THE ART AND MASTERY OF CONFISCATION:
O FARROUPILHA, 1835-1845

A ARTE E A MESTRIA DO CONFISCO:
REVOLUÇÃO FARROUPILHA, 1835-1845

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ABSTRACT
When it came to feeding the requirements of war, confiscation of enemy property was the most productive method for riograndense ranchers and their Revolution. Just after declaring independence, the rebels, or Farrapos, legalized their actions with their first Confiscation Decree, hoping to show themselves as principled men concerned about the democratic structures of their new Republic, not land grabbers. With this the rebels selectively incentivized adherence and firmed up territorial control. However, there was no intent to take great property for the benefit of smaller ranchers or for the very poor, rather, this measure bestowed favors to intimates inside the revolution. Rents and cattle revenue would fund independence through a national treasury. Customs offices, incapable of enforcement and subject to the predatory needs of field commanders, proved poor sources of state wealth, and, cut off from port import and export duties, the Farrapos suffered reliable revenue streams. Seized enemy cattle became the focus of contending interests, including the state itself. Enemy slaves, also subject to confiscation, served in segregated units. While confiscation was much grander than ordinary bribery, smuggling, and rustling long associated with an expanding frontier, it surprisingly tempered more rabid forms of despoliation. Ranching cycles and environmental disasters, too, inhibited rebel cravings. Eventually, Caxias applied military pressure and exploited rebel differences, which were gaining momentum as cattle herds declined. The Baron’s army and anti-insurgency strategy squeezed rebels into smaller spaces, denied them resources, and defanged black troops, allowing him to penetrate and disrupt the rebel network of complicity and corruption which confiscation nourished.

Keywords: Farroupilha. Confiscation. Couraças.

RESUMO
Quando era necessário atender aos esforços de guerra, o confisco de propriedade do inimigo era o método mais produtivo para os estancieiros rio-grandenses e suas revoluções. Logo após declarar independência, os rebeldes, ou Farrapos, legalizaram suas ações com o seu primeiro Decreto de Confisco, desejando mostrarem-se homens de princípios, preocupados com as estruturas democráticas da sua nova República, e não como ladrões de terras. Com isso, estes rebeldes incentivaram a adesão e afirmaram seu controle sobre o território. No entanto, não era sua intenção se apossar de grandes propriedades para o benefício de pequenos

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pecuaristas ou os muito pobres, ao contrário, essa medida trouxe favores aos próximos da revolução. Rendas e lucros com o gado iriam financer independentência por meio do tesouro nacional. A arrecadação de impostos, frente à incapacidade de aplicar as leis e sujeita às necessidades predatórias dos oficiais superiores, mostrou-se uma fonte pobre de riqueza estatal e, interrompidas as atividades de importação e exportação, os Farrapos sofriam com a falta de fluxos confiáveis de recursos. Gado confiscado de inimigos se tornou o foco de interesses conflituosos, incluindo do próprio estado. Escravos inimigos, também sujeitos ao confisco, serviam em unidades segregadas. Enquanto o confisco era muito mais abrangente do que suborno, contrabando e roubo de gado, longamente associados a uma fronteira em expansão, ela surpreendentemente atenuou formas mais graves de espoliação. O ciclo econômico das estâncias e desastres ambientais também diminuíam as ansias dos rebeldes. Afinal, Caxias aplicou pressão militar e aproveitou as diferenças entre os rebeldes, que aumentavam na medida em que os rebanhos diminuíram. O exército do Barão e a estratégia de contra-insurgência comprimiu rebeldes em espaços menores, evitou acesso a recursos, diminuiu as tropas de negros, permitindo que ele penetrasse e rompesse a rede de complacência e corrupção da qual os rebeldes se nutriam.


INTRODUCTION

Much has been written on the Farroupilha, but little attention has been given to the question of forced acquisition of property or the nature and effects of its related regulatory measures in the conduct of the war. Recently, two scholars have explored farrapo confiscation policies and actions, building on the work of Moacyr Flores’ República Rio-Grandense: realidad e utopia (2002). Anderson Marcelo Schmitt’s article (2013) looks into the cross border trade of confiscated cattle and its detrimental impact on rebel leadership; and, Marcia Eckert Miranda’s study (2015) dissects and explains rebel taxation laws and procedures, which also damaged the viability of the new state. The discussion that follows hopes to add to this conversation.

Theoretically, for the most part, confiscated property remained in the hands of its uncompensated original owners despite farrapos tatements and positions that ultimately claimed all enemy lands were state property. Ranches were identified as belonging to such and such estanceiro, and were rented usually to a farrapo adherent. In reality, they were speaking to the historic, legal underpinnings of private property, rather than for the purposes of identification and location. Interestingly, the farrapos operated with an implied deference to their once neighbors and many times friends who had given their allegiance to Rio de Janeiro. This deferential behavior was often seen, too, in the treatment of riograndense prisoners of war. Good pastures were essential in providing yearly renewable resources, but the rebels were primarily interested in moveable assets: slaves and cattle. In appro-
aching confiscation as an essential wartime measure, the rebels assumed the right to take and use property in a unique way, as a possible future pathway to reconciliation. At its core, confiscation meant survival; but the rebels weaponized the concept in their peace negotiations and for their post-rebellion relationship with the Empire. From almost the very beginning of the conflict, rebels demanded immunization from their own confiscatory practices; in other words, protection against all present and future liabilities. In effect, the nationality of persons who suffered from the consequences of confiscation, whether secessionist or loyalist, would be considered equal when it came to restitution, although distributed monies were done so unevenly. Confiscation, then, was much more complex and part of a larger narrative, elemental to the pacification process itself.

Unlike the other Regency revolts of the 1830s, Rio Grande do Sul's *Farroupilha* was notable for its longevity and the creation of a functioning independent state, the Republic of Rio Grande do Sul. Setting the Revolution apart, too, was the abrupt change in mood just before the Peace of Ponche Verde (February, 1845), from resistance to conciliation and reintegration into the Empire. The best example of what took place was Caxias’ ascendancy to the Presidency of Rio Grande do Sul, an act unanimously agreed to by the once warring rebel officers who, weeks earlier, were being hunted down by the Baron’s armies. What seemed an inevitable collision of wills never occurred. The biggest winners were the losers: secessionist white ranchers who received compensation, some known and some hidden, kept their lands and slaves, and would, in a few short years, help lead Imperial forces against Brazil’s enemies. Paradoxically, the rebel government’s confiscation policy, which helped to fuel the Revolution, reflected a worrying challenge to its very existence and continuance. Corruption and its handmaiden, confiscation, too, were a part of the glorious military episodes the *Farroupilha* has become known for.

Establishing confiscation measures was an extraordinary triumph for the rebels following their crushing Fanfa) defeat (October, 1836), which nearly decapitated the Revolution in its infancy (SPALDING, 1963, p. 111-112). Several of the most important original conspirators were sent off to exile, some thought more dangerous, including Bento Gonçalves da Silva, to Rio’s sea fortress prisons. Within a month’s time, the remaining leadership at Piratini began building a more professional army, almost immediately running up against *riograndense* militia and guerilla traditions, and put forth the mundane workings of a government; although republican in name, solidly resting its administrative practices on Luso-Brazilian law and custom. Large scale government sponsored confiscation, however, was new and unprecedented. It was consciously virile and austere as written,
and comported with *riograndense* expansionist inclinations. Flexible in elite hands, confiscation, at least in its early years, exhibited a measure of plains justice mixed with materialism and greed.

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Confiscation was a response to crisis, the only answer to the countless financial and economic problems facing a rural land-locked nation in formation, executed through a disorderly process of incomplete goals without impartial administrative checks, balances, and oversight. With the first confiscation decree of November 11, 1836 and the second of April 5, 1837, which extended the policy into the Banda Oriental, the new government hoped to persuade independent-minded field commanders, born on the very same *Campanha* ranches, to do the unimaginable: to respect the new republic’s procedures on the disposition of seized slaves, lands, and cattle of those still loyal to the Empire (O POVO, 27 out., 1838). Astonishingly, the *Farrapos*, whose past successes arose directly out of a long history of expansionism, would attempt to do so for a good part of this long war. At least they refrained from wreaking indiscriminate havoc on the provincial ranching system, from which recovery would have been difficult and long. The low intensity warfare over the ten years permitted the ranchers to take generous furloughs to tend to and protect their pastures. These ranchers and rebel officials were not unopposed to the use of violence for larger political goals or for personal and family gains; nevertheless, they demonstrated what would seem as a remarkable shared sensitivity to looting’s cumulative costs. In no way did confiscation activities morally purify the Revolution. Rather, death, destruction, and untold injustices were its real consequences. The executors of confiscation were cautious men, whose short-sighted vision failed to recognize that its policies actually worked against the creation of a viable state and community of free men. Until around 1840, confiscation performed rather wellholding commanders in check, limiting punitive violence in the interests of regional liberty (AHRGS, CV-4821, Antonio Vicente da Fontoura, 15 de fevereiro de 1840; AHRGS, CV-4816, 16 de fevereiro de 1840).

