Los restos de una lucha propiamente simbólica por la conquista inédita de espacio, poder y prestigio para la profesión en ese campo culturalmente masculinizado.

Conclusión: la re-inclusión de esas enfermeras en el Servicio Militar Activo del Ejército sirvió de fundamentación para la creación de nuevos cuerpos militarizados femeninos en el ámbito de las Fuerzas Armadas, a partir de la década de 1980.

DESCRIPTORES: Enfermería. Historia. Historia de la enfermería. Enfermería militar. II Guerra mundial.

INTRODUCTION

During the first decades of the twentieth century in Brazil, discourses on the incorporation of women into the Armed Forces began to gain importance, especially driven by the feminist movement and the social, political and health demands of the time. This situation became more concrete in the context of the Second World War (1939-1945) with the creation of the Army Reserve Nursing Board in 1943, which incorporated volunteers from various parts of the country. These nurses worked with the Brazilian Expeditionary Force Health Corps (FEB), a troop that depended on the participation of 25,334 citizens in the war against the Nazi-fascist powers.¹⁻²

The work of such nurses took place in the Italian Theater of Operations, in the field hospitals of the United States of America, which Brazil were allies with during the conflict, in a context where the North American diplomatic Good Neighbor Policy and Pan- Americanism was arduously articulated and propagated in Latin America.³

From their mobilization for war in 1943, and their exclusion from permanent position in the Army shortly after the end of the conflict in 1945, these nurses began to develop some particular strategies for their reinstatement into this field. Thus some public discourses were (re) produced by them, in the sense of expressing their positions and ideas about the possibility of having female nurses officially incorporated into the Army, to the point of being on stand by for Active Military Service.

The use of women in Brazil during times of peace for the purpose of technical functions (mainly

nursing) in the military field, came to be the subject of some debates after the war, but in a restricted and discreet way. Despite the contradictions, the military nurse figure-type, which was constituted in a dictatorial regime, the *Estado Novo* (1937-1945), laid the foundations for the defense which stated the necessity of having a reserve of female nursing groups on stand by in the Armed Forces; on the other hand, despite being established during a dictatorship, this figure-type would only be instituted and legitimized in a democratic regime.

Based on the above, we set out the following objective for the development of this study: to analyze the symbolic effects of the struggle of the members of the first female nursing group of the Brazilian Armed Forces who were reinstated in the Active Military Service of the Army, after the end of their activities During World War II.

This article contributes to the deepening of the discussion regarding the unique journey of these veteran Brazilian nurses, who committed themselves to using strategies to ensure their place in militarized spaces, where, in a certain way, their presence was required and something viable in times of war, however unwanted and at times considered as vulgar in times of peace and redemocratization of the country.

Moreover, the resistance identified in the statements and writings of these first military nurses distinguishes them in the history of nursing in the country, but also reflects certain struggles that several women nurses had to face and, to a certain point, still face. Such struggles tend to deepen in the spaces where male domination is practiced daily and indoctrinated as natural. Thus, in this

context we highlight the militarized spaces, zones where the masculine narrative occupies central place commonly.

METHOD

A social-historical study which, in turn, includes the analysis of human groups in a given geographic and temporal space, and their social and institutional dynamics, as well as their traditions, values, rituals and relations with the different groups and social spaces.⁴

The historical sources were collected from January 2009 to October 2010, consisting of written documents located in the National Library, Documentation Center of the Anna Nery Nursing School, Oswaldo Cruz House - Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (*Fundo Virgínia Portocarrero*), Historical Archive of the Brazilian Army, Brazilian Academy of Military Medicine and Association of Former Combatants of Brazil, institutions located in the City of Rio de Janeiro. Memoirs, photographs and interviews with veteran nurses who participated in the FEB were also used, as well as bibliographical references with contents related to the theme. The findings were classified, contextualized, critically evaluated and treated according to the historical method.

Therefore, the analysis of the data was based on the use of the techniques of documentary analysis, photographic analysis, as well as thematic oral history. In particular, we also used the discourse analysis technique, from which we sought to investigate symbolic elements defining the circumstances in which such discourses were produced. In fact, it is in the statements that the instruments of symbolization and of the eternal memory of the groups become evident, bringing reflections of past experiences to the present time, marked by ideologies, struggles and power relations, preserving the symbolic effects that affect the subjects in its materiality.⁵

The reflections and the triangulation of the data were marked by concepts of the Social World Theory, by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and by the studies on the History of Women by historian Michelle Perrot, which served as theoretical support to satisfy the discussion process and the presented synthesis.

