

Lieutenant General Ulisses Lisboa Perazzo Lannes, Brazil

Military History in Brazil

Paper presented on the Occasion of the 37th International Congress of Military History, in Rio de Janeiro, August 2011, in the session of the Educational Committee.

Distributed as Annex to the Newsletter No. 17 of the International Commission of Military History, Fall 2011

The purpose of my presentation is to provide you with an overview of how Military History is being taught in Brazil. Initially I'll focus on the teaching of Military History in the Armed Forces, especially in the Army; then I will talk briefly about the way it is viewed and taught in the academic world.

So, let's begin by presenting the teaching of this subject in the Army.

Since the creation of the Royal Military Academy, in the year 1811, Military History has been part of the curricula of our professional military education system. Historical examples of campaigns and battles have always been used in officer education, and we may truly say that the importance of studying and researching Military History is deeply rooted in the mindset of the Brazilian military.

Beginning in the years 1996 and 1997, however, it gained a new momentum: it was included in the curricula of more schools; its objectives were broadened and it began to be viewed under a new approach. In a nutshell, Military History's value has been greatly enhanced and a renewed emphasis and a more in-depth study have occurred since then.

All this came about as a result of the thorough restructuring undergone by the Army's professional military education system. Concerned with the challenges posed by the coming of a new century and the amazing technological advances of our times, the leaders of the Army launched the so-called "process of modernization of the military educational system". This process was centered on the search for answers to some very basic questions: What should we teach? How should we teach? And how to strengthen the ties and the exchanges between the Army's educational system and other institutions of higher learning, both civilian and military, foreign and domestic?

At the end of this process, as I said, Military History emerged as a valuable and indispensable tool for the self-improvement of the professional soldier. More than knowing what happened, the officer and the NCO should strive to understand why and how the facts took place; why and how the changes in the art of war occurred and how they continue to evolve.

As of today, the study of Military History in the officer professional military education system follows the path that I will now describe:

a) At the Military Academy (a four-year course) cadets study Military History in the 2nd and 3rd years, and the time allotted reaches a total of 120 hours. Broadly speaking, the subject matters include: foundations and evolution of the art of war, from Antiquity to post-World War II conflicts; the thought and deeds of the great captains and philosophers of war; origins

and development of the Brazilian military doctrine; origins and evolution of the Brazilian Army and its role in the Brazilian History. More than simply conveying lessons, the course at the Military Academy seeks to awaken the penchant for Military History and make the future officer aware of the necessity of studying, reading and researching it.

In order to be awarded a Bachelor's degree in Military Science, all cadets must write a dissertation on a topic related to the military profession, and, very recently, Military History has gained acceptance as a proper area for academic research.

b) Immediately after being promoted to captain, the officer is enrolled in the Advanced Course of his branch. The course lasts two years: the first year makes use of distance learning, and the second takes place in a traditional classroom — Military History is included in both phases. With a time allotment of 95 hours, the curriculum emphasizes the techniques for studying and researching the subject matter, the analysis of the role played by the Army in both external and internal conflicts, the doctrinal evolution of one's branch and lessons learned from the study of historical cases.

c) Later on, as majors or lieutenant-colonels, some officers will be admitted to the Command and General Staff College (the school where we are now). In order to have access to this school, the officer must pass a rigorous entrance examination which checks, among other things, the candidate's knowledge of Military History. Graduation from the CGS School is a pre-requisite for promotion to general. The course lasts two years and its curriculum includes Tactics, Strategy, Logistics, Administration as well as ... You guessed correctly, Military History! The time allotted to the study of Military History is 92 hours and allows the officers to study in greater depth the art of war and the evolution of military doctrine and thinking, as well as historical cases involving brigades, divisions and higher echelons.

Since 1998, officers of the Medical Corps have also been required to study Military History. In their case, the time allotted for the basic course is 40 hours, and, in the advanced course, 45 hours.

In all of these courses and schools, the officers are required to read books and other types of documents that complement and illustrate classroom lessons. Special attention is given to chronicles and reports on combat operations and leadership lessons. In so doing, the Army hopes to stimulate its officers to make the reading of professional-related works a habit, even in the inter-schools years. Since the time Army schools can allot to military history is limited, it can serve as a most useful tool for self-education at any stage of an officer's career.