For the most part, ranchers attached to the Revolution attempted to coordinate their interests, usually with a strong reliance on personal relationships with Treasury Minister Jose Domingos de Almeida in an understanding of mutual impunity. One can only estimate the number of *estancias* involved, registered into the system, or others simply overrun, as well as the number of rebel *estanceiros*, who sometimes formed themselves into syndicates. Given the available evidence, perhaps, only a few hundred white
ranchers entered the world of confiscation, for this was their Revolution and theirs alone.

The Republic was, in reality, not the best showcase for good government. Yet without confiscation, the Republic could not stand nor the War proceed, but for its modest veil of legitimacy, to cover what were many times shady to outright unlawful activities. In the struggles over authority, it fell to the commanders to balance their competing interests amongst themselves and with rebel Campanha ranchers with whom they were sometimes at odds over dissident and abandoned properties, and with the government without betraying the very grievances which brought them to power, or lose control over the Revolution, which could undercut their capacity to enrich themselves. The ranchers of 1835 were, in effect, a class-for-itself with power rooted in the National Guard and in their autonomous aspirations (AHRGS, CV-4977, Francisco Modesto Franco, 7 de fevereiro de 1841). There were more than enough pasture and cattle, after opening up enemy ranches to expropriations, to maintain order and allegiance to Piratini’s strongmen (AHRGS,CV- 4816). At the uprising’s start, Rio Grande do Sul’s borderland horizon seemed boundless, an invitation for reinvention and open spaces for the prickly individualism of its estanceiro-soldiers to threaten those who dared oppose them.

Now that the Republic in 1836 had to face the superior might of Rio, it also had to confront hostility from within, since perhaps a good fourth to a third of those living in the province sided with the Empire. To minimize future retaliation from aggrieved neighbors, just in case the Revolution turned badly, colonels demonstrated a measure of self-control toward their enemies. For example, on numerous occasions following an encounter the rebels expressed warm sentiments towards captured Legalists, even releasing quite a few; although the War had many instances of looting, beheadings, assassinations, firing squads, grave desecrations, and, of course, the continued mistreatment of the dispossessed, including about 50,000 non-whites mostly slaves who continued to endure unspeakable acts associated with the institution. Yet, in absolute numbers the casualty rate was low. Over the 10-year span, there were just a handful of significant battles in this war of ambushes and skirmishes, in which about 3,000 rebels died (ARARIPE, 1986). In fact, one could argue that it was this early stubborn defense by Loyalist cavalry officers, like João da Silva Tavares, Sebastião Barreto Pereira Pinto, Manoel dos Santos Loureiro, Antônio Pedro de Abreu, and the Oriental Bonifácio Isás Calderon that stymied and blocked early Farrapo military progress and was indispensable to Caxias’ later efforts in closing down the War. Dangling offers of rank and land, Farrapos tried to turn them, but this tactic failed to work except with the most famous of all,
the twice Farrapo Bento Manuel Ribeiro, who ended the War as a brigadier general under Caxias (LEITMAN, 2008, p. 134; AHRGS, CV-514, Domingos José de Almeida, 26 de setembro de 1841).

Cattle, in the hundreds of thousands, was the only economic means by which revolutionary talk could turn into action. They were mobilized and redeployed to produce capital, but grasping hands on both sides of the frontier diverted proceeds from confiscation and customs stations, the two major drivers of revenue, hindering rather than helping the formation of an economically independent nation. Without funds the state was unable to invest in larger internal works beyond its small military shops. Lack of access to coastal waters prevented setting up rival charqueadas. Fortunately, the sheer number of cattle in their possession overcame a haphazard administration and misuse of whatever was collected and held back from their sale, for that, too, was critical in maintaining some kind of ranching equilibrium. Just as in peace, the whole economy and society revolved around the presence of cattle, and while more were available for rodeos, drives, and markets, certain constraints rationalized their consumption: environmental, regional prices, territories occupied by war, and the very nature of ranching practices in the first half of the century. Certainly, feathering one’s own nest over those of other Farrapos or the state was an important objective, but outliers, such as bandits, contrabandists, and the like, over whom the Farrapos had little or no control, were as much the enemy as were Legalist soldiers. There were times when organized cross border banditry were greater threats than nearby Imperial soldiers (O POVO, 2 out., 1839; 9 out., 1839; 2 nov., 1839). For the first half of the war, cattle seizures served as an important economic lubricant designed to keep the Revolution going, and then, in the latter years contracting, progressively laying bare inequalities, injustices, and morally infecting its leadership.

In the gaucho lands awash with weapons and roving militaries in the warring geographies of Uruguay and Rio Grande, confiscation was not simply rapacious, but, by necessity, continued in step with the ranching methods of the day, related not only to the seasons and the location and pace of fighting, but in overcoming the persistent shortage of labor (AHRGS, CV-5054, Duarte Silveira Gomes, 2 de outubro de 1839). Slaves were essential members of ranching society, important as family, agregados, and peões. Those on enemy ranches, in charqueadas, in towns or wherever found, were subject to confiscation. Every ranch, from the smallest to those of the grandest of the cattle barons, had a few to several dozen slaves performing ranch work, from cowboys with prized skills such as horse breakers to domestics and agriculturalists. Though desperately in need of recruits, the rebels, however, were afraid of overwhelming their forces with ex-sla-
ves, which tainted, in their minds, the *Farroupilha* appearing similar to the darker revolts of the northern provinces (O POVO, 24 ago., 1839). Although they created two black units totaling almost 1,000 men, one of horse lancers and the other infantry, both officered by white ranchers, they rarely volunteered their own valuable slaves (AHRGS, CV-4988, Franco, 19 de novembro de 1841). Of the elastic rebel forces, about a third were these ex-slaves or *Libertos*, having been given provisional freedom, a percentage that roughly matched those inside the province. Most seized slaves were kept out of action, used by the state in small shops producing goods to assist the war effort or more often placed into private use (LEITMAN, 1977).

On an existential level, confiscation substituted for the secessionists’ failure to achieve the kind of statehood which would bring foreign recognition, and with it, benefits such as loans, arms shipments, and mercenaries. But, the failed attempt to establish a constitutional government (1842-1843) did little to justify its existence to governments outside the Campanha. All they had were sympathetic voices from Brazilian republicans, and pieces of paper, not meaningful treaties, from weak, out-of-power so-called friends in the neighboring Spanish states (AHRGS, CV-4656, Fontoura, 15 de junho de 1842). Naturally, without substantive alternatives and operating mostly from within the Campanha, having been forced out of the capital and from other important lagoon towns, the rebels focused on the principal resources at hand. By framing enemy property as legal prizes of war, they justified extortion and occupation. But although the results seemed insignificant to run a state, they were relatively substantial in funding what was really an insurgency of 3,000 - 4,000 horsemen.

Orderly procedures for the confiscation of enemy estancias was not yet clear in the first few months following the September 20th rising. Once assuming power, rebels unaffiliated with the ousted Rio appointed provincial president stressed continuity. Publically, independence was not yet on the table, and vivasto Brazil were the order of the day. The Farrapo leadership carefully reported the intimate workings of the provincial treasury, established a commission to examine the state of the important customs houses of Norte and Rio Grande, and continued with everyday financial affairs to restore calm and confidence (O MENSAGEIRO, 24 nov., 1835). Relieving Loyalist sympathizing neighbors from their possessions was not an official part of rebel agenda. But, as they tore through the province in 1835 and into the first months of 1836, the rebels took cattle and slaves on a haphazard basis, sometimes related to simmering quarrels going back years between families, where no one remembered why, although one could be sure it involved land. Still, the leadership was sensitive to Loyalists and neutrals, although some had set their sights on slave recruits from Pelotas. Initially
there were larger objectives to safeguard, primarily to consolidate initial territorial gains, only to be thrown back by a stubborn provincial Loyalist response. The contest was fast becoming a civil war after Bento Manuel Ribeiro’s defection, Antônio de Souza Netto’s unauthorized Independence calls at Seival, and then the major reverse at Fanfa.

From September 20th until the catastrophic defeat at Fanfa the rebels held their own. True, by then they had already lost the capital of Porto Alegre, the industrial center of Pelotas, and its gateway to the Atlantic, Rio Grande. But they were far from finished. Out of their Campanha redoubt, having sanctuaries in the Banda Oriental, which protected and refueled their cavalry, and the willingness of Montevideo merchants to do business with their upstart neighbors, the Farrapos remained dangerous and unpredictable. From their declared capital in Piratini in the early days of November of 1836, a small government emerged, headed by non-elected ministers, some born in other provinces but with established strong local ties. That being said, Brazil’s vastly superior navy, almost a first class power of the day, ruled the supply lines of the interior lagoons and the nation’s coastal waters, turning the insurrection into a stalemate of sorts. Rio’s generals were content to leave interior forays to their riograndense Loyalist cavalry. Confiscation activities continued apace.