The doctoral project from which this study was derived from was evaluated and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Anna Nery School of Nursing and the São Francisco de

Assis School Hospital (Protocol No. 68, CAAE No. 212481). The ethical-legal aspects were carefully considered, including those related to Resolution 466 of December 12, 2012, of the National Health Council, and to Federal Law 7,524 / 1986, which provides for the manifestation of political or philosophical views by inactive military.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ruptures and reaffirmation of the limits of women nurses in the military field in the mid-20th century

In its historical process, nursing was recurrently required in war situations. The practice of care amidst the chaos of military conflicts affirmed the necessity of their presence, which promoted the public image of the nurse engaged in patriotic causes. In fact, the notion that wars (notably the Second World War) have radically altered gender relations and conferred new practices, representations, and powers to women are virtually commonplace in literature and political discourse.⁶⁻⁷

Thus, in Brazil, during the dictatorship of the *Estado Novo* (1937-1945), sociopolitical circumstances favored the mobilization of women, as nurses, to assist in the care needs of war victims, which contributed to the dissemination of a professional model backed by religious and military aspects.

In this sense, the attributes intrinsic to the feminine nature and morally necessary for the care of the human being, while reaffirming the founding oppositions of the symbolic order through the dichotomy between the masculine and the feminine, contributed to the construction of an exemplary representation of the woman in the public space through the expression of dignifying qualities of the feminine image, a fact that can be configured as signs of a culture structured by male domination.⁸

In the meantime, the first official initiative to create a female group of nurses to be incorporated into the Army occurred, with the aim of providing health care to citizens who attend to the mobilization of the country to combat incorporated into the FEB against Nazi-fascism. In addition, such a group sought to meet the demand of American nurses who were said to be too exhausted to receive more troops from allied armies in US field hospitals, which was probably influenced by racial bias and Ethnic segregation in that country's own military recruitment,

including the demands for care directed at soldiers of Latin origin.⁹⁻¹⁰

Therefore, on December 13th, 1943 Decree-Law 6,097 was signed, which created the Nursing Board of the Army Reserve. After, volunteers from all over Brazil - single, widowed, separated and with the most diverse courses in the nursing area - were summoned at haste to complete the Army Nurses Emergency Course, which would enable them to work in the field hospitals.¹¹

Among the volunteers enrolled in this course, only 67 were selected to attend the course, six of which were professionals from Rio de Janeiro, three from the Anna Nery Nursing School, one from the Brazilian Red Cross Nursing School, one from the Professional School of Nurses Alfredo Pinto, and one more from the São Paulo School of Nursing. 16 more were incorporated. After they completed the Brazilian Red Cross Samaritan Course, a kind of nursing supplement with a duration of one year. The vast majority, 42, were volunteer first-aiders, educated through intensive courses which were only three months in duration, organized by the Brazilian Red Cross in other states of the federation. The education of three of the volunteers was not identified.^{9,11}

At the time, the number of professional nurses in the country was quite precarious. To make matters worse, the Anna Nery School, sought by the Army Health Chief to organize the Nursing Board, did not accept the precarious conditions imposed by the Brazilian Army, such conditions as insufficient payment and lack of access to posts in the military hierarchy. Thus, for this reason the army had to accept different types of diplomas.

Nevertheless, in spite of their heterogeneity regarding the type and quality of education, the appearance of this grouping served to reinforce the molds of the "Motherland" metaphor, which promoted the transposition of the imaginary values of the feminizing vocation of the family woman to the recruitment of nurse-soldier. Such ideation was the subject of press publications, which praised the female figure for the war efforts in an attempt to modulate the production of opinion and judgment of Brazilians, which, in a way, symbolically valued the nurses who presented themselves as volunteers. Indeed, the patriotic discourse combined with propaganda and the media in the *Estado Novo* regime resulted in a reasonable portion of young people to accept, or even to wish, to participate in the ranks of the Armed Forces.

