

Women In The 1932 “Constitutionalist” Uprising In São Paulo: Dimensions Of A Multifaceted Presence

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Abstract:

The participation of women in the “Constitutionalist Revolution” of 1932, a revolt triggered by the state of São Paulo against the then Provisional Government of Getúlio Vargas, is prominently highlighted in the sources of the time. More than to document this participation, however, the highlight intended to legitimize the uprising itself. Taking as sources the newspapers and other documents from the period, this article critically revisits the historiography produced surrounding this theme and problematizes the conditions of female adherence to the uprising, the cleavages of class and social condition, the role of ethnicities and religious confessions and the possible meanings of war for the women of 32. As a result, the multifaceted character of this presence is highlighted, historically covered by the standardizing memory of the “constitutionalist woman”.

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I. The presence of women, a theme dear to 1932’sⁱ propaganda

In November of 1930, Getúlio Dornelles Vargas (1882-1954) took power in Brazil. Defeated candidate in the presidential election of March in that same year, Vargas was led to power by various political and military forces, which had staged a coup d’état and prevented the then successful candidate from taking office. From 1930 to 1934, Vargas would administer Brazil through a Provisional Government, whose political guidelines, differing from the previous period, would be based on greater centralization of power and the acquisition of new social relations, especially through the action of official unions.

Against the Provisional Government of Getúlio Vargas, the so-called “Constitutionalist Revolution” of 1932 would rise. The uprising, which had the re-constitutionalization of the country as its flag, involved, however, other causes, such as the dissatisfaction of the political and economic elites of São Paulo - a state that used to held meaningful political prominence before 1930 and that had lost its protagonism in the new government. In this direction, from July 9 to October 2, 1932, the São Paulo forces would take up weapons against the Provisional Government of Vargas, in a confined confrontation, however, on the borders of the insurgent state itself which would end with its military defeat.ⁱⁱ

With that being said, what calls for attention is the fact that the participation of women in the 1932 uprising, far from an explored data in sources at the time – as usual in the period – occupies a highlighted position in certain documents and in the memory of confrontation.ⁱⁱⁱ

Bárbara Weinstein, in one of the rare articles dedicated specifically to the participation of women in the uprising, did not fail to observe and highlight the political and discursive uses of this participation by the articulators of the uprising. Without denying the concrete relevance that women had in the struggle, the author draws attention to the fact that their presence received exacerbated emphasis in the reports produced at the time – mostly written by men. Such an emphasis, in her view, had nothing casual or fortuitous, corresponding to:

[...] desire and even the need to present the movement primarily as a moral campaign and not as a political campaign [...]. This led to the frequent use of family metaphors to symbolize the broad popular support for the movement, and, in particular, to claim that even the Paulista Woman^{iv} was willing to leave her home and enter the public arena, to manifest her moral opposition to the reduction of São Paulo “to a conquered territory”. Undoubtedly, this argumentative strategy depended on the classic gender view of politics and the public sphere as masculine, so that the mere presence of women in the movement already attested to its moral and, therefore, non-political character. (WEINSTEIN, 2004, p.74).

Weinstein perceives other elements in the characterization of women's actions, among the discursive strategies of “constitutionalist” men. According to the author, in 1932, the gender was regionalized, with the construction of the figure of the “Paulista woman”. This was successively represented as a “woman of exceptional fiber”, along the lines of the Spartan woman, whose standards of strength and stoicism prevented her from

mourning, for example, her loved ones being sent to the fronts of battle; as the traditional “bandeirante woman”, just like her ancestors, ready to take on the responsibilities of a home and of life in the face of long periods of male absence; there was also the “modern woman”, with an almost masculine strength and virile courage. The author points out that:

[...] [...] there were considerable overlaps between the image of the traditional Paulista Woman and the modern Paulista Woman. Both were more self-confident and aware of civic duties than Brazilian women in other regions; both avoided frivolous behavior in favor of more useful activities, and both were less likely to be closed off or withdrawn from the “real” world. (2004, p.78).^v

In light of this, it is already possible to formulate with certain clarity, the problem to be unraveled in this article: what was under the singular and homogenizing cover of the “Paulista woman”, sewn by the narratives of the “constitutionalist” propaganda? What are the possible meanings of female participation in the fight, beyond what was intentionally printed in the sources? Given the complexities inherent to this problem, let's see how the historiographic production specialized in the 1932 São Paulo uprising dealt with the subject.

II. The women of 1932, under the eyes of historiography

A first look upon the historiographical works dedicated to the “constitutionalist” uprising, in search of in-depth approaches on the role of women, reveals little advances. Despite the visibility given to female participation in the belligerence by contemporaries and the official memory, the theme does not seem to have aroused the interest of professional historians in more specific and in-depth analyzes regarding their participation.