In regard to NCO educational programs, I'd like to point out that Military History was recently included in the curriculum of the NCO Academy, with an academic workload of 60 hours distributed over two years.

So much for the teaching of Military History.

The Army does a lot more than simply teach Military History in its schools, though. It is seriously engaged — as it has always been — in preserving, promoting and disseminating Brazilian Military History and its participation along with the history of Brazil. For this purpose the Army has, as part of its structure, an organization called the Directorate of Historical and Cultural Patrimony, which is in charge of guarding our extremely rich cultural and historic heritage. Just to give you a few examples, this collection includes ancient forts, historic sites, weapons, uniforms, equipment, documents as well as a precious cartographic set of maps that piece together the geographic origins of our nation.

Now let me speak a little bit more about the Army's Directorate of Historical and Cultural Patrimony. It controls the two most important Army museums (one of which, the Historic Army Museum and Copacabana Fort, you will be visiting tonight), the Historic Archives of the Army, the Library of the Army and the recently created Center for Studies and Research of Military History.

The Historic Archives of the Army is extremely well organized and open to historians, scholars and researchers. It is a true treasure trove of information for all of those individuals who wish to have access to documents considered as primary resources. The Library of the Army (actually, an editing house) annually publishes selected articles which deal with Military History, Strategy, International Relations and modern world conflicts. This library should be viewed as an important tool for the dissemination of military culture and history. The Center for Studies and Research of Military History was created last year. One of its important missions is to promote exchanges between Brazilian and foreign institutions, researchers and students; to promote the development of Military History studies and to manage the Army project of Oral History.

The outcome of the work that is being carried out in these educational and cultural areas is that we can now say that Military History is profoundly engrained in the culture, practices and behaviors of the Armed Forces. Military History is present, for example, in the practice of giving a "historical name" to most of our units, thus connecting their current designation to some important battle or individual of their past; or, in other cases, with their original designation. Historic uniforms, symbols and patrons of Arms are other ways that today's Army pays homage and tribute to its past. In addition to that, many units have their own museums where they cultivate their own history and traditions.

On this point, I need to mention two private organizations which are intimately associated with the Army and carry out a very important role in the dissemination of Military History. They are the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Military History, and the Brazilian Academy of Land Military History. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Military History was founded in 1938 and I am sure that you already know about its existence since it is affiliated with the International Commission of Military History. The Brazilian Academy of Land Military History was founded in 1996. The objective of both of these entities is to

promote the study of Military History through the provision of conferences, symposiums and speeches. Both organizations are led by retired Army officers who lend valuable support to the activities of our schools.

Now we will take a look at the instruction of Military History in the Navy and in the Air Force. The Naval Academy and the Air Force Academy have a program of Military History similar to that of the Military Academy. Obviously, their curricula prioritize the study of doctrine and development of naval and air power, respectively. Time allotment is 54 hours in the Naval Academy, and 68 hours in the Air Force Academy.

The command and general staff schools for both Navy and Air Force do not designate specific time for the study of Military History. This fact, however, does not mean that the subject is forgotten or ignored. What happens is that they treat the study of Military History in a transversal manner, when studying Strategy and International Politics, for example. Both Navy and Air Force, on the other hand, possess a very similar structure to the Army's, in order to preserve and promote their very rich historical and cultural traditions and patrimony.

The Navy has a Directorate of Historic and Archival Patrimony. This Directorate encapsulates the so-called Naval Cultural Space, the Naval Museum of Naval Archive and the Library of the Navy. These are first class installations and institutions, open to researchers, scholars and historians, both Brazilian and foreign. The Naval Cultural Space exhibits some very interesting naval craft, including a replica of the Portuguese caravel that in the year 1500 carried the discoverer of Brazil, Pedro Alvares Cabral.

The Air Force has its own Institute of History and Culture, which, among other things, oversees the very high quality Aerospace Museum, with more than 80 aircraft on display (including the "14 Bis", with which Santos Dumont conquered the air) and an excellent collection of engines, armaments and documents, on top of an unprecedented collection of more than 30,000 photographs which show the origins and development of the air force in Brazil.

In closing, I want to emphasize that the Brazilian Armed Forces believe in the value of Military History and the lessons that it teaches us.

Let us now turn our attention, albeit briefly, to the Military History outside the Services, more specifically in the academic world.