In general, the nurses who made up this group of Army nurses, engaged in the construction of a favorable collective identity and thereby accumulated symbolic capital by appearing to be unified in their altruistic discourses and striving to honor tradition and the memory of the nursing profession, but also attentive to the construction of their own reminiscences.

The following text, written by Olympia de Araújo Camerino in 1944, one of the leaders of the group, reinforces this statement: "[...] in this vibrant moment of our History, in which the Expeditionary Corps hails the glorious banners of the Enemy, in Berlin where it is strengthened, in the delirium of crime and in the frenzy of hatred, destruction and obscurity, raises the Brazilian woman, in the solemn affirmation of marching alongside the soldiers of Caxias, such as Anna Nery in the battles of the past [...]. Here we are wearing the uniform of expeditionary nurses, to go beyond, facing the dangers of war, sharing the glory of fighting for Brazil. It is not the adventure that seduces us [...]. It is not the vanity that excites us: the deeper the voice of our conscience, the more serene and perfect is the conviction of our duty. In defense of the homeland [...] here we are, here is the Brazilian woman, keeping vigil."^{12,29-31}

From this text, there is the zealous record of reverence for Anna Justina Ferreira Nery. This legendary figure from the nursing profession, who unselfishly represented the image of the child Motherland during the Paraguayan War, and who was an example which the nurses of the FEB needed to follow during the process of incarnation of a war nurse *habitus*. Coincidentally or not, the day and the month of the enactment of the decree-law that created the Army Nursing Board were the same as the date of Anna Nery's birth, which may have already shown some symbolic intent by the Army itself, in order for the nurses to use it as a positive sign which could better distinguish and legitimize them in the social field.

In addition, idealized discourses, constructed to produce representations and useful images of a given group, play an important role in the existence and subsistence of the group itself by manifesting essential values for the confirmation that the existence of the latter serves for something. With this kind of symbolic work, the nurses who saw themselves as holding power to speak on behalf of the group strived to consecrate it, bringing together somehow effective words to make themselves well recognized in this project of mobilization for war and defense of the Motherland.

In spite of all the investments made, where the discourse is emphasized, the apparently eccentric option of these women to align themselves with a major military conflict with the men of the army was not well accepted at the time, nor by their families or society or by the military field itself. Culturally, it had always been recognized as a masculinized space, where it sought to incorporate behaviors sustained by the imposition of certain restrictions, visible and invisible, through rigid norms, strengthened by the pillar ideas of tradition, discipline and hierarchy.

Nevertheless, after embarking with fractions of the FEB, fascist Italy was their final destination. There, they worked in several hospitals of the 5th North American Army, in which, on the other hand, they obtained some advantages when acquiring certain professional competences, since they came to have direct and continuous contact with the modern military health service of the United States of America. This situation enabled their *habitus* to be renewed and provided profits for its social, professional and military capital.

Despite the surprising and victorious performance during the conflict, the FEB was demobilized by the federal government at the end of the war, including the nurses positions. This action brought the start of the exclusion of these women from the Army, as war nurses would no longer be necessary in the new peaceful world. Thus, they were deprived of the titles and representations of past times: Army officers, war nurses, and military women. With a doubt, such an act would reaffirm the order previously established in the military field regarding the sexual division of labor. Her "new" destiny would be the home, to resume the functions of the feminine universe.

In this spectrum, there is the symbolism surrounding Anna Nery's own performance in the Paraguayan War (1864-1870), which, after the end of the conflict, she was nicknamed "Mother of Brazilians" by the Historical and Geographical Institute. Thus, wars reiterate the more traditional and symbolic representations of differences between the sexes. Regardless, the performance of these Brazilian nurses has increased women's visibility and possibilities in public / militarized spaces.

In this sense, it should be emphasized that the fields are not horizontal spaces but vertical spaces, in other words they are hierarchies that determine how and under what circumstances agents can act in

order to provide changes or favor the maintenance of the *status quo*. Thus, each agent is endowed with a certain capital, which is crucial in determining its weight in relation to other agents.¹³ Therefore, in the middle of the twentieth century, certain limits were reaffirmed, others broken, or at least altered, especially those between men and women in the Brazilian military field.

