

By challenging the policies of Brazilian Empire, Rio Grande do Sul, the southernmost Brazilian state, in 1835, has proclaimed its independence, forming the *Rio-grandense Republic*, giving cause to a reaction from the central government, in a war which was recorded in History as *The Farrapos' Revolution*¹ (*The Ragamuffins' War*). The Empire wanted back the rebel Federal Unity; fought for it, and eventually got it by an armistice treat imposed over the moribund Republic.

The secessionist state for a long period of ten years faces the troops from the Empire in an impossible quest, experiencing always increasing difficulties that at the end has lead to a total defeat, with a Peace Treaty signed under the shadow of treason to a particular part of the rebel worriers:

The Black Lancers.

Who are those Black Lancers?

The Black Lancers are already free Negroes, the ones freed by the proclaimed *Rio-grandense Republic*, under the condition of enlisting their troops, and the confiscated slaves belonging to the Empire subject. The Black Lancers, in their majority, are recruited among the Negroes cowboys, with long experience in the animal treat, mainly on the horse's mounting. The Black Lancers are the attack troops of the *Farroupilhas* army.



The importance of the rule of those lancers in the process of *Farrapos' War* can be measured by their participation even in the frustrated experience of constitution of another

¹ - Names: **Guerra dos Farrapos** (Farrapos War), or **Revolução Farroupilha**. **Farroupilhas** or **Farrapos** (men wearing ragamuffins). **Piratini Republic**, the name given by the rebels to the new and aborted by defeat secessionist Republic.

Republic (*Juliana Republic*) on the neighbor state of Santa Catarina. Yet, the increasing importance of the Black Lancers is reported in the creation of a Second Corps, a group of 426 fighters.

Reports of the War refer to the Black Lancers as “*excellent Cavalry fighters, facing the combat with maximum strength by knowing that the achievement of liberty to themselves and to their brothers in color would be at stake in each and every battle [...] They handle perfectly, with remarkable dexterity their favorite weapons: the lance [...] They fight using basically as their weapons means available where they are fighting [...] They ride in their horses without any saddle, barely in the horses’ skin [...] They carry daggers, some use machetes and few use arms of fire [...] They dress raw ponchos made out of wool – bicharás – yet used as bed, blanket and rain coat against the severe cold and inclement rain in days of winter. When fighting in horseback, the bicharás wrapped on the left arm it is used as a kind of shield to absorb the enemies’ sword stroke [...] They are highly skilled in using the “boleadeira” (a kind of noose) as a war weapon.*

The Imperial Historian, Tristão de Alencar Araripe, a harsh critic of the *Rio-grandense Republic*, records about the Black Lancers: “*and now the Republic add a permanent power, by organizing the battalion baptized as the Lanceiros, integrated only by slaves, draw by force by the Farroupilhas rebels on the rural properties of the Imperial loyalist, or the ones who voluntary have run to be under the flags of the rebels, moved by the hope of freedom, and, yet, by the ones who have seen bought their freedom by sympathizers of the rebels. Three were then the sources of the enlisted slaves on the rebel’s lines: extortion to the adversaries; agreement among friends; invitation to the oppressed one! [...] in slavery the rebels have found a powerful help to sustain a cause which they used to call freedom*”. Examining this remark of Araripe, professor Raul Carrion says: “*Araripe take notice with acuity, the important role played by the freed Negroes during the Farroupilha Revolution*”, because “*in proclaiming the freedom for the slaves that joined the lines of the Farroupilhas, the victims of the social oppression moved forward in the direction of the rebels, making the commanders of the Farroupilhas to receive an expressive number of men, which turned to be the basis for their military strength*”. Yet, Araripe rejoices by the fact that Rio Grande do Sul state to be an inexpressive state in terms of slavery. Because “*if it were not like this, the rebels would have found a strong militia to support their secessionist effort; and if so most likely the creation of a separate Country off Brazil, dreamed by the Farroupilhas would have happened.*

Another eyewitness of the Revolution wrote that the *Piratini Republic* (on behalf of the city name where the Republic was proclaimed – Piratini) has never proclaimed the freedom for the slaves – an enormous mistake, he said. If the leaders have done so, a contingent of no less than 6,000 men had been added to the Republic army.

The general idea left behind by the rebels is that the Farrapos have found in Negroes soldiers not a kind of mercenary, nor a kind of passive person – instead of it, they are a trustful ally in rebels' campaign for the emancipation of their state. The Negroes are to the rebels' allies from the first hour, being among the early insurgents, knowing the secrets and passwords of the rebels and are in the absolutely first men mass attack against the Imperial troops.