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That is, academic investigations about the effective role of women in the confrontation did not take the form of books, monographic works, or even entire book chapters as one might expect and it is what happened, for example, with the role of workers (ALMEIDA, 1999), the black legion (DOMINGUES, 2003; FAUSTINO, 2011) or specific groups of volunteers (CARMO, 1998).

The female presence, on the contrary, came to be briefly analyzed, in the midst of research and approaches that target the confrontation of 1932 as a whole. The consequences, however, are delicate regarding the knowledge of the subject, since, in the absence of specific investigations, the most general views are the ones that assume relevance from a historiographical point of view, and the authority to set the boundaries for the ways of understanding the participation of women in that fight; this is why it is of fundamental importance to examine these panoramic approaches, which, in one way or another, interpret the subject, guiding paths of understanding.

In effect, due to the pioneering role – if considered only as carried out under academic molds –, and due to the prominence considered achieved in explaining the 1932 uprising, it is worth focusing first, on how Maria Helena Capelato and Holien Gonçalves Bezerra’s interpretation of it, published in the 1980s. Despite the particularities and internal differentiations, the works of these two authors would share the same theoretical perspective, centered on historical materialism, and would attribute similar roles to the women of São Paulo in the insurrection.

In this regard, both Capelato and Bezerra would establish as the main aim of their works the objective of bringing to light the class conflicts embedded in the “revolution” of 32 in São Paulo, which would have been hidden, intentionally, in the historical memory by the winner's speech. This speech would have enshrined the “Constitutionalist Revolution”, sometimes as a clash between the “Paulista oligarchy” and the “Vargas dictatorship” or “tenentista”^{vii}, sometimes as a fight of “United São Paulo”, with the purpose of voting the participation of other social sectors that also competed in the conjuncture into invisibility, which also competed in the conjuncture.

It would then be time to shed light and unveil, decades later, the reality of class conflict, the mechanisms and ideological strategies used by the São Paulo ruling class to co-opt the middle class and, at the same time, restrict the action of subordinate classes. , of the working class and plebs of São Paulo, who were experiencing a period of intense agitation. The “constitutionalist” confrontation, after all, would have aimed, simultaneously, to recover the political position of the state in the federation (that is, “for São Paulo”) and – not least – to ensure the maintenance of the social order (“for the Order”), therefore, it relegated to historical invisibility the performance and interests of the popular classes in the conjuncture.^{viii}

Having established the theoretical horizon, the female presence in 32 would be investigated by these authors based on this perspective.

In the work *O Movimento de 1932: a causa paulista*, in which she dedicates four pages out of the eighty-nine of the book to examine the subject, Capelato indicates that women were one of the preferred targets of the uprising organizers. They would represent, in their eyes, a portentous weapon in the face of their need to gather forces for the confrontation, as it would be able to influence husbands and children in the decision to support the cause, and, in ambivalence, it could also be useful in the task of preserving the social order, since, as the mother cell of the family, it was in their interest to see their loved ones return to the home space safe, sound and in peace. Therefore, the “Paulista woman”, especially from the middle and dominant classes, constituted a valuable ally to

be conquered, or rather, co-opted. According to the author, it “[...] responded to ideological requests” (CAPELATO, 1981, p.42):

The participation of the Paulista Woman was not a passive one. She was an active element, and her participation as a reproducer of the dominant ideology was extremely effective, having rigorously fulfilled her role as a maintainer of order. It is worth remembering, by the way, that at times in Brazilian history when the exercise of domination failed, women were always called in to participate in the accomplishment of this function. (1981, p.43).

Holien Gonçalves Bezerra in *O Jogo do Poder: República Paulista de 32*, a resulting work from his doctorate thesis, based mainly on memorist reports, would not disagree with Capelato's conclusions about the participation of women in the fight. In Bezerra's view, the “Paulista woman”, in fact, assumed the condition of reproducing the dominant ideology, exercising this role in an active way. Wherever she was, she would perform this function, sustaining, in an orderly manner, the enthusiasm for the cause, as it would be possible to infer from the sources that Bezerra analyzed:

The woman is described as the great revelation in the fight, as she makes her fragility the 'sustain of enthusiasm in the sewing workshops, rear organizations or outposts'. Mostly, she applauds the passage of volunteers, providing a festive atmosphere to the fratricidal struggle. [...] the Paulista Woman exercises a real moral pressure on the men, forcing them to decide to enlist, as volunteers, and leave for war. (1988, p. 35-36).

Female participation in Bezerra's understanding is, above all, limited to the function of reproducing the ideology proposed by the dominant class, the leading elite and conductor of the revolt, as Capelato also pointed out. The “Paulista woman”, in the home space or in the crafts of the war, would act, recurrently, in the sense of legitimizing and giving support to the “constitutionalist” forces of São Paulo, and, at the same time, preventing the confrontation from being transformed into a “social chaos”. The Paulista woman did not militate in her own cause, but in the service of the interests of others.