"What does talk mean": the war nurses' war of words

If the nurses' relationship with the armies was possible and even required during the wars, the same did not occur with such similarity when the issue was the incorporation of female nursing factions into military corporations in times of peace. Even though the gaps opened by the wars are commonly quickly closed when peace returns, especially when it comes to work and private roles.⁷

Faced with this, the nurses of the FEB, now understood in a politico-social context in the country other than the war, a country of redemocratization and pacification, began to adopt a series of strategic measures in several opportunities, in a new *front* that would objectify their reinstatement in the Active Military Service in the post-war period.

Thus, the social capital represented by alliances with high-ranking military members, ecclesiastics, medical officers, influential politicians, ex-combatants associates, their persistent presence in military ceremonies and congresses, and even the publication of interviews and their texts, all served to try to fade skepticism that would shape the idea of reusing such veteran nurses in the Army.

In the immediate post-war period, the first achievements of rights and benefits obtained by the FEB nurses were through alliances with the demobilized expeditionaries, who prevailed in maintaining a conservative policy of non-confrontation of the State.¹⁴ An example of such was the publication of the Ministerial Notice 1.052 on August 15th, 1946, which came to be reported the following month by means of a note from the *Anais de Enfermagem* (current Brazilian Nursing Journal), stating the following terms: "in view of the services provided by the nurses who served in the FEB, Minister Góis Monteiro has encouraged all the administrative authorities of the Army Health Service to give preference to these nurses in the case of vacancies in military hospitals and similar departments."

This advancement meant that the nurses of the FEB could be hired as “civilians” by the Army, and such was qualified as an act of justice by the *Correio da Noite* newspaper on August 29th, 1946, which published some words in deference to them, but also juxtaposed the roles of each sex in the militarized spaces: “[...] the Brazilians who left home, the quiet life to accompany the heroic trajectory of the FEB, revealed the same heroism and the same bravery in the field [...]. And they went to the field hospitals in the hours of suffering and despair, a presence of tenderness, kindness and affection [...]. The Homeland owes them compensation. The most just and most logical is the one that comes from being determined by the illustrious Minister of War. And the sweetest, also to the heart of the Brazilian nurses; because in this gesture they find a reflection of their feminine sweetness, impregnating with gallantry and the grateful and lofty gratitude of the soul of the soldier.”^{12:99}

However, the contracting in question was not an aspiration for most of the FEB nurses, most probably because of the unattractive salary and somewhat disadvantageous hierarchical position they would assume at the Army Health Service. This is because, as contracted civilians, they would be under the orders of the sergeant-nurses, who were their hierarchical subordinates in field hospitals during the war and who performed duties considered simpler, heavier and riskier.

The following passage, taken from an interview with one of FEB’s veteran nurses, recalls this situation: “[...] *those who submitted, because they did not have a job, they went to work as civilians in Army hospitals. I didn’t! I would never go! I would not go from being a swan to duck! How could I, I had been Chief of Nursing [in the war], work under the orders of sergeants who had been my subordinates? Such a thing could not be!* [...] (Nurse Elza Cansanção Medeiros).

The metaphor contained in this speech symbolically triggers the social distinction of dominating and dominated parts that is at stake in a field, while linking biological differences (duck / swan) with social differences (sergeant / official) in an attempt to regulate who is who in the social games. Such an explicit judgment can be understood as a means of reaffirming a social bond, determined by the accumulation of symbolic goods in the structures of thought and expression of the respondent. Part of this need for affirmation comes from the constitution of its *habitus*, through which individuals elaborate their journeys and ensure social reproduction, which cannot be accomplished without the action

of agents and institutions, in order to preserve social functions through symbolic violence exercised on individuals and with their adherence.

Thus, her discourse shows and validates her judgment, which symbolically conditions and violates the one named “duck.” Here the duck, a slow-moving animal, popularly identified as a bad player, is disadvantageously contrasted with the swan, recognized as a great flyer, which travels great distances in its migrations, aesthetically beautiful, graceful, and figuratively identified as poet, orator, celebrated musician. Thus, in the struggle for the distinction and appropriation of a legitimate identity, and within the hierarchies of power established among agents within a given field, there is a permanent tendency to classify, to declassify and to reclassify positions which they occupy in time and space, depending on the capital they can accumulate.