The Farrapo ministries counted on município officials to execute the hastily written decrees which, just as in pre-revolutionary days, were irregularly enforced. Most of the measures involved standard, everyday operating procedures and guidelines. Farrapo-styled republicanism shied away from the most modest of changes that could threaten the social order and time-tested traditions, so any move toward popular sovereignty, for instance, was a threat, as seen in their firm attitude toward upholding slavery. The Libertos were not accepted as kindred revolutionary spirits, but fighters subject to terms of conditional freedom. Personnel on the ground charged with carrying out confiscation in the beginning were not under the spell of extremists, but were municipal authorities, the customs officials, police, and judges, who adapted to new predatory challenges and shared similar convictions and status as those whose lands were in the line of fire. The army’s foundation rested on the new National Guard elements, which resembled the organization and structure of the militia system of colonial days. Its already powerful officers assumed additional authority from their closeness to the ministries and high command. This allowed the colonels freedom to exercise the personal over national business and, when necessary, over the municípios. They were the most dangerous to any smooth rollout, asserting themselves into enemy lands, removing cattle without permission, or openly defying Almeida’s ministry. Nevertheless, there was a mea-
sure of consensus and a tolerance for the colonels as they skirted authority, as long as there was an abundance of cattle (AHRGS, CV-5055, Gomes, 11 de novembro de 1839).

Declaring a separate state with some of the accouterments of other Platine governments, the rebels went about their business seeking alliances and trade, and put forth many of their followers into new military roles. There was an explosion in the number of officers and promotions into higher grades. A robust number of over confident officers stood ready to turn what were, only a few short years ago, poorly organized militia into crack professional troops. But they were too steeped in the same tactics and loose structures of command to overcome the traditions and customs of gaucho horse armies. Still, for Rio, this was not simply another revolt, but one led by experienced white officers holding tri-color flags over international fault lines. Set within the cauldron of other Platine revolutions and the significant disturbances going on elsewhere in the Empire, Rio had much to lose from the Farroupilha. Separation was now a fact, a mortal challenge to Brazil itself. Rio only saw the Farrapos behaving as a sovereign nation, which, despite many setbacks and limited resources, could nevertheless mount sizeable mobile forces seemingly supplied with endless numbers of fresh horses.

One revolutionary stood out from all the others at Piratini, Domingos José de Almeida, perhaps the only charqueador-merchant to side with the Farrapos. A native of Minas Gerais, with apparently some black heritage, he married into the local riograndense ranching Barcellos family. A progressive businessman, he advocated for Pelotas’ development. He sought new techniques for his plant and was an early investor in the first steam driven boat on the Patos Lagoon, named “Liberal” after his politics. A holder of over 80 slaves and owner of an important industrial house, Almeida had more in common with the interior ranchers who tilted toward Brazil’s reformers, for he, too, had heavy debts to pay and felt the sting of being an outsider in the largely Luso-charqueador community, but within the ranching elite, he held a place of honor as one of the early plotters and republican visionaries.

Those within leadership roles saw him as financially successful and the best prepared to manage the Revolution’s ledgers. Almost single handedly he helped bankroll the insurgency serving as its de facto treasurer before there was an actual post. From the outset, though, there were serious limits to his ability to act on a grander scale, pressured by his own colonels and geographically restricted inside the Campanha. Yet, Almeida developed influence beyond any other except those colonels and generals in the highest tier of the army. His optimism inspired the Revolution’s foun-
dational ideology, and his *O Povo* co-editor, the Young Italian follower Luigi Rossetti, provided a broader intellectual context. Almeida, too, issued proclamations usually reserved for the republic’s president or one of its respected commanders (*O POVO*, 20 ago., 1839). Restraints on his authority went virtually unchallenged until the rise of his hated rival Antonio Vicente da Fontoura, who supplanted him in 1842. Until then, few dared to encroach on his powers or interfere with his unofficial business activities in Montevideo, which centered on protecting his skilled *charqueada* slaves from the fighting in Rio Grande do Sul, a clear demonstration of casual dishonesty and anti-revolutionary behavior shared by few others.

Throughout the War, *Farrapo* armies looked like ragged beggars, even after setting up their new government. An army required provisions, pay, and arms, and Almeida knew confiscation was the only way to accomplish this. His fingerprints were all over the first confiscation decree of November 11, although issued by José Pinheiro de Ulhoa Cintra (*O POVO*, 27 out., 1838). Almeida and especially Fontoura, who followed him, were opposed to promiscuous unauthorized destruction. Still the decree did create a convenient path for all kinds of manipulation, from outright theft to swindling, and allowed the commanders and big ranchers to collude amongst themselves while establishing understandings with Almeida and the state. While simple and direct, the decree was alarming in its scope as it covered all enemy property within the territory of the breakaway state. Virtually every conceivable piece of enemy property from slaves to utensils was up for auction.

In the excitement of passing their own law for the first time which, generally for good measure, highlighted the overbearing despotism of the enemy, Almeida on the very next day, November 12, issued a decree attacking the “*Capitalistas*“ of the port towns for supporting with their loans retrograde Brazilian forces operating in the province (*O POVO*, 27 out., 1838). He undoubtedly took pleasure in taking away any expectation of eventual repayment from *Farrapo* coffers for these loans to the most disloyal *riograndenses*, the merchant-*charqueadores*. With both sides swapping vicious charges, the Empire had ready-made propaganda in the sedition and banditry of the southerners wrapped up in confiscation. In an upside down sort of way, *Farrapos* boasted about confiscation which set them apart from the racial rampages going on in the northern provinces. They prided themselves by saying: “Não somos huma horda de salteadores, para dar-se a mesma identidade entre a questao Rio-Grandenses, e a dos Cabanos de Panelas de Miranda, e Jacuipe. Aqui o direito de propriedade he garantido, e os bens dos próprios dissidentes são respeitados” (*O POVO*, 10 nov. 1838; 27 out., 1838; 12 nov., 1836). While not specified in the decree, the rebels employed a mechanism for the return
of seized land, “benignly” taken, in their words, back to the original owners if they swore allegiance to the state; but, seemed less inclined to so with their slaves. (O POVO, 14 mar., 1840; 9 jan., 1839). Such restoration usually required the backing of an important rebel leader. (O POVO, 25 set., 1839).

In directing the Revolution, the men of Piratini had the habits and advantages of command learned in war, ranching, and as masters over slaves, believing that their orders would be observed. They wanted a workable state but were at odds with this outcome being directly or indirectly beneficiaries of confiscation. Under confiscation, commissions were set up in each municipality, composed of the local political elite: municipal judge, the municipal president, chief of police, justice of the peace, and the collectors of customs and taxes. They were tasked to set up a registry of dissident ranches for auction. Once in session, the board would vote by simple majority. Enemy properties auctioned off to the highest bidders were limited in time to a few years as temporary rentals. All proceeds were to go to the treasury. Unleased cattle on enemy property were directly subject to Almeida’s instruction to be used by local authorities for payments of state obligations usually to foreign commercial traders and major Montevideo cattle merchants (O POVO, 26 jan., 1839). Almeida knew them all. Of course, unauthorized land occupations by those considered *Farrapos* were a constant problem for the commissions and municipal authorities (O POVO, jan., 1839). The enemy was defined as any Brazilian from either inside or outside the province: “…oculta ou abertamente por qualquer modo tem hostilizado a causa da Independência, ou que existam nas Praças ocupadas pelo inimigo….” (O POVO, 27 out., 1838; DECRETO, 11 nov., 1836).

Even before the issuance of the first decree, Loyalist ranchers fled their properties for Porto Alegre or across into Uruguay, and some to Rio, leaving behind, when able, their trusted *capataz* to protect what they could (AHRGS, CV-5053, Gomes, 28 de setembro de 1839). As expected, however, participation was often predetermined and funds never reached the treasury. One of the largest prizes was the feudal *estância* of *música*, owned by the Loyalist Jose Francisco Viera Braga, who later became the *Barão de Piratini*. It seemed to have a limitless number of head. Duarte Silveira Gomes rented it for a handsome sum of 4 contos, which never appeared in the Treasury although his debt was registered in the books (AHRGS, CV-4558, Fontoura, [documento incompleto]). Gomes was considered one of the most extreme of the revolutionaries, often mentioned in the same breath as the notorious war minister José Mariano de Mattos (PUBLICACÕES DO ARQUIVO NACIONAL, v. 29, 1933, p. 381-2). He was a close confidant of Almeida, a kind of fixer, who often, when asked, handed out money to businessmen and colonels. Asking for commission reports and copies was part of the lan-
language and structure of Almeida’s orders, but the accuracy and tabulation were subject to doubt. Simple problems also affected functionaries’ bookkeeping, such as paper supplies, to enemy attacks, like the one on the then capital at Caçapava that destroyed important records. Almeida and others never assumed that dependable rental fees would spontaneously come into being nor would the republican patriots completely support it. He knew he had set up a system of patronage based on theft, a feature of the regime not its goal, to keep the Revolution running. Of course, Almeida, the commissions, and less often the colonels tried to correct challenges of unauthorized land occupations, construed as seditious threats to their authority, more so than the law (O POVO, 26 jan. 1839).