Still in this argumentative logic, Capelato and Bezerra would identify in working-class women the voices of opposition and lucidity. Such voices, however, that without the necessary means or spaces to express themselves, would find enormous difficulties in making themselves heard.

To avoid a hasty judgment regarding the contribution of Capelato and Bezerra's works about the knowledge of the subject, it is appropriate to observe that when these authors wrote their analyses, the investigations concerning women's history, as well as gender studies, had not yet developed many of the concepts, methods and research that support new investigations nowadays.

In addition, academic recognition has also changed regarding the themes and problems accepted as legitimate in the historiographical field, in the wake of the transformations of the social roles occupied by women. Ultimately, it was in fact, not on Capelato and Bezerra's horizon to carry out specific research on the role of women in the belligerence. On the other hand, the interpretative perspective launched by them would achieve a certain hegemony and power of influence among academic research related to the 1932 confrontation, notably in the 1980s and 1990s, when it was effectively presented as an innovational approach.

It would take more than a decade for new interpretations, guided by theoretical frameworks and diverse sources, to be opposed to such an explanatory aspect. The photographer and historian Jeziel De Paula, in the book *1932: imagens construindo a história*, would produce the academic work inaugurating this other perspective,^{ix} that he would not hesitate to make public the intention of differentiating himself, in almost every aspect, from the previous one.

Regardless of this yearning for differentiation, De Paula would go off from purposes similar to those of Capelato and Bezerra. Similarly to them, he proposed to seek the historical meaning of the 1932 uprising, which would have been overshadowed by the winner's speech, in the full exercise of power.^x

However, if Capelato and Bezerra sought to find the class conflicts involved in 32 submerged by the “winner's speech”, De Paula would present different objectives. He understands that the “winner's speech” was prepared by the Provisional Government of Getúlio Vargas, interested in diminishing the historical importance of the civil war of 1932 to consolidate its power, but also, or mainly, by the academic historiography of the 80s, in especially Bezerra's thesis, which, in his eagerness to unravel class domination, would have limited the conflict to this point.

Once again, therefore, the time had come to reexamine, making use of new sources – above all, photographic images – the predominant historical comprehension and move towards a new understanding, which would do justice to the magnitude of the 1932's confrontation, a real civil war. Within the scope of this new analytical perspective, consequently, the view that would fall upon the female presence in war would also acquire new outlines.

Occupying ten pages of the book, which in its entirety has approximately three hundred, richly illustrated, De Paula would argue that female participation in 1932 would have been quite effective, despite the insufficiency of the research carried out until then. According to the author,

Much has been questioned about the involvement of the *paulista* woman in the 1932 conflict. To a large extent, the predominant historiographic production defines it as a kind of “theatrical staging” practiced by the ladies of high Bandeirante society with the aim of political propaganda. But none of these interpretations satisfactorily explores the documentation that demonstrates the decisive role played by women in the events of 1932. (DE PAULA, 1999, p. 150).

Against the grain of these interpretations and relying on a wide range of photographic images, De Paula sought to prove that the participation of women in the uprising had assumed decisive importance. Their mobilization would not be an exclusive result of political propaganda, nor would their involvement be limited to small groups, it would encompass women from all classes and social sectors.

Young single women and widowed women would sign up for short, intensive nursing training offered by the International Red Cross and, as soon as they finished, they would be sent to emergency posts in the immediate rear of the combat fronts. According to data collected by the author, approximately 72 thousand women would have worked as volunteers in sewing workshops set up in the state capital, a percentage that corresponds to 15% of women in the city at the time. These would have been responsible for the production of an average 5,300 uniforms for the “constitutionalist” troops per day. Furthermore, the female groups would also be responsible for managing the various Soldier's Homes spread across the capital and the interior of the state, in which the “soldier of the law”, in transit or convalescing, could find shelter, food and other care that was needed. Furthermore, the industrial production of war materials, improvised after the closure of the state's borders by the Provisional Government, would rely on specialized lines, under the coordination and work of women. Ultimately, at least three of them would have experienced the violence and suffering of the confrontation directly on the battlefronts, acting as soldiers in the “constitutionalist” troops (DE PAULA, 1999, p. 150-160).

In short, in the section of the book dedicated to the topic, Jeziel De Paula brings to light a vibrant, grandiloquent female presence of crucial importance to the uprising of 32. In the author's terms, “We would not say totality because there would certainly be [...] some women that did not fit into that universe” (1999, p.161), however, the photographic images would reveal the broad scope and make evident the spontaneous nature of female participation in the war.^{xi}

To what it seems, therefore, the contrast between two of the main historiographical currents that interpreted 1932 leads to an interpretative impasse when it comes to the participation of women in the revolt. On one hand, the understanding defended by the works of Capelato and Bezerra leads us to the view that female action meant, above all, an element of conservation of the social order during the confrontation and of reproduction of the dominant ideology. On the other hand, the perspective pointed out by Jeziel De Paula indicates an expressive, overwhelming and voluntary involvement of the “São Paulo woman”, motivated by true hatred towards the unpopular administration imposed by the Provisional Government of Getúlio Vargas on São Paulo and in Brazil.

