

## **Epitácio Lindolfo da Silva Pessoa**



### **Biography**

He was a lawyer, graduated by the Law School of Recife (1886), he was born in Umbuzeiro, Paraíba, on May 23, 1865. He was a public defendant in Bom Jardim (1886-1887) and Cabo (1887

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1889) in Pernambuco, as well as secretary-general of the state of Paraíba (1889-1890). He was a congressman in the National Constitutional Assembly (1890-1891) and Federal Congressman (1891-1893), reelected in 1894, without having however, his diploma recognized by the Committee of Verification of Powers of Congress. He was also Minister of Justice and Interior Business (1898-1901).

After 1902, he accumulated the functions as Attorney General of the Republic until 1905 and as Minister of the Supreme Court until 1912. He Presided the International Committee of Legal Consultants that analyzed the projects of the Public and Private International Code of Law. He was elected senator from Paraíba (1912-1919) and presided the Brazilian commission to the Peace Conference (1918-1919), in Versailles. By means of a direct election, he assumed the presidency on July 28, 1919. After his term as president, he was elected senator of Paraíba and was a member of the Hague Permanent Court of International Law (1923