Now as arbiters of personal and state wealth, those with the closest personal relationships could engage more freely in cronyism. Whenever politically desirable, Almeida circumvented the commissions to hold back choice properties from auction, presenting them to colonels or important families (AHRGS, CV-5051; 5052, Gomes, 4 and 22 de maio de 1839). Operating in what was a mostly cashless society, ranchers converted part of the confiscated herd into financial instruments to cover expenses and loans. Everyone was well aware of the size and composition of herds of their once neighbors. The mere mention of the rancher’s family name or the name of the ranch told the story of its worth. Warm correspondence with his ministry hints at the close relationships confiscation touched off as he worked with them to pursue advantageous opportunities for certain individuals as well as the state. Having the blessing of an Almeida or a Bento Gonçalves improved access and provided cover for ranchers anxious to enlarge their herds. Commissioners thought of themselves as men of public goodwill, Almeida knew, as in his own life, civic duty was not inseparable from one’s own interests and family. For all their apparent solidarity Almeida, the ranchers and colonels were not always on the same page over the justice of their cause and where the Revolution was headed.

Many new opportunities opened up to Almeida for opaque insider deals, sheltered from scrutiny by a tangle of secrecy, family, and revolutionary mismanagement. Such arrangements transformed and elevated potential wealth into legal status and revolutionary dignity as they increased Almeida’s influence to a point where it “...excedido a toda a sorte de imoralidade, dispensando coisas que talvez nem mesmo V. Exa. (Almeida) o pudesse fazer....”( O POVO, nov., 1838; AHRGS, CV-4816, Fontoura, 16 de fevereiro de 1840). That the collectoria officials reported directly to Almeida, who had an important say in their appointments, gave him a bit of extra weight in local decision making. Expectantly, there was a considerable time lag before some commissions were up and running, two years, for instance for Caçapava.
However this did not halt giving patriotic gifts of prized property. If a commission shut down for unknown reasons, Almeida pushed them to reopen their work, especially if it concerned the land desires of prominent officers, in one case General João Antônio da Silveira, or in another to reward relatives of Onofre Pires da Silveira (O POVO, 1 dez., 1838; AHRGS, CV 3545, Onofre Pires da Silveira, 19 de dezembro de 1838). Here he could order the commission of São Borja, really the Ribeiros, to assist in “...arrolamento da fazenda do S. Vicente, o Coronel Joao Antonio da Silveira em concorrência com os outros licitantes” (LEITMAN, 2008, p. 149). João Antônio, as a top commander, unrestrained on his own, cut through over lapping jurisdictions to satisfy his troops or his own ranching interests. Through his wife, he also had close family ties to Bento Gonçalves. João Antônio moved good-sized herds to Montevideo, carefully employing trusted drovers from his own brigade as insurance against Legalists, marauders, and Orientals. These drives were often a mixture of state and private business, something Almeida knew much about. In one extraordinary instance, Almeida approved a rental as a payoff to an Oriental lieutenant-colonel who was assisting in a delicate riograndense diplomatic mission to Paraguay (O POVO, 11 maio, 1839).

The second confiscation decree issued on April 5, 1837 and signed by Vicente Lucas de Oliveira extended confiscations to Loyalist ranches inside the Banda Oriental and gave additional time for proprietors to make their case against expropriation. Projecting the decree beyond the border confirmed the militarist nature of the Republic. In areas north of the Rio Negro, there were over a thousand large satellite riograndense ranches which, in war, served as havens and resupply depots. Importantly, this zone was a source for fresh horses, an essential element for cavalries where each man ideally had a string of 5 to 6 mounts. Also, the decree forbade republicans from individually, or in syndicates, to traffic in the buying, selling, or the re-renting of properties they had won in bidding. In theory, any and all enemy property was state property. Confiscation equaled survival and was akin to the famous Farrapo dictum that extraordinary measures were justified when the nation’s fate was at stake. Resorting to confiscation hardly added to the Revolution’s luster, but it provided revenue streams and undermined enemy pastures beyond the border where Legalist sentiments were strong, just enough to maintain the existing military standoff, manage a bare bones government, and foster loyalty.

Rio Grande’s history as a land of smugglers, contrabandists, and schemers was a rehearsal of what took place after 1836, one that called out for a talented bureaucracy to support policies of unified compliance. Avoiding established law and authorities through bribes, embezzlement, fraud, and theft continued, but this time in a more organized manner with
government approval and support. This was the kind of war where horse armies lived off the land, taking what was not nailed down, waiting in desperation for assistance from Almeida’s *Trem de Guerra* or treasury funds. Colonels claimed the right to raid their own customs houses in order to preserve their forces. Despite the limitations and frustrations imposed on Almeida by the colonels who represented decades of entrenched frontier attitudes, which centered on the expansion of their properties, confiscation propped up the battle ahead and enriched a select few. One such *farrapo* was Colonel Onofre Pires da Silveira Canto, following the destruction of the Royalists at Rio Pardo, the rebel’s most spectacular victory in the War, in April of 1838. One witness reported that the celebrated cousin of Bento Gonçalves created his own commission on the spot to “...*arrecadar fazendas*” enabling him to take whatever he wanted. To avoid being known as a “saqueador,” he “...passava recibo citando o nome de Bento Manuel[Ribeiro], quem lhe tinha ordendo para aquella commissao.” (LEITMAN, 2008, p. 149).

Cattle from rented lands or those held by the state were rounded up, driven to Montevideo to liquidate Uruguayan debts. These debts were prioritized, not only by past due dates, but for those associated with the most powerful Uruguayan merchants, realizing that one day the war would end, but personal business relationships would not. To carry out such debt payments, the most important higher ups, colonels and generals, were directed to specific ranches to select the appropriate number of head (AHRGS, CV-4856, Fontoura, 7 de junho de 1842). They would then add these to enlarge their own drives. Almeida, too, mixed state and personal affairs better than anyone, but nevertheless, occasionally, called into question army commanders “...*porém como os indivíduos do exército não tem querido acintemente ajudar por ser coisa ordenada pelo Governo...*” There was no irony in chiding others for engaging in similar types of behavior which defined him. His ministry naturally sought excuses to choke off indignation for producing insufficient funds. He was cautious never to name specific colonels, but blamed the collective. Others in his sights, beyond the retrograde Legalists, were bandits whom he was unafraid to name.

For the most part, Almeida, from 1836 to 1840, oversaw enough properties and cattle to keep the Revolution going. He knew in advance estancieiro desires and who would win control. Somehow he and the treasury always managed to have funds, generally not what his many solicitors needed, which demonstrated his power and a sincere interest in their problems. At first the rebels would depend upon Piratini’s far-flung tax collection stations, funds from rentals of seized estancias, and sales from large cattle drives to Uruguayan saladeros. Though voluntary contributions in the form of large herds were uncommon, one patriotic rancher donated 1500
novilhos; but most often the lots were less than 50 and the cattle went to feed soldiers (O POVO, 26 fev., 1840). Few in the leadership believed the decrees would bolster public morality and act in the state’s interest, rather “…teve mais em vistas assegurar os bens dos herdeiros inocentes dos imigos da causa, do que mesmo o próprio interesse do Estado.” As months passed into years, there was a growing sense of alienation and suspicions about loyalty “…em menos cabo da lei e da honra, apadrinhar afilhados, eliminando até da lista de bens para serem consumidos pela má fé e venalidade desses hipercriticas que se inculcam suplicantes protetores das famílias dos dissidentes (AHRGS, CV-4821, Fontoura, 15 de fevereiro de 1840).

In practice, Almeida had great latitude over the funds that trickled into the treasury, mainly from the collectorias, which had responsibility over duties, taxes, and rental property monies, but he was unable to oversee the collectorias in remote places (FLORES, 1985, p. 139-142). He had little choice but to rely on their honesty and competence. There was no one collectoria system but a hodgepodge of ad hoc arrangements open to charges of self-interest. The agents, though, worried little felt of being forced out of these choice paid positions. There were upwards of 23 collectorias outside the Imperial held lagoon zone, staffed by 400 collectors, clerks, and guards. Alegrete, (IBID, p. 139-142), S. Victoria, Bagé and S. Borja were the best revenue producers, exceeding the total receipts of all the others (O POVO, 11 mar., 1840; 17 mar., 1840). Naturally other problems arose out of the province’s vast geography, the riograndense appetite for smuggling, and the shifting war. When rebels and assorted contrabandists were dishonoring their own siege of Porto Alegre with small boats on the Guaíba, Cahy, and Sinos rivers, Almeida attempted to divert them to established collectorias where at least the Revolution could profit alittle (O POVO, 24 ago., 1839). Some collectorias operated without clerks, with just the collector in charge, and those who were understaffed especially with customs guards, and oversaw a bewildering array of internal duties, were expected to come up short. For example, Triunfo’s several extensive districts operated independently, its guards subordinate to more local officials rather than the principal collector up in Triunfo. In areas rife with contrabandists, poorly patrolled, and without clear lines of authority, collectorias required strong bureaucratic intervention to insure a proper relationship between revenue, taxation inequities, and civilian fairness. Rio Pardo by 1842 had none, with security issues about roving gangs the major concern (AHRGS, CV-4783, Fontoura, 22 de outubro de 1837).