After all, the eloquent appearance of women in the 1932 sources was due to the ideological strategies of co-optation exercised by the ruling class, it occurred as a result of it, or did the overflowing feeling of civility and the massive and ungovernable female presence were what resulted in a large emphasis regarding the participation of women in the occasion? How can these approaches be reconciled? And, mainly, do these historiographical approaches respond, in a sufficient way, to the problem raised before, in terms of supplanting the discourses constructed by contemporaries themselves and influenced by the memory of the “São Paulo woman”, in the singular form?

These are complex questions that prevent simple answers. The contributions brought by the authors and texts analyzed above are undeniable and should not be disregarded, according to the time in which they were written. The survey of sources and information they carried out regarding the female presence, for example, helped us to understand the subject better. However, the same data was very closely linked to the general objective of these works, which relied on the interest of interpreting the 1932 confrontation as a whole. In this sense, the analysis of women's participation in the revolt was limited to the underlying problem, regarding the spontaneous or manipulated nature of this presence, in a confrontation with broad popular origins or led by the dominant classes.

Without completely rejecting the contributions they present regarding the “São Paulo woman”, it is necessary to overcome the aporia that has polarized the explanations until then concerning the nature of their participation in the struggle, and to go further. It is also necessary to reflect on this female presence in specific terms. However, this task requires looking at the issue from other perspectives.

The pathways opened by research in recent decades concerning women's history and gender studies, for example, constitute relevant paths. Conceiving female participation in 32 in specific terms implies being clear that:

[...] There are many different types of women throughout history, who have different social conditions depending on numerous factors, such as skin color, ethnicity, class, age, etc., and they should be studied in relation to men, and not in isolation. (SILVA and SILVA, 2015, p.167).

It is of fundamental importance, therefore, to focus efforts on understanding the diversity of sorts and classes of women who got involved or were involved in 1932 and, as far as possible, discern the meanings of such participation, not only to enable confrontation, but for themselves. Such objectives, in turn, presuppose a reflection on the construction of the “São Paulo woman” gender in the context in which it occurs, and also the recognition of ethnic and class differences, committing to the task of understanding the reasons and meanings, and the power structures involved in the situation.

Naturally, a work like this requires much more than the extent of an article. Therefore, what is intended in the next part is to explain some facets of the multiplicity, diversity, and differences that characterized the participation of women in 1932, providing elements to, thereby, supplant the standardizing discourse erected about “the” “São Paulo woman”.

III. The multiple facets of a presence: women in the “constitutionalist” confrontation

Due to the influence of official memory, explanatory convenience or generalization, it was customary to define the presence of women in the 1932 struggle in the singular, as the participation of the “São Paulo woman”. However, this definition proves itself problematic, since even a quick look at period sources reveals the diversity of this participation, in terms of social and cultural conditions and roles played by the women involved. For this reason, in order to overcome the imposed uniformity, it is necessary to shed light on the multiplicity of this supposedly one presence, to reflect on the women of 32, plurally.

A first and necessary step in this direction is to try to understand why women participated in the “constitutionalist” confrontation, if society at the time considered war a male activity? Was it a free choice or were there pressures that compelled them to join? Would they have limited action or could they participate in everything? Although, at first glance, the answer seems simple, the existing historiography, as already mentioned, diverges on the topic. While the works of Capelato and Bezerra interpret the participation of the “Paulista woman” in terms of an ideological instrument of the ruling class, used above all to convince men to join the “revolution”, in an orderly manner, performing only some functions in the rear, De Paula analyzes the same fact as a voluntary choice, resulting from political dissatisfaction on the part of both men and women, with an almost unlimited role played by women in the confrontation.

In fact, it seems to us that far from mere ideological instruments or, on the other hand, from a fully voluntary adherence, set off by the free purpose of expanding the forces at the disposal of the 1932 revolt, as many photographs of the time, in fact, may suggest, The entry of the women of São Paulo into the fight occurred as a concrete necessity, or even an urgency, given the precarious nature with which the state, or better said, its political and military leaders, decided to launch the war.

On July 9, when São Paulo launched an armed confrontation against the Provisional Government of Getúlio Vargas, its military forces were infinitely inferior to those of the opponent it was challenging. It was said at the time that São Paulo leaders believed that São Paulo would only have to conflagrate the movement for forces from allied states to immediately support it, composing an army against which the Provisional Government would not dare fight. However, although some important groups in these regions have demonstrably participated in the conspiracy, when the “revolution” broke out, the insurgents in São Paulo could not count on the support they hoped for to achieve their objectives.