Until the beginning of the 1990s, Military History was all but ignored — if not despised — in the Brazilian academic world. In the eyes of professors, historians and scholars, the traditional type of operational history exemplified by the soldier-authors (or history-battle) approach seemed narrow, unproductive, and easily prone to bias or special pleading. Borrowing the words of Peter Paret, they tended to consider "the character of most military

history extremely conventional, descriptive history, centering on leading figures, campaigns, and climatic battles, often with a strong utilitarian bent”.

To make things worse, the political situation had created a huge gap between the academic world and everything connected with “the military”. Military History was viewed with mistrust, as something belonging “to them” (the military), something that did not even deserve to be recognized as a specialty. Ideological biases predominated and contaminated intellectual production.

Fortunately, things today look much better. Military History, although still not regarded as a specialty, is a growing object of interest by the academy. Why? What happened to bring about such a change of perception? Two factors, among others, help to explain this welcome development.

Initially, still in the 1990s, a group of history professors began to show a growing interest in the facts involving the participation of the Armed Forces in external conflicts — namely, the operations of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force in the Italian Campaign, during WWII; and the Paraguayan War, fought in the second half of the XIX century, our bloodiest and bitterest war — as well as in the turbulent Brazilian political life. And what’s more, they (this group of professors) started to approach the subject matter with the unbiased eye of historians, without falling prey to the dictates of political correctness.

A second factor would be of foremost importance: the agreement between the Army and the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO) for the implementation of the first course of specialization in Military History. Let me talk a little bit more about this.

Traditionally, teachers of Military History at Armed Forces schools — most, if not all of whom, were self-taught historians — always had a desire to stimulate the study of war as a social phenomenon in all of its scope and interfaces with different areas of knowledge. They always expressed a desire to increase their relationship with the academic world and elevate the study of Military History to new levels.

That aspiration materialized in the year 2000 thanks to the initiative and perseverance of two individuals: Colonel Luiz Paulo Macedo Carvalho, then president of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Military History, and Professor Arno Wehling, President of UNIRIO and Head of its Department of History. At that opportunity, the Institute of Geography and Military History acted as the representative of the Army’s Department of Education and Culture.

The seeds planted by this first course have fallen on fertile ground and are bearing many fruits. As of today, five other courses have been offered and 119 students (civilians and military) have successfully completed them out. Of these, 29 are directly engaged in the task of teaching Military History in the Armed Forces’ schools. In other words, the course has

contributed in a very positive way to raise the standards of the teaching of Military History. In addition, the number of monographs, papers and presentations by its former students in congresses, symposia and conventions is growing considerably. And it would be remiss of me not to mention the *Revista de História Militar* (Review of Military History), an excellent journal created by the initiative of the alumni of the specialization course.

No matter how important these results may seem — and they are indeed important— the real meaning of the agreement between the Army and UNIRIO goes far beyond its own accomplishments. Actually it may be seen as a watershed in the way the Brazilian academy views and deals with Military History.

Stimulated by this successful case, many other initiatives have taken or are taking place. In 2009 the Army celebrated another agreement with the University of South Santa Catarina State for one more specialization course in Military History. This course makes use of distance learning; its contents are set by the Institute of Geography and Military History and the time allotted for study reaches 390 hours. As of today, 215 students have successfully completed it. UNIRIO itself included Military History as an elective course in its graduate program of History. What is also extremely meaningful is that in a number of prestigious colleges and universities Military History has been resuscitated and is now offered as part of their curriculum.

At this point, it is important to emphasize that, in the academic world, Military History is treated in a much more comprehensive and interdisciplinary way. It is viewed from the perspective of the following academic fields: sociology, political science, anthropology, philosophy, social psychology, economy, law, and pedagogy. Without these points of view it would not be possible to study the multiple facets of Military History – as Professor Arno Wehling tells us:

“...We can cite the following themes/problems: relations between the Armed Forces and society; Armed Forces institutional and administrative structure; the different types of warfare, fortifications; evolution of military ethics; strategy and battle; logistics and military formations; motivation for war, etc. Those intersections are typical of the field of historic science and perhaps this is why Military History has become one of the interdisciplinary fields in the area of social sciences.”

The Academy, therefore, more than battles or war, treats Military History through a global perspective, characterizing this study area as an approaching of military organization and society instead of simply actions that involve the Armed Forces.