To restore authority over collectorias in far off districts, Almeida needed to negotiate with commanders and, in the process, at least in the important frontier zone of the Alegrete, not reverse the Revolution. Alegrete
straddled the frontier and was home to the mercurial cavalry general Bento Manuel Ribeiro. He had left the *Farrapos* in the past and could presumably do so again. Almeida needed exceptional qualities of tact and a pragmatic understanding of the general to oblige his ego and appetite. With his special attachment to Guarani warriors, Bento Manuel was, in reality, lord over the Jarau, courted by Uruguayan caudillos, Legalists, and wary *Farrapos*, like the other Bento. As a demonstration of this influence, *Farrapos* provided him with rent-free properties and gave him choice commands. Later Caxias, too, showed how influential he was, defending his promotion to brigadier to a fearful Rio when he turned again. Considered the War’s best tactical fighter by all accounts, Almeida, too, was not immune to his outsized influence. Almeida and the state could not prevail against the independent desires of the power brokers of Alegrete. The only way to perpetuate the notion of the state’s legitimacy was to bend before Bento Manuel and his brother, a colonel, who headed the important *collectoria* of São Borja (O POVO, 10 nov., 1838; 8 jun., 1839). The best way to outmaneuver Legalists was to secure both brothers’ efforts on behalf of the state rather than against the state. (O POVO, 8 jun., 1839). Almeida’s actions were accountable to his own government including those who wanted nothing to do with turncoats, yet he knew he had, to some degree, take care of the colonels first and himself second.

Those on the other side, even the most extreme of *Farrapo* enemies, importantly held certain protections. They were not absurdly indiscriminate. In sparsely settled areas, the land, even if much if it lay unused, was nevertheless formally claimed (CHASTEEN, 1991). One had to take into account big land owners, many with multiple properties, who were always preparing to return. Some were opposing military figures who carried more weight than marginalized *Farrapos*. Respect for the most powerful transcended party, and at times the War. Sebastião Barreto Pereira Pinto, the most despised Loyalist commander at the War’s outset, did not have all of his properties immediately taken away. Powerful enemies invoked implied special prerogatives related to fears of future retribution and class affiliation. While six thousand head known to be on his *Contrato estância* mysteriously evaporated, most of his land sand herds remained intact. *Farrapos* waited several more years to pillage his other well-known ranches. His were not the only *estancias* under scrutiny (AHRGS, CV-4326 and CV-4327, Joaquim Pereira Fagundes 27 de fevereiro de 1841 and 16 de marzo de 1841). José Manuel de Leão tried to bring several untouched ranchers to Almeida’s attention, “...de nossos inimigos que não tem aparecido em hasta pública,” who claimed to be republicans, but were not; unlike Sebastião Barreto, who actively fought against there bels. Leão went on further to name names
The Art and Mastery of Confiscation: Brazil’s Farroupilha, 1835-1845

(LEITMAN, 2008; AHRGS, CV-524, Almeida, 6 de outubro de 1841; AHRGS, CV-5383, 24 de abril de 1839).

Almeida, hoping to make land leasing more enticing in 1838, while adding to the Republic’s coffers, approved a decree encouraging cattle drives to enemy charqueadas through the Passo dos Canudos on the São Gonçalo. This included expropriated cattle from Uruguay, if properly branded, registered, and having paid a head tax (O POVO, jan., 1838; 1 fev., 1840). Drives to Montevideo were in jeopardy, subject to the uncertainties of the Guerra Grande (1839-1852), a civil war between two powerful rival caudillos whom riograndenses knew all too well. To avoid rancher discontent, Almeida promoted trading with the enemy, a major policy shift but one that legitimized the two way commerce already in place. The rebels had hoped with the Revolution to change their indebted relationship to the great merchant-charqueadores, but were forced in the end to tactically deviate. By legally opening up trade, Almeida tried regulate un official rebel commerce, collect duties, and reassert his office; and the Legalists kept their charqueadas running with the uninterrupted flow of cattle. The Legalist provincial president fought against this illegal trade, trying to choke off illegal goods into the Campanha. Riograndenses at the upper rungs of society, no matter party affiliation or on what side of the revolutionary divide, knew the value of moderation and what was out of their immediate control. Trafficking with the enemy was preferable to diminishing returns. At work in these relationships and accommodations were class affiliations, the recognition of a highly integrated economy, and the necessity of white cohesion within a mostly rural world which relied on slavery. For all the hyperbole contained in O Povo about independence, charque’s only market was a greater Brazil, and the province’s dependence on Brazilian slavery, materially and ideologically, reinforced their own economic future. This was the very heart of Farrapo federalism. This economic sentiment reached across the border to rebel satellite ranches in the Banda Oriental. They were in the midst of republican abolitionism in Uruguay, as was Almeida, who had sent his prized skilled slaves there now in the early 1840s, consumed in bringing them back across the frontier into the relative safety of the Farroupilha. There was no shame in asking Fontoura’s help in finding and protecting his slaves involved in erva production (AHRGS, CV-4825, Fontoura, 3 de maio de 1840).

The actual disposition of lands under confiscation happened rather quickly, within two years or so, but cattle removal went on longer, in somewhat orderly, if irregular ways, until about 1840. Generally, rebel ranchers knew which Loyalist ranches were best, and moved in, with or without the special commission’s auctions, others asked for Almeida to intercede (AHRGS, CV-5055, Gomes, 11 de novembro de 1839). Most demonstrated
caution and a responsible attachment to the land. By 1840 discussions and conflicts over confiscation had all but disappeared in _O Povo_, but it was becoming apparent to a few that confiscation was changing, turning out disastrously unsound, and, perhaps, unsustainable. Fontoura was the first to see, and more importantly believe, that he was irreproachably right, that Almeida’s confiscation policy had spun out of control. As the nation’s police chief, he wrote to all the justices of the peace in early 1840, that “...muitos bens dos dissidents da causa da Republica existem em complete abandono e outros arrancados por falsos patriotas que em prejuizo da Nacao e de seus legitimos propietarios se arrogam a si pretextando dívidas imaginarias....” (AHRGS, CV-4821, Fontoura, 15 de fevereiro de 1840). State cattle roundups were not as ambitious in their sweep as in the past, but drives continued. Ranchers who once abided to rental terms and followed conventional, unwritten range wisdom limiting them from extracting no more than ten percent of their herds for _charqueada_ production, were under increased pressure to change operational methods. In the recent past, they knew they could gain more from older, better, fattened head (BELL, 1998, p. 54). The French traveler Auguste de Saint - Hilaire observed, in the early 1820s, how carefully ranchers followed the one-tenth rule before sending them to market. To capture the most profit out of a steer, ranchers normally waited for at least 4 years. It took that time or longer to fatten a steer which, in terms of production, was also better suited to the salting process, as well as added to larger hide size. Even if pressed by wartime conditions to double this percentage, the most venal of enterprising speculators knew they would quickly destroy breeding capacity (AHRGS, CV-4541, Joao Jose Victorica, 20 de janeiro de 1842). The same was true for mares, which gained the protection of the government from being slaughtered solely for their hides (O POVO, 14 dez., 1839). The _Farrapos_ required additional, well rested mounts, to conduct guerilla plains warfare that killed horses in large numbers. As an example of fiscal competence, Almeida and later Fontoura were careful to touch only seasonal surpluses (O POVO, 23 jan., 1839). Usually, calves were not used to pay debts (AHRGS, CV-4542, Fontoura, 19 de janeiro de 1842). The quick removal of herds would only momentarily lift revenue but would damage the out years by lowering reproduction. They carefully discriminated in their orders between _rezes de criar_ and _rezes de corte_ (O POVO, 10 nov., 1838; AHRGS, CV-4584, Fontoura, 18 de fevereiro de 1842). Once herd size was lost _estancieiros_ knew the difficulties and time it would take to develop strong new ones. Fontoura knew they were in the middle of a ranching crisis of an unprecedented scale, and tried to warn Almeida: “Tenho visto com espanto os arrolamentos dos bens dos dissidentes feitos o ano passado, os quais não servem para atestar a rapidez com que fortunas regulares tem desaparecido, outras reduzidas a..."
metade e isto em pouco mais de um ano” (AHRGS, CV-4816, Fontoura, 16 de fevereiro de 1840).