In this scenario, women and men from different backgrounds, groups and social conditions were practically called upon to join the revolt as volunteers. With interstate articulations and alliances having failed, if there was any hope of a “constitutionalist” victory, it undoubtedly involved the volunteers.

Therefore, taking this context as a basis appears fundamental to understand the conditions under which women's participation took place in 1932. They were not called only to help men join in and maintain social order, nor did they have total freedom to choose whether or not they would participate in the revolt. Women and men were summoned due to a pressing need to support a declared insurrection, however, unsustainable without volunteerism – and time would show that even with it, defeat was inevitable.

The aftermath of such pressures, however, would be fundamental. This is the key point, the indelible mark of the plural presence that needs to be highlighted. If the needs of war imposed the participation of women in this activity considered masculine, this same urgency would make impracticable the strict or absolute control of which women would act in the confrontation and what type of functions they could or could not perform.

As a fact, the total number of volunteers involved in the confrontation is uncertain, as well as the definition of how many were women.^{xiii} Meanwhile, even though the male presence was widely a majority and dominated the war posts understood as male belonging, control could not be absolute in a situation of this sort . Photographic records from the time document the diversity of women's participation. An uniformed presence

represented as one, but one in which the concrete practices of the struggle were multiple. An authorized presence, but also an earned one.

For obvious reasons, the most common photographs highlight female performance in positions considered appropriate to women in the period. It is no coincidence, however, that the photographs of the work carried out in the rearguard of the clashes, in the sewing workshops, in the services of the improvised infirmaries, in the kitchens that prepared food for the soldiers, in the donation campaigns and at the enlistment stations, among others, multiply. However, the scope of their involvement was not limited to that. Given the needs imposed by the war, women were also involved and got involved in heavy work, such as in industries adapted to the production of equipment and gears for the “constitutionalist” troops.

Photograph 1 – Women contributing to the production of steel helmets.



Source: PONTES, 2004, p.134.

Photograph 2 – Employees at a factory that produced equipment for the uprising.



Source: PONTES, 2004, p.133.

Photograph 1 depicts the production of steel helmets for “constitutionalist” soldiers, which included the participation of women. Although the presence of children next to the workbench shows that they were only carrying out a finishing process on the helmets, the female contribution to the production of equipment for the São Paulo troops was of significant importance. In *photograph 2*, the staff of one of the state's factories, which converted its production in favor of the needs of the war, included the presence of numerous women. The posed

photo reveals the large number of employees involved in the “constitutionalist” industry, among whom women make up a significant workforce.

Women also took on the leadership of some committees responsible for organizing the uprising, such as Olívia Guedes Penteado, who held the position of Director of the Civil Assistance Department; and Carlota Pereira de Queirós,^{xiii} who headed the Department of Assistance to the Wounded. Finally, even the functions closest to the front lines had the presence of women, some of them as soldiers, others in uniform, performing medical or military functions among the troops, as already depicted in *photograph 2*.

Therefore, women from São Paulo participated in the 1932 confrontation, playing roles of significant importance in sustaining the struggle. If the actions of men, military or civilian, were seen as decisive due to the size of the contingent and the greater exposure to the risk of death on the battlefields, certainly, without the female presence, the “constitutionalist” insurrection would have resisted even less time than it resisted the far superior troops of the Provisional Government.

On the other hand, being content in highlighting the selflessness of these women who courageously faced the difficulties of war, in all its levels, although tempting, is a pitfall to be avoided. Having explained the cyclical tensions that made female participation in the struggle essential, it is now time, in this second step, to discuss some types and differences between the women who performed these different roles.

Classes and social conditions, classifications and resentments

The universal call for adherence to the cause, as mentioned, corresponded to the entry and incorporation into the struggle of a heterogeneous group of women, in terms of origins and social and cultural conditions. However, the nature of these distinct groupings, as well as the power relations established between them, have remained dim so far. In fact, were there hierarchies in female participation in the revolt? What kinds of tensions and power relations would be happening between them during the confrontation? Or was it, in fact, a unanimous and harmonious performance that led to the presence of women in the 1932 confrontation?

The historiography produced in the 1980s about the São Paulo uprising, as already shown, insisted on class division and conflict, with the participation of the elites being considered a somewhat disguised action, as they sought the best positions, preferring the leadership charges and the remote security of trenches and outposts. When they were involved in teams made up of people from different social conditions, a certain aura of opportunism and manipulation would prevail, since other social groups would be drawn into a war that was not theirs (CAPELATO, 1981; DE PAULA, 1988). Some authors from the late 1990s and 2000s supported a different position (DE PAULA, 1999; PONTES, 2004; VILLA, 2008), attributing popular participation to a set of factors, including widespread dissatisfaction with the Provisional Government. Looking through this perspective, the people of São Paulo would come together in the war efforts, without reasons for division, since the revolt was for the greater good of the community.