It was very easy to recruit slaves to join the rebels' lines. In a certain way, the gross of the slaves dreamed with the Farrapos arrival, to join the army that would eventually freed them. To fight under the *Farrroupilhas* flag was considered as an opportunity to achieve the freedom. Countless was the number of slaves that runaway from their masters in the neighbor Country of Uruguay to serve with the Farrapos troops, in the Piratini Republic.

When the Revolution reaches to an end, the Farrapos account two Negro divisions – one in Infantry and the other in Cavalry, both totalizing one thousand men. By the figures from the Imperial army, the total participation of Negroes was of one third or one half of the whole rebel army. Yet, two mulattoes were among their main leaders: Domingos José de Almeida, Minister of the Treasure of Piratini Republic, born in the far distant state of Minas Gerais, and José Mariano de Mattos, twice the Minister of War, and the Minister of the Navy – yet, the President of the Piratini Republic, along the years of 1838 and 1841. Mattos was born in Rio de Janeiro.

Five and six years of conflict between Imperial troops and the rebels, the chances of pacification started to rise. Then, the Imperial Government, in Rio de Janeiro, started to prepare militarily for a Peace Treaty. One of the worries faced by the Imperial Minister of the War, José Clemente Pereira, was the possibility of diplomatic conflicts if a large number of former slaves, still with their weapons, search for asylum in the neighbor Uruguay, and use this Country to move forward with the revolution, then coming from Uruguay. To avoid a military conflict with Uruguay, the Minister of War has asked to his aides if would be necessary to open a terrible precedent of “awarding slaves with freedom by the commitment of insurrection offence.” The same Minister of War considered possible that a military action in Uruguay would lead to unpredicted reaction from Juan Manuel de Rosa, the Argentinean dictatorship. The same thoughts worried as well some leaders of the Farrapos against the slaves' freedom.

Those leader headed by David Canabarro and Antonio Vicente da Fontoura politically have pushed off the historical leaders and were eventually discussing Peace with Duke of Caxias, the negotiator in name of the Brazil's Emperor.

To adjust the Peace between the fading out Republic and the Empire was considered of high risk without giving any guarantees to the freed Negroes, who in a long period of ten years, fought in favor of the Republic considering it has their redemption. Yet, was considered extremely difficult to bring back the black warriors to the servile labor in the farms, salted meat industries, and to the Senzalas were by sure they would organize rebellion with the knowledge they have got in the battlefield.

THE TREASON

The Duke of Caxias has used as his trump the ambient of contradiction involving the *Farroupilha* leaders at that moment of the Revolution. With the power of the Empire, the Duke has used even blackmailing actions, seducing the rebels. In this universe of shadow and collusion the main general of the *Farroupilhas*, David Canabarro, accepted an agreement with the Duke to cease the war. They both have agreed that a portion of the *Farroupilhas* soldiers should be destroyed. And, the part to be annihilated would be, exactly, the Negro warriors. The scenery agreed in this stage of treason was a battle to be fought at a certain place named *Porongos*. In November 14th, 1844, what the history records as "*The Porongos Surprise*", indeed happens". There is another character here, coronel Francisco Pedro de Abreu, nicknamed Chico Pedro or The Moringue, commander of the Empire Operations in Combat. He has received from the Duke of Caxias sharp instruction to be followed: "During the battle spare the Brazilian blood whenever you can, mainly the white people of the Province or the Indians as well, since you well know that such poor people may be of some utility in future for us.

Canabarro did what he has agreed with the Duke: he split the black warriors from the other soldiers. Not knowing the underground agreement between Caxias and Canabarro the black soldiers fought bravely, but hopelessly – they were slaughtered merciless.

One nowadays researcher² says:

"The Porongos' Surprise' opened the door for the Ponche Verde Treat of Peace just few months ahead. The Farrapos Negroes had suffered a very serious misfortune. Eighty among one hundred dead in the battlefield were they Negroes. 'The Porongos Surprise' has remained

² - Spencer Leitman.

as a military secret for many years. Domingos José de Almeida was the first to challenge Canabarro's behavior in an investigative research that took 20 years of work."

THE SURPRISE

A squad of 40 men burst forth over an army completely off-guard. In panic by surprise, the ambushed army move in all directions, like scared ants – they are astonished, they are terrified. In vain they search for senior officials to organize the troops. A cry run mouth to mouth: Moringue! The nickname of the ruthless commander of the Imperial troops. Behind Moringue moves a wave of well armed soldiers. To face such wave shake, run and tremble the weaponless black soldiers face him in holding a solid barrier. The situation became terrible. The *Farrapos* are completely disorganized. Yet, time rushes on and the weaponless warriors are being slaughtered by Imperial Forces' gun fire, swords and spears. They try to organize themselves somehow, and decide to fight until die. But the infantry and cavalry burst forth from all places, and the Black Lancers and other soldiers from the Negroes regiments are merciless annihilated.