Confiscation pleased the colonels and other revolutionary ranchers, but fell short in filling Almeida’s treasury. He admitted as much in the beginning of 1839 with the suspension of payments to individuals who privately aided the Revolution before establishing the government in 1836; a self-inflicted economic burden placed upon himself (O POVO, 16 jan., 1839). But unlike others, he had multiple ways to financially recover. Desperate for savings, the small number of government bureaucrats had their salaries slashed, and any looted objects finding their way into the Trem de Guerra would be auctioned off in the name of the state instead of being held and redirected to military use (O POVO, 16 jan., 1839). This was an extraordinary admission of the loss of revolutionary confidence, paralleling the famous disparaging comment of the Imperial judge Tristão de Alencar Araripe, that the rebel government was little more than a few ox carts moving slowly around the Campanha in search of a capital. Three days later another decree, this time from the ministry of war, showed how painful the situation had become. Rather than dipping into their pool of slaves, the government, desperate for new recruits, was now in the hunt for capable white males as young as 14 years old, claiming as justification Loyalist use of older men and those as young as ten (O POVO, 16 jan., 1839).

By 1840 the Revolution was at the mercy of impossible expectations, presupposed to a situation that would only become worse. Unsupervised cattle drives and the smuggling of hides to Montevideo, fueled by commanders’ promissory notes to merchants and traders, further restricted Almeida’s treasury from building surpluses. He knew the Uruguayans were gouging the precarious new state. Hope, too, failed for a decisive military victory, which could lead to untapped foreign resources or open up revenue producing ports. The recent breakout, expeditionary adventure into Santa Catarina, intended to leapfrog the entrenched Imperial forces in the lagoon zone, ended in full retreat (O POVO, 29 maio, 1839). The inability to overcome Rio’s armies and naval forces was more an indictment of their predicament than a celebration of their mastery of guerilla plains warfare. Without alternatives, confiscation continued on. At one point, during a rare session of the rebel Conselho de Procuradores Gerais, the councilors advised the ministers to amortize the Farrapo national debt through the sale or rental of all dissident lands, especially those of known Portuguese (O POVO, 29 maio, 1839). Instead of municipio commissions handling land rentals, a three-person board would take its place. In one debate there was an effort to place all seized properties under the state, a proposal that could never be enforced. Another again showing collapse of the system, occurred related to the erva
lands. In a radical idea, Fontoura, surveying the level of dishonesty amongst his own functionaries was prepared to contract dissident families in the management of important *erva* lands (AHRGS, CV-4816, Fontoura 15 de fevereiro de 1840). *Erva* had become a form of currency and pay for soldiers (AHRGS, CV-4979, Franco, 20 de abril de 1841). Incredibly, Legalists would receive part of the production.

For *Farrapo* commanders, raiding in the 1840s was not part of the normal way of life, though many a forefather had built family fortunes on taking lands and herds from others. Certainly there would always be some who broke the rules, unable to contain a slight or grave incident. Gripped by prudence not previously in evidence in borderland operations of cattle raiding, land occupation, and settling disputes by force, confiscation was a simple more orderly way to take revenge and extend ranching influence within *patrias*. Rebel ranching families, commissions, and commanders were all, too some extent, interested in reshuffling enemy *estancias* by expelling Legalist owners, bringing in friends and relations to administer them. Given the circumstances, confiscation was executed, at times defensively and pragmatically, as the only available remedy to sustain war and make a little cash on the side. Ideally, the colonels wanted a government in which they and their *patrias* were paramount, yet with a collective presence to negotiate with foreign powers, including Brazil, which called what was taking place in the countryside “…*patrimônio dessa phantastica República de Piratini*” run by *caudilhos* and bandits (*O POVO*, 14 nov., 1838). While it brought greater regional autonomy, confiscation was fragile, unstable, and unsuitable for the building of a lasting state, by keeping it decentralized into multiple power centers, expressed in the activities of the *patria* and its colonels. A sensible solution in 1836, confiscation was flagrant evidence of the disorder to come in the 1840s.

An untimely sequence of environmental disasters inflicted upon the *Campanhas* ped up the decline already taking place, a result of the accumulated drives totaling hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of expropriated and non-expropriated cattle. Ineluctably, each drive led to the next until the *Farrapos* were incapable of stopping themselves or defending themselves from ravages of nature. Range misery came in the suffering of high levels of epizootic and tick infestations, accompanied by an unusually severe drought in 1840, followed by heavy rains in the winter of 1842 (BELL, 1998, p. 55-57). With winter pastures in jeopardy, one solution was to halt the drives to Montevideo, strip the cattle of their hides to cart away, or go after calves on rented and unrented lands, shattering any image of responsible ranching (AHRGS, CV-4640, Fontoura, 7 de junho de 1842). These environmental issues triggered additional unrest within *Farrapo* quarters,
and played into Caxias’ plans for internal dissension. Environmental stress magnified resentments over who was still receiving rewards and who was not, opened many to Caxias’ amnesty program, or reduced rebel ranks. The calling and assembly at Alegrete (1842-1843) coincided with the stony truths about the damage taking place in the Campanha, decreasing any opportunity to recover confidence in and sanctify the revolutionary spirit with a constitution, or restore the colonels’ dominance. Unfortunately, the richest fountain of revenues was drying up and was about to be siphoned off further by the punishing couraços, which sent a powerful message to the ranchers that both constitutionalism and confiscation were dead, in effect licensed brigandage had given way to utter lawlessness (AHRGS, CV-4545, Fontoura 20 de janeiro de 1842; CV-4557, Fontoura, 8 de fevereiro de 1842).

The Farrapos were stuck in a desperate rush to gather up all available resources by the close of the Constitutional Convention in 1843. Caxias’ mixed forces of Legalists and professional soldiers from the provinces were entering the Campanha, and Oribe’s encirclement of Montevideo cut them off from supplies, forcing some Farrapo elements to take extreme economic measures, the infamous couraços: the widespread slaughtering of cattle just for hides. It was easier to strip cattle and place the hides in carts to smuggle out of the Campanha than to assemble drives which were more visible and open to attack by forces involved in the Guerra Grande and Farroupilha. Herd extraction and depopulation had already reached a critical stage. Now with national authority at risk, the violent, un controllable couraços exploded across the borderlands, coinciding with changes in the government. Fontoura replaced Almeida as treasury minister. For Fontoura, the “malditas couraços” exposed the Revolution to what it had become (AHRGS, CV-4554, 20 de janeiro de 1842). Such episodes existed before and during the War by those considered bandits, not established ranchers (O POVO, 2 out., 1839; 9 out., 1839; AHRGS, CV-4589, Fontoura, 18 de fevereiro de 1842).

According to Fontoura, the couraços were the source of all the evils associated with Bento Gonçalves and Mattos, challenging the social order and the higher standards the republicans had once seen in themselves, and threw into question the legitimacy of the revolution. As Fontoura said “... arrendatários das fazendas dos dissidentes...cuidam mais em destruir que conserver tais bens, resultando de tão mesquinho Sistema não só o aniquilamento de grandes fazendas como a nenhuma exatidão no pagamento dos devidos arrendamentos o que se comprometeram.....”(AHRGS, CV-4670, Fontoura, 26 de julho de 1842). He pictured a landscape of carcasses stripped to the bone, similar to the “... desolado terra dos tempos de Artigas,” if they continued (AHRGS, CV-4553, Fontoura, 20 de janeiro de 1842). He accused his predecessor of fomenting this scandalous activity and colluding with corruption activities.” Além de outras
medidas tomadas pela repartição da Fazenda apareceu (antes de minha posse) a antieconômica, immoral e arbitrária autorizando as courações por conta do Estado” AHRGS, CV-4553, Fontoura, 20 de janeiro de 1842). He could not stop them by going to the chiefs of police or justices of the peace not knowing if the districts even had any. Cattle drives supported by planning and osten-sible licensing from the government had purpose; but confiscation which fostered the courações’ blind, vindictive, unsanctioned raids destroyed what remained of rebel unity and caused diplomatic harm when carried into Uruguay. Delegates, acknowledging the need for better management of grassland resources, pushed proposals and held discussions on how to con-trol abuses rising from the war and its confiscation practices. However, the time for patriotic sacrifice and unanimity had already passed them by.

Fontoura’s career was the story of frontier ambition. His ascendancy within Farrapo ranks was not risk free, starting back in 1836. He had an un-questionable ability to fit in and please his higher-ups. With the escalating scope of the War and his administrative day-to-day responsibilities as police chief, district customs collector, and as the Republic’s highest recruitment officer, he grew in his role. Moving up, he became more assertive and daring, and eventually led the political oppo-sition against the Revolution’s original conspirators. Chronic rheumatism contributed to his bleak outlook and general despondency on where the rebellion was headed. Nevertheless, he remained cautious, avoiding openly tangling with rebel leadership, especially Almeida. Most of his furies and criticism remained hidden inside his diary. Like most Farrapos, he was re-luctant to quarrel in public, holding back, like everyone else, in order to stay connected to Almeida’s capricious treasury, which still wielded whatever fi-nancial power there was. Once, to Bento Gonçalves, he railed against Almei-da’s corrupt legacy that he had inherited, but nothing came of it (AHRGS, CV- 4754; FONTOURA, 23 agos., 1842). Instead, Fontoura pursued smaller fish and spoke in broad terms about fiscal dysfunction. In fact, he praised Almeida’s patriotism and love for the American cause and his commitment to ending ranchers’ hatred for the circulation of false copper coinage, for which they blamed Rio.