There is truth in each of these interpretations. Popular involvement in the revolt was not due exclusively to the ideological appeals of the ruling class, nor was the war itself entirely alien to the interests of São Paulo’s population. On the other hand, attributing the uprising to a popular explosion without considering the internal correlation of forces that gave rise to it and the possible tensions that were involved means leaving aside an important part of the problem.

As a result, it seems evident that unity in war efforts would not be able to overcome latent social distinctions. In the problem that concerns us directly, there is no doubt that, during the revolt, elite women were able to frequent the same places and develop labors similar to those performed by women from lower social conditions – as long as they were willing to do so. Some examples of this are the “ladies of high society” who volunteered to work in sewing workshops, in the kitchens, in the infirmaries, at enlistment stations and in donation campaigns to support the war, whose actions could be reported in the press to give idea of social barriers allegedly overcome by the civic ardor of the uprising.

However, one can ask whether the opposite was also possible, that is, whether women from subaltern classes had the freedom to frequent places and participate in tasks seen as appropriate to elite women. The answers, at this point, become more difficult, since this, certainly, was not a fact to be printed in the sources with the same evidence as the participation of “high society ladies” in the most mundane daily functions of the war. This difficulty, however, should not hide the social barriers and limits that existed in that society and that could not be broken in such a short-lived revolt, which had as its main objective, most of the time, the defense of the state’s borders and not the impairment of internal social structures.

In this sense, some positions were certainly closed to women from lower classes. The leadership of donation campaigns aimed at state schools, for example, would belong to elite women. The doors to this reserved sector of society would not be opened so easily to people who were not from that environment. In the case of the “Gold Campaign for the good of São Paulo”, although women from the lower classes could contribute, naturally, this campaign had not been planned to reach the non-elite. After all, donating personal jewelry in significant quantities was something for few people. Similarly, the actions in theaters, charity teas and artistic spaces, among

others, were not exactly intended for the general public. Also, leadership roles in war commissions, when achieved by women, were linked to social capital and class membership.^{xiv} some tasks still required prerequisites, such as literacy – not accessible to all – and minimal knowledge of rhetoric, restricting them to a smaller number of women. Female expression in public, for example, in radio speeches, when possible, required such prerequisites.

If these types of prohibitions and hierarchical distinctions of functions between women, fueled by current power and class relations, caused acute internal tensions during the revolt and were on the verge of rupture - since a part of the women could understand that they would be performing the most difficult jobs, while the most notorious functions would be limited to a much smaller group – it is not possible to say. Certainly, the regionalism exacerbated during the war and directed against the external enemy concentrated hostilities towards the outside of the state. This does not mean, on the other hand, the complete elimination of internal tensions.

It is worth remembering that, at the beginning of the 1930s, São Paulo concentrated an important part of the country's organized and combative labor movement, which, in May 1932, would organize a general strike of employees in the state capital, in which there would be involved more than sixteen thousand workers and which would be harshly suppressed by the police, under the approval of the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP). At the time, around 400 strike leaders ended up in prison (SILVA, 1991, p.123-124). If this polarization of forces didn't result in the complete opposition of São Paulo's working class to the 1932 confrontation, which had FIESP and the Commercial Association among the main organizers, on the other hand, it was also not just a few work leaders who frowned their noses in the face of the July 9th insurrection.

Ivete Batista de Almeida (1999), in one of the few specific studies on the working class' view of the “constitutionalist” campaign, considers that many of the workers who ended up joining the cause did not do so out of the civic ardor imagined or just because they disliked the political direction of the country. Highlighting the immense difficulties and hardships that were faced by the workers of São Paulo in 1932, even pressed by hunger, Almeida understands that numerous workers agreed to volunteer for the uprising due to the assistance services offered to volunteers and their families at the time.

For motives like these, there are good reasons to suspect that if, in fact, the “defense of São Paulo” mobilized many hearts and minds” in this tangle, there were also internal tensions, which counterbalanced unresolved situations, grudges and hatred (ANSART, 2004), among the different women involved in the 1932 confrontation. It would even be worth reflecting on possible forced adherence to the uprising, imposed by bosses on female employees. The aura of unanimity around the “São Paulo woman”, stamped in the sources, would hide these rivalries and resentments that failed to surface, but which were fueled by the hierarchies and power relations underlying the different groups that found themselves involved in the war.

Ethnicities and religious confessions

If different social conditions constitute one of the differentiating factors and possible tensions in female participation in the revolt, what should we think of the different ethnicities involved in 1932? Were they all united by São Paulo and the Constitution?

The information and sources available on this subject are much less abundant than the ones we have on other aspects of the 1932 war. Some photographs from the time portray the presence of indigenous people and black people as volunteers in the revolt. However, historiographical works oppose when it comes to their fate, with Capelato even stating that a battalion formed of black people was exterminated, with no record of the names of the dead left (CAPELATO, 1981).