However, it must be considered that the contracting of some nurses from the FEB to the Army Health Service, as civilians, served to somewhat intensify the symbolic strength of the group when their functional interaction with the active military became more constant. The following excerpt helps to reinforce this idea: “[...] *the movement began with the arrival of the contracted civilians [...] everyone wanted to return to the activity, but the campaign against us was great [...]* (Nurse Elza Cansanção Medeiros).

The scam of having been war nurses would be well applied to the public word as well. The text written by Bertha Moraes entitled “Testimony of a Nurse”, which was included in the controversial book “Testimonies of Reserve Officials about the FEB”, published in 1949 is of particular note. This work faced serious distribution difficulties because it contained harsh criticism of the federal government and the army at the time and, above all, the role of the FEB commanders in the war. Virtually all the statements contained in the book are focused on pointing out problems of the most varied types and proportions, assuming a critical position rarely found in the memories of Brazilian ex-combatants, contradicting the official discourse of the FEB in several respects.

In her speech Bertha Moraes expresses part of the discontent of the nurses who participated in the FEB when she openly denounces the conflicts, contradictions and discomforts of the experience they had in the war, in addition to trying to reduce the silence and to ease their forgetfulness in the immediate postwar period.

As the only woman in the body of the authors of this book, Bertha surprises the reader in her text, by giving evidence that the time spent in the Army would have been practically lost, without encouragement, and many sacrifices, "without any payment, but a conscience of duty fulfilled".^{15:418} In her reflections, she confronts the military authorities of the time, who blamed the lack of initiative to favor the use of women nurses in the military" [...] why don't the military authorities try to organize a cadre of professional nurses with proven competence? Why isn't there a School of Military Nursing, but there is a School for doctors and sergeant nurses? First of all, why not guarantee moral and material stimuli which give the nurses a position to compete in the military hierarchy?"^{15:419}

As noted in her speeches, veterans advocated the permanent participation of women in the military camp. However, these same speeches did not clearly express their efforts and proposals for peace. More than that, they demanded an advanced position from the heads of an army in a country unprepared and still considered militarily backwards, when they pleaded for their protection with wages and guarantees in time of peace.

At the end, the nurse closes her speech with a recommendation: "[...] and let it never be said that the fighting zone is not a place for a woman! Come and see what a nurse can do to a wounded man, good and miraculous! Many, many times, a tender hand on a burning forehead, a well-stretched sheet, a smile, a woman's face, can do more for the wounded."^{15:419}

The analysis between the lines of this recommendation shows the idealized view of a woman's worth during wartime during that period of time. This clamor evoked what is symbolic in the work of nursing during times of conflict, the idea of humanitarian commitment and the feelings of self-denial, affection, kindness, missionary spirit, preparedness, as moral elements indispensable for its good practice. But at the heart of this type of discourse, such feminine attributes tend to stereotype the very exercise of the profession. In fact, the text of Bertha Moraes appropriates and takes advantage of a masculine discourse in a feminine cause, which, in a way, contributes to the promotion of the symbolic maintenance of the established order.

Thus, the female nurses discussed here, reproduced speeches that ratified the differences between the sexes, meaning that their statements did not necessarily consider the success of femi-

nism as evident, but their speech corroborates a submission to desire, rules or roles imposed by others, as they constantly portray the stigma against women. The few texts they have produced in the postwar period reduce women's conduct to mere examples, conscious or not, voluntarily or otherwise, of the effects of the domination of a culture dominated by men. In pleading for a place for the woman in the "combat zone" Bertha Moraes also expresses a concern about the evocation of "feminism" not being effectively integrated into the political world.

Also, in legal terms, the Brazilian constitution of 1946, recognized as democratic and progressive for that time, had well defined limits for women in Military Service, despite registering the equality of all citizens which can be certified in article 181: "all Brazilians are obliged to the Military Service or other responsibilities necessary for the defense of the Motherland, under the terms and under the penalties of the law. Women are exempt from military service, but subject to the responsibilities that the law establishes."