With the exception of the confiscation decrees, the Republic produ-ced no significant transfers of economic or social power within the terri-tories under their control. In the social realm, differences of political con-viction were no match for estanceiro social solidarity. But in the economic realm, confiscation disruptions proved temporary; and, during the Revolu-tion, all estanceiros had to be pleased with Almeida’s war on false currency. The presence of false copper coin rendered Rio Grande a de facto cashless society, increasing dependency on the cattle trade with its problematic no-
tes. Cattle trading was the alternative to hard currency. As the police chief in the districts he covered, Fontoura saw total “...desleixo, tudo abandono!” with government measures ignored (AHRGS, CV-4796, 21 de junho de 1839). Contraband was rife, but worse, still, were the representatives of the state who allowed all sorts of fiscal evasions to take place, including false purchase bills. He had a special ire for foreign traders, coming down hard on them as unwanted competitors, for he, too, once owned a commercial house. The business of war was to acquire needed arms, supplies, and care for the wounded and families of the fallen, not to make war the business for the dozens upon dozens of foreigners crisscrossing the Campanha in their carts loaded with merchandise. He knew that confiscation and couraças would eventually end on their own, but the rebel government, or what remained of it, still had to demonstrate its respect for private property to Caxias, the province’s recently named Imperial president and commander-in-chief, or it would expose the true character of their assault on Brazilian constitutionalism, the integrity of the Empire, and the person of Pedro II, to whom they would have to swear allegiance. Peace and reparations demanded it. Fontoura and the political minority he headed had come to the conclusion that Bento Gonçalves had become more dictatorial than ever, and that his brand of republicanism was little more than a surrogate for provincial autonomy, especially as it related to the use of and rights of private property (SILVA, 2010, p. 107). Government interference only led to increased corruption and an unequal distribution of the little that remained to be taken. Some wondered whether the military was more committed to preserving the conflict in order to perpetuate couraças and the property invasions that came with it.

Although Bento Gonçalves desired more authority, he never envisioned himself as a Brazilian imitator of the Spanish-styled caudillos. Certainly, he knew how to exercise power. Had he chosen to do so, he could have remained in the presidency. But he bowed out, claiming ill health, leaving the presidency to an elderly José Gomes de Vasconcellos Jardim. A few days later, his closest ally, Netto, handed over supreme command to David Canabarro. Though Netto and Bento Goncalves would continue to fight Imperial forces across the Campanha, they had given over titles, command, and authority to others. They could have continued to cling to the frontier, but they knew Caxias outnumbered and outgunned them. The broken up Farrapo armies, even when recombined as in the case of Ponche Verde in 1843, could not drive the Imperial columns back. No matter. Fontoura saw Bento Gonçalves, Almeida, and Mattos as his internal enemies, and blamed them for the Republic’s decline; but he hardly stopped there. Caxias’ progress and plans to divide the rebels with offers of amnesty and covert peace
feelers played into Fontoura’s hands. Broad acceptance of Imperial amnesia and Caxias’ lenient program of pardons was paying off. Soon, even Mat- tos and Almeida would be applicants. For all intents and purposes, by the end of 1843 and early 1844 the *Farrapos* were stateless, with only nominal control over part of the *Campanha*, as more and more territory fell under the control of the Empire. They were reduced to a weak patchwork of munícipios and military groups looking for minimal support under increasing competition for diminished resources. Porous borders still accommodated some rebel needs, but with the *Guerra Grande* inside Uruguay consuming them, too, and with less means of their own, resupply was haphazard and lacking. Wounded politically and eager to show the minority that he had not been stripped of all power or, worse, humiliated, Bento Gonçalves rode away to his small army so that he could benefit from the coming peace that he knew, like Fontoura, was inevitable. He was also talking to Caxias, but was soon sidelined by Canabarro and Fontoura, whom Caxias trusted more.

When the Revolution faltered in 1844 and in early 1845, confiscation laws had already been masterfully molded into hardened negotiating instruments, giving *Farrapos* a semblance of a functioning state when there was none, backed by just enough military resistance for their emissaries to profit even further from the defeat at hand. They asked for Imperial restitution for both themselves and their opponents. They repeatedly suppressed any talk of their own liability, individually, collectively, or as a rebellious province, for debts accrued or other demands, even if they were to lose the War. Moreover, securing debt repayment implied immunity from Imperial prosecution for crimes committed against property and person during the conflict. This remained unalterable to ensure that their own debts would be honored, including those they had caused through confiscation. Rio, and Caxias, too, imagined a swifter, less bloody victory through secret payments and other inducements. Funnelling funds under the table to quiet opposition was not new, having been used recently by Caxias in the northern rebellion, the *Balaida*, in Maranhão (SOUZA, 2008, p. 319). Convinced of their own prowess in extending the War longer and further, if need be, into the complexities of Oriental politics, the *Farrapos* demanded the Empire’s assumption of their internal and external debts. When the *Farrapos* and Imperial representatives discussed peace, both parties knew full well Rio Grande’s value as the key strategic chip in Platine affairs (FLORES, 2004). The rebels artfully extracted an agreement that materially kept them whole, compensated their internal enemy whom they had despoiled, and, if the principals never acknowledged what had taken place at Porongos, the *Farrapos*, with their honor intact, could return as politically acceptable subjects of the Emperor and his defenders in the wars to come.
Whatever their ideological bent, the *Farrapos* were always pragmatists, and Porongos proved no exception. When Canabarro gathered most of the rebel forces at Porongos in October and November of 1844, perhaps fifty percent of his soldiers came from the black lancers and infantry, a result of whites and mestizos melting away back into the countryside. These battle tested *Libertos* were the final stumbling block to peace. Proficient in war, and politicized by the promise of freedom, as conditional as it was, *Libertos* were dangerous to Imperialists and *Farrapo* alike, and both were willing to sacrifice them. Yet, if the rebels had provided all confiscated slaves with full citizenship, and the hope of greater economic and social participation, perhaps, the outcome could have been different. After all, the rebels had an additional 6,000 able-bodied males, whom, according to Colonel Portinho, they held back (PORTINHO, 1990, p. 37). The Porongos massacre was the solution, a contrived encounter set up by Canabarro and Caxias. The unarméd black infantry paid the heaviest price. Porongos demonstrated that freedom of any kind was impossible. Over a hundred *Libertos* died in the early morning hours at the hands of Pedro de Abreu’s troops, a few hundred taken prisoner, and others, mostly lancers, escaped. Caxias shipped some survivors turned over to him by Canabarro to Rio to serve as de-facto slaves assigned to menial tasks in the arsenals, forts, and hospitals of the navy (LEITMAN, 2018; CARVALHO, 2011).

Rio, too, particularly fixated on *Farrapo* incorporation of slaves, and understood full well that to keep slavery intact as a national institution, they would have to compensate owners who had been forcibly dispossessed of their slaves as well as other property. Any thought of freedom for ex-slaves involved in rebellion would be a terrible precedent to set. The accord of Ponche Verde (February, 1845) not only provided the illusion that the two governments had engaged in negotiations as equals, but that *Farrapo* fighting, morale, and mettle had pushed the Empire to agree to this demand, removing any stain of humiliation and the damaging effects from developing a lost cause mentality. In an odd way, the misnamed Peace of Ponche Verde was a mix of flattery and thanks for the putting down of weapons, and showed that the *Farrapos*, too, were true Brazilians, subject to the Emperor (FLORES, 2004; SILVA, 2010).

Since 1844, Fontoura had been conspiring with the Empire to dismantle the Revolution he had so ardently championed back in 1835. There existed no internal challenge to confiscation, and the courações terrified the *estanceiro* community to allow Fontoura to willingly play into the hands of the enemy. After the Peace of Ponche Verde, he and Caxias continued to collaborate, paying out the secret funds allocated by Rio to finally seal pacification. It fell to Fontoura to distribute part of the reparations. These
proceedings, like Porongos, were shrouded in secrecy. While there were no public cries of outrage, certain Farrapos claimed they deserved more. Their complaints went to Fontoura and his commission. An unembarrassed Almeida went directly to Canabarro, whom he expected of treason at Porongos, to ask for his help to intercede with Caxias. While Almeida’s detailed recounting of his own personal expenditures on behalf of the War were questionable, his criticisms of Fontoura and his reparation commission made certain that he could expect no reply from Canabarro, who undoubtedly had learned of Almeida’s corruption. If he did not know, Fontoura would have placed those doubts in Caxias’mind anyway. Canabarro never appeared on any list, but other undisclosed monies destined for other ex-Farrapos and perhaps certain Loyalist riograndenses arrived through different channels outside those controlled by Fontoura. Perhaps that is why Bento Gonçalves, for one, thought he was being short changed. Fontoura described Bento Gonçalves’ demands for more as being “o mais infame.” When his requests for ten contos were finally met, the past president-general demanded additional compensation, according to Fontoura. Upon his death, the self-described poorest man in the province died with over fifty slaves on his ranches. Bento Gonçalves was not alone. His friend Bernardo Pires also proved insatiable, as did General Antonio da Silveira, who wanted the retention of his Farrapo rank of general. The monies handed out by Fontoura did not include other secret payments controlled by Caxias and paid out by Rodrigo José de Figueiredo Moreira, perhaps unbeknownst to Fontoura (AHRGS, CV-6000; 6001 Moreira, 7 de outubro de 1850 e relação, 1847-48; SILVA, 2010, 2012).