If the search focuses on the participation of black women and indigenous women who worked in 32, the results will be even greater. Regarding indigenous people, the scarcity of work probably has to do with quantitative issues, since the groups of indigenous people active in the uprising were not that many – in the data indicated by Capelato, the contingent would not exceed 75 people (CAPELATO 1981). As for black women, however, there is a bigger gap. The challenge, it seems, lies in thinking about the dimensions of this presence beyond delimited groups, such as the black legion (FAUSTINO, 2011); in interaction with other groups and social conditions. Were black women welcomed in the several roles of “constitutionalist” volunteering? Did they wish to participate in 1932 and were they prevented from doing some tasks or assigned, compulsorily, to others? How were the racial theories and intolerance in force at the time in relation to women who escaped the recommended “civilizing standards”? What did participation mean to them? Certainly, some of these questions can no longer be answered today, after the witnesses' lifetime has run out, which, however, does not exempt historians from making the fact historically intelligible.

As well as ethnic differences, there are other categories of women who participated in the revolt and who have not received the attention of scholars. This is the case of involvements caused by religious denominations, such as the League of Catholic Ladies, which appears to have been very active during the confrontation. What type of emotional and religious fusions caused this entity to join a war and also to take sides on the side of São Paulo and against the Brazilians on the other side of the trenches?

And what about the women of foreign origins who, as the sources announce, resolutely supported the “constitutionalist” struggle? What bonds of sociability were at stake, beyond the human solidarity provoked by the commotion of following the news of the war? Finally, would there be different perceptions of the confrontation for women of different ages and generations?

Regarding those aspects about the 1932 confrontation, as one may notice, there are still plenty more questions to be answered than there are answers already constructed.

Women and men, other hierarchies

In fact, the beginning of the thirties is considered an important milestone in the history of Brazilian women's struggle for the acknowledgement of their rights. It was in February 1932 that the first Electoral Code was enacted, which provided the right to vote for women, and this right was exercised in the election for the composition of the Constituent Assembly, in 1933. In this election, Carlota Pereira de Queirós was elected, who in 1934 would become the first woman to hold the position of Federal Deputy in our country. Also in 1934, Maria Tereza de Camargo would be appointed mayor of Limeira, in the interior of the state.

These facts, however, although indicative of important changes that were happening, as well as the achievements and diversity of female positions occupied in the uprising, should not give the impression that the “constitutionalist” campaign was the stage for supposed gender equality between men and women. Bárbara Weinstein, for example, would demonstrate that, despite the men of 1932 highlighting the participation of women in their written accounts of the period, this did not mean, in practice, that they were there imagining concrete changes in the role reserved for women in that society. The “São Paulo woman” praised by them, represented sometimes as the “Bandeirante woman”, sometimes as “modern”, aimed to legitimize and strengthen female participation in the campaign, but, at the same time, to contain it within certain limits (WEINSTEIN, 2004, p. 87).

Therefore, the public space, which was reserved predominantly for men, would continue to be, for the most part, a male space during the uprising. So much so that the main leadership positions in the uprising would be occupied by men, as well as positions in the press, on the radio and in other functions that involved the usage of words in the public space regarding political issues.

However, as Weinstein points out, there were also spaces for transgressions and the period of struggle was prolific for some of them. The discursive representation made by men about the “São Paulo woman” as an emblem of São Paulo’s “modernity”, for example, implied dynamics and some characteristics commonly attributed to men:

The Paulista Woman effectively became an identity that allowed women to claim a voice, exercise moral authority and celebrate their own heroism within the movement, without exposing themselves to criticism for transgressing traditional gender roles or abandoning their family duties. (WEINSTEIN, 2004, p.77).

Still, Weinstein understands that it was the position given to only a few women of 1932.

Ultimately, in the article mentioned, the author also asked about the general meaning of female participation in the 1932 confrontation given their conditions at the time. Even admitting that wars of relatively short duration, such as that of 32, can open spaces for relevant changes in the roles reserved for women in society, Weinstein would conclude, however, denying deeper and lasting changes for them, resulting from 32:

Under these circumstances, perhaps a small group of educated, elite white women were able to penetrate certain “bastiões” [places] previously exclusive to men. However, it was unlikely that the common Paulista Woman, despite the fascinating experience of political mobilization, would or could use it to pave her way to emancipation. (WEINSTEIN, 2004, p. 89).

In the uprising of 32 there was not exactly a promise of transformation for women. The messages from the “constitutionalists” evoked much more of the past, a resumption of directions in which São Paulo could regain control of its state and the country.

IV. Conclusion

Once the confrontations were over, the people from São Paulo saw in their memory a chance to reverse the crushing defeat suffered on the battlefields, and fuel the struggle that would continue in the 1933/1934 Constituent Assembly. The “heroism of women from São Paulo”, in this sense, sounded like one of the essential aspects of a jingoistic discourse, permeated by regionalism and which would be incensed, for decades on end, in written productions, commemorative dates, monuments and civic parades, among others..