In this way, the distinction between the sexes in the national militarism at the time was supported by legal regulations, but also by sociocultural foundations. In fact, the military field was recognized for its masculinized myths, its high risk activities and subjection to the rigid precepts of hierarchy, dedication, preparedness and physical vigor. At least in our western civilization, sustained physical exertion, the practice of ascetic devotion and rigorous discipline, stubborn courage, and even a taste for violence were almost always masculine rather than feminine qualities.¹⁶

This labeling of what is "macho" at different times, created a justification for not accepting women in the military corporations of the country. In the intolerance of women's biological nature, women are expressed as "fragile sex", contributing to the reproduction of masculine values in the socialization of women who dare to think of crossing the walls of the barracks. With this, feminine incompatibility with the values attributed to the concept of "being military" was reinforced. Thus, socialization of the biological and a biologization of the social was permitted, which masked but also consecrated the division of the sexes in the military organizations.^{7,16}

Thus, women in western armies held background positions, without any prior or almost no training, in order to release the male labor force

needed at the *front*.¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Soon, the recruitment effort was started for the domains where women could provide better services as early as possible. In a certain way, nursing represented the first activity that demonstrated its ability to adapt and meet the patriotic, political and military needs of the army, a fact that grounded the FEB nurses' demands for the conquest of their proclaimed rights.

In this process, social games were incorporated into political games, a strategy that would earn them certain gains. Thus, from 1947, some proposals for the granting of benefits to veterans began to be presented to the Chamber of Deputies, among them Bill 3.832 / 1953 by Congressman Fernando Ferrari, whose objective was: "[...] to regulate the use of the nurses who were part of the FEB in the Active Service of the Army, in the Italian Theater of Operations". In the text of the justification presented by the parliamentarian, the following was recorded: "as is well known, our compatriots provided excellent professional services during war operations, exceeding in a loving and high spirit of solidarity, which was attested by the FEB Health Service, as well as US commanders. This is why, after a period of time, after the end of World War II, it is necessary to examine the current situation of these compatriots, many of them carrying out specialized functions, in public offices and others as administrators."¹⁹

Once again patriotic sentiment snatched from wartime was brought in the interest of the FEB nurses. In the war of words, the deputy himself took the symbolic capital accumulated by them as a reference, highlighting the prestige of the group. Thus the symbolic strategies through which agents seek to impose their view of the divisions of the social world and their position in this world reflect the symbolic power characteristic of official naming: "an act of symbolic imposition which has all the power of the collective, of consensus, of common sense, in its favor because it is operated by a representative of the state, who holds the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence."^{13:146}

In fact, nurses' alliances with agents in prestigious positions ensured the survival of their disputes not only in political settings but also in academic settings. As an example, during the 1st Brazilian Congress of Military Medicine, held in the city of São Paulo in July 1954, with the support of the Brazilian Academy of Military Medicine, a paper was presented with the suggestive title "Nurses' Last war: the need to create a permanent cadre of military nurses in the Armed Forces," written by

veteran nurses Olímpia de Araújo Camerino and Jacyra de Souza Góes.

The text summarized the history of the creation of the Army Nurses' Board in Brazil, combining aspects of volunteering and training, appointment as officers, difficulties in daily life in the field hospitals, the developed technical work, debanding of the group after the war and the need to create a permanent cadre of military nurses in the Armed Forces. As recommendations, they made some judgments about the role of nursing in wars: "[...] the excellence of the nurse corps, the admirable organization of this efficient machine, is one of the most important problems in assisting the wounded, it is not enough to be technical in a field hospital. The nurse must have skills, initiative and, above all, a sense of responsibility [...]. It is also the duty of the nurse to take care of the psychological part of the patient: to comfort him, to encourage him and to raise his spirit. If the life of the nurse is a life of sacrifice, in times of war, it is even more filled with detachment, altruism, and love of others. As a soldier of charity, who is the steady sentinel watching over the sick. Whose motto is to be good and charitable, her aim is to accompany the suffering. Only she can give or take away hope. In a field hospital, more sublime is your courage, more real your worth."^{20:574-5}

In addition to reproducing attributes of the war nurses' work, the authors refer to themselves as "soldiers of charity", in an attempt to assign a particular place and status to female nurses in military settings.²¹ These are representations of the private imagery reproduced in the public word, which feed even male domination. On the other hand, the stereotyped discourse was no longer a strategy for them, in which the need for dissimulation was embedded: to be loving, caring, good and charitable. In this perspective, the performative discourse, which praises the functional role of women, highlights a legitimate way of guaranteeing recognition. In addition, the reasonable visibility enjoyed by this work, as it was published in full in the annals of this international event, also served as a strategy to propagate ideas that aimed at the reinstatement of veterans in the Brazilian Army's Active Military Service.