Privately, to a friend, as the War was closing down, an angry Bento Gonçalves wished to soften his image before proceeding to tear his Farrapo compatriots to ribbons. He was sure that Caxias’ final path to victory had been paved with gold. It would place Bento Gonçalves in a better light among his closest associates if this information ever seeped out. Immediately following Porongos, he had written that military matters were “...ignorados por quem não quisesse ver nem ouvir, ou por quem só quisesse ouvir traidores talvez comprados por o inimigo!!!” (SILVA,1985, p. 256-7). A few months later, after Peace of Ponche Verde, he privately lashed out again about “...estúpido Canabarro and his covarde inimigo Fontoura....” Rio Grande lost the war “....só podíamos perder aparecendo como apareceram os ambiciosos de mando e ouro que ou por verdadeiramente maus ou comprados fizeram com empenho aparecer a desunião entre nós....”(IBID, p. 259-260). Riograndenses always expected that Caxias would be bringing gold and silver from Rio’s war minister to be offered to certain rebel chiefs (SOUZA, 2008). None of the Farrapo chefes expected a ruthless triumph. Quite the opposite, the ex-rebels, according
to the first article of their concession presented to the Baron, called for the ex-secessionists to select the next provincial president. They would vote for Caxias.

Caxias, by now, was well versed in borderland politics and interests, a complicated business to be soothed by favors, money, and his own personal intervention. Coercive force had been insufficient in bringing the rebels to heel. As provincial president, Caxias understood that it was best to resolve reconciliation issues quickly and avoid controversy. Brazil had paid Farrapo debts, started the discussion over borders, reduced riograndense duties on cattle products, and prepared ex-Farrapo military and leadership skills for the wars which were sure to come with the realization that future Brazilian Platine diplomacy required the loyalties of riograndense cavalry. Rio Grande do Sul’s ex-rebels and the Empire masterly rearranged recent wartime reality to cast both sides in a favorable light and harmonize their interests.

Inside the borderland this process went on, too, following the War. Chico Pedro, the victor at Porongos and soon-to-be Barão de Jacuí, showed how easily the ex-rebels mended fences. He rented 18 leagues of pasture between the rivers Quarai and the Arapei from the ex-Farrapo colonel and past deputy to the Alegrete convention, Oliverio José Ortiz. In the recent past, confiscation had provided one of the keys to local autonomists to use as an incentive in the rising political movements of the day, but was no longer the case. Certainly, old hatreds could rise up anew, but riograndenses with Imperial backing tried not to open old wounds. With his objective attained, Caxias and his riograndense Loyalist officers did not exult. In the case of Rio Grande and elsewhere, the Empire was opening up the electoral system to all elites, ensuring reasonable fair practices, emphasizing the dangers of social upheavals to public tranquility and economic well-being, and encouraging expressions of national loyalty. Elections and patronage served as an advance guard toward a more progressive, constitutional monarchy (FRANCO, 2006, p. 18-19; GRAHAM, 1990, p. 72-98).

On one level, the appeal of revolution had been the overthrowing of tyranny, and, at its extreme, the financial domination of Portuguese charqueador capitalists to whom most ranchers owed debts. The Revolution was a means, if successful, to remove them or at least keep them in check from establishing competing ranching enterprises in the borderlands. Awaiting the revolutionaries was the welcome embrace of Americanism of their immediate neighbors. Even after the creation of their state, there were feelings of resignation amongst some rebels. Fanfa had inspired many to carry the revolt into full blown independence; but for others, the loss served as a
chance to reverse course. The rebels were ready to negotiate peace several times during the conflict, but confiscation helped delay it by regulating the relationships among the colonels and the state. As long as the rebel government supported confiscation, and as long as there were pastures and herds, the colonels could look upon Rio with contempt, allowing the long war to go on a little longer.

The Peace of Ponche Verde was more an agreement than a formal peace treaty. Unsigned by Caxias, the Farrapo chiefs who signed the document perhaps resented most the knowledge that they had been used; but if this sentiment existed, they did not express it. Caxias spared them public humiliation with his careful use and editing of the Decreto de 18 de dezembro de 1844 and the Instruções Reservadas of the same date. On March 1, 1845, officially and in the name of the Emperor, he proclaimed the War’s end without any utterance of amnesty. Doubtless, any Farrapo pain gave the victorious riograndense Loyalists some measure of satisfaction. Backed by the power and funds commensurate with his task, Caxias expertly brought pacification along. His administration was orderly and relatively disinterested when it came to the past contending parties in the province. However, pacification was not perfect.

Below the surface, hatreds and rivalries percolated, sometimes playing out in the political arena or through intermittent lawsuits and provincial legislation. Caxias, though, showed little difficulty in defining his beliefs. Power and order were at the center of his thoughts and action. Overall, the Farrapo chiefs respected the outcome designed by Caxias, except for, perhaps, Netto, who went into a short, self-imposed exile into the Banda Oriental. Caxias’ restraint, the cash that was handed out, and above all a shared fear of social violence kept passions under control. Even as time passed, minimal grousing and pointed attacks existed in private correspondence by Farrapos; but remarkably, there came about provincial-wide acceptance of consolidated interests. Tension remained between the ranchers and those larger, well-capitalized charqueadas, many owned by foreign interests of the littoral, with direct access to the better herds in Uruguay. As late as 1895, Victorino Monteiro wrote that “o criador é uma vítima do charqueador...” (AXT, 2011, p. 313). So it seems that the great charqueadores managed to acquire land and cattle of their own, as they had begun to do just prior to the beginning of the Farroupilha. The wars with Uruguay and Argentina would underwrite this status quo. In 1852, three-quarters of Brazilian troops engaged against Rosas’ Argentina were from Rio Grande do Sul, led by notable ex-Farrapos Canabarro, Netto, Silveira and Mattos, once the most contemptible of all the rebels, who had become Caxias’ chief aide.
Unlike the colonels who integrated themselves back into Imperial military service and their ranching enterprises, Almeida invested most of his energies in local politics, his charqueada business, and his obsession to chronicle the Revolution. Toward the end of his life, he would remember the glories of the Revolution and the important roles he had played. Almeida, who had already amassed the best documentary records on the Farroupilha, went about acquiring more so that he could write a first-hand, definitive history of the conflict. He asked old Farrapo friends for official and personal documents, and sent out, on occasion, detailed questionnaires to ex-Farrapo officers and administrators to aid or jog their memories. Most of all, he was building his doubts about Canabarro’s actions before and at Porongos. His best friend Bernardo Pires, whom he depended upon greatly in building his collection, had doubts that Canabarro would do such a thing or that Chico Pedro would divulge such confidential information. But to talk about it publically would shame the brave who had fought. He seemed quite content to embellish his role a bit in the Revolution, in particular when it came to the evils of slavery. His dedication to establishing a historical repository benefited future historians, but not himself. Old age caught up to him before he could write his account of the War. But what really prevented him from this task, for he had active years to do so, was the fear of disturbing conciliation, which had overtaken the province, and, perhaps, fear of what harm publication might bring to his legacy, even though he would have left a narrow trail of his own and that of others when it came to activities associated with confiscation. It was just another tool in gaucho warfare, but one could be sure Almeida would not have dwelt on it had he done so. (AHRGS, CV-7428, Bernardo Pires, 1 de Agosto de 1859).

The story of the Farroupilha has continued to inspire riograndense spirits, but has left behind maddeningly contradictory legacies. The intensely ranching character of the Farrapos marked the Revolution with a conspicuous acceptance of the principles of confiscation and that of slavery that diminished hopes for abolition and rural modernization. Of all the Farrapos pre- and post- the Farroupilha, Almeida was the most progressive, always open to the adoption of new industrial techniques and innovations. But while the rest of the Plate had shifted to free, paid labor, any real discussion of slavery in moral or economic terms was out of bounds. Bento Gonçalves’ Manifesto of 1838, co-signed by Almeida, remains the most far reaching explanation for the War. This document, too, was filled with contradictions. Although there was no discussion of land appropriations as a solution to Farrapo wartime needs, the Manifesto dealt with grievances, including assaults on estanceiro privileges by way of land taxes and disrespect for riograndense past wartime contributions. Though Almeida had absorbed some
of the lessons of revolution, he ignored its most important one that much of it rested on venality. Then, like so much else in the *Farroupilha*, there was no real reckoning of justice in a broad revolutionary way nor a loss for never creating a republic of citizens that would include more than themselves.

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