At the end of this analysis, there is no doubt that, thanks to the lack of preparation with which the state declared and insisted on carrying out a war they were unable to win, the actions of many women were, in fact, heroic. Facing adverse conditions of all kinds, they took on the task of overcoming these mistakes and did so on the limit of their own strength.

However, if contemporaries were interested in standardizing the idea of a strong “São Paulo woman”, with a view to continuing the struggle in the 1933/34 Constituent Assembly and, furthermore, corresponding to the epic formulations of São Paulo’s regionalism at the time, historians had another role to play, like Ricoeur

pointed it out well. It is necessary to bring to light the plural nature of female participation in 1932, at the point in which standardization was established. To regain the right to different feminine narratives, in tune with forms of solidarity and repulsion, harmony and tensions, instead of the arbitrary standardization that took its place. The purpose of this article was no other.

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Notes

ⁱ The reflections that resulted in this article were also partially published in the annals of the XXIX ANPUH National History Symposium and in the chapter Women of 1932: the multiple facets of female participation in the “constitutionalist” uprising in São Paulo (RODRIGUES, 2018). Article translated by Thaisla Isabella Pinheiro.

ⁱⁱ In the numbers presented by Hernani Donato, the government army would reach a total force of 350 thousand combatants, while the “constitutionalist” forces would be much smaller (DONATO, 2002, p.131-132). For Carlos Henrique Davidoff, “[...] the people of São Paulo could only effectively count on approximately 46,500 combatants, a number corresponding to the firearms available, which demonstrates the inferiority of men and war material of the constitutionalist forces.” (2001).

ⁱⁱⁱ Regarding the theme of women in 1932 on publicity sites, see, for example: “Women’s participation in the 1932 Revolution is an important milestone for the female legacy in the country”. Available in: <https://www.migalhas.com.br/quentes/204015/participacao-da-mulher-na-revolucao-de-32-e-marco-importante-para-legado-feminino-no-pais>. Access at: 01/05/23. Exhibition organized by the Museum of Image and Sound. Available in: <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/AwVRXg7DS8ZpKg?hl=pt-BR>. Access at: 01/05/23. “Memorial da Democracia – São Paulo em Armas”. Available in: <http://memorialdademocracia.com.br/card/a-revolta-paulista-de-1932>. Access at: 01/05/23.

^{iv} Paulista woman refers to a woman from the city of São Paulo in Brazil.

^v The author would return to the topic in later works, reaffirming and complementing the propositions of the 2004 article. See WEINSTEIN, 2022.

^{vi} Given the extensive volume of works that deal with 1932, from historians and journalists to memoirists, we will focus on some academic approaches that marked original and more lasting positions on the subject at hand. The number of works, however, is broader. See, for example, Rodrigues (2012), Moares (2018) and Weinstein (2022).

^{vii} The term “tenentista” refers to a movement headed by Brazilian lieutenants in 1920 due to their dissatisfaction with Brazilian politics.

^{viii} The similarities in purpose of these two works are clear, in the case of 1932, with the article written by Carlos Vesentini and Edgar De Decca, the Winner’s Revolution (1976), dedicated to the 1930 Revolution.

^{ix} Through her would also follow, for example, PONTES, 2004 and VILLA, 2008, among others.

^x It is still interesting to observe the influence of Edgar De Decca on these two perspectives, since his 1976 article, in partnership with Vesentini, influenced the works of Capelato and Bezerra and, later, De Decca would be responsible for supervising the dissertation De Paula's master's degree.

^{xi} It is worth remembering that Zeziel De Paula's work, the result of a master's thesis completed at the end of the 1990s, was carried out at a different time from the approaches he opposes, in which the historical materialism used in the eighties, example, received strong academic criticism and underwent significant updates. The very use of photographic images in historiographical work had gained greater recognition, promoting his research. Studies on women's history, in turn, had developed a little more in Brazil.

^{xii} In the numbers presented by Davidoff, although it had approximately 46,500 firearms available, São Paulo managed to enlist around 200 thousand men for the war (2001). Regarding the number of women, the numbers are more uncertain. According to De Paula, 72 thousand women worked in the sewing workshops in São Paulo alone. (DE PAULA, 1999, p.151).

^{xiii} Olívia Guedes Penteadó and Carlota Pereira de Queirós belonged to the São Paulo elite. Detailed information about their personal trajectories and the friendship established between them can be found in SCHPUN, 2011.

^{xiv} The aforementioned Olívia Guedes Penteadó and Carlota Pereira de Queirós, for example, in addition to their family origins, already occupied prominent positions in São Paulo society at the time. See also: SCHPUN, 1999 e WEINSTEIN, 2004, p.76.