The interviewed veteran nurses agreed that Olympía Camerino was the authorized spokesperson for the reinstatement process in the Active Service of the Army and who enjoyed prestige among the military chiefs, as can be attested in the photograph:



Source: Thesis "Nurses of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force on the post-war front: the reinstatement process into the Army's Active Military Service (1945-1957)", EEAN-UFRJ, 2010.

Figure 1 - Ritual during the 1st Brazilian Congress of Military Medicine. São Paulo, 1954.

The photograph records an important moment at that congress. The importance of this photograph is justified by having the image of nurse Olympia Camerino (circled) between several civil authorities and high ranking officials of the Armed Forces, in a socially distinct position for a woman in that scenario and occasion, which attests to her good network of relations (social capital) and of prestige (symbolic capital) in the Army.

The solitary feminine presence in the photograph draws attention, as the mythical-ritualistic system of the Army tends to ratify and to extend the principles of inferiority and the exclusion of women from the noblest spaces and occasions. In addition, the representative speech that emanates from this photo demonstrates the persistence of the veteran nurses to publicly circulate their ideas and their attempts on the intended reinstatement into the military field.

Ultimately, their relationship with influential generals and parliamentarians would yield the desired profits. Thus, the bill introduced in 1953, by Fernando Ferrari,¹⁹ gave rise to Law 3,160, dated June 1, 1957, which included them definitively in the Active Military Service of the Brazilian Army. Thus, after 12 years of being withdrawn from the post-war service, they were reinstated in the Force and benefited from the rights, advantages and perks inherent to active officers and were distributed by several military health organizations of the Army. Of the 67 veterans, 44 requested to return to the Force.²²

Although the legal basis for the admission of nurses into the Brazilian Army (during wartime) field was established in an authoritarian and dictato-

rial period during the *Estado Novo* led by President Getúlio Dornelles Vargas, the permanent reinstatement of this female group (during times of peace) would only occur after the redemocratization of the country through the development and evolution of intellectual activity, in the administration of President Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira.

As highlighted, the FEB nurses' sense of belonging to the military field reinforces the notion that they were willing to reoccupy their positions in this scenario. In the post-war period, the strategic persistence of their presence in various occasions and circumstances evokes the remnants of a past struggle, which tried to highlight the idea of the viability and necessity of having women nurses in military hospitals, even in times of peace.

In fact, as the women's historian Michelle Perrot points out, "war is, in short, frustrating, in that it closes the exits that were opening or opened by themselves. Thus, it contributes to an increase in tension between the sexes, the consciousness that each of them has of itself. In the long run, it stimulates future feminism."^{7: 446}

CONCLUSION

The mobilization during World War II favored the incorporation of female nurses through a patriotic appeal that brought not only the concept of valuing the nursing practice, but also the ideas regarding the hierarchical division of the social world into masculine and feminine. Such a mobilization still made it possible for these same nurses, in the post-war period, to transgress the regulations and cultures of the military camp, when they would plead for space and power in this masculine scenario. Therefore, they (re) produced discourses that sought to prove and make the existence of their group known, mediated by the articulation of the social, professional, military and symbolic capitals that they managed to accumulate.

Thus, through the demonstration effect of perceptions and appraisals of themselves, the FEB veterans gained their reinstatement in the Active Army Military Service as nurse officers in the mid-1950s, under federal law, an unprecedented and emblematic fact in the history of Brazilian women until that moment

In this study, certain meanings of the singular discourses of war nurses were revealed, which aided in the symbolic materialization of their forgotten historical and social memories. At the same time,

there was a past struggle of these veteran women as historical subjects, agents of their time, who eventually forged and promoted the public image of the military nurse in Brazil and who began the political discussion of gender awareness for the future incorporation of new women to the Armed Forces, a fact that was only brought to an end in the 1980s with the country's new redemocratization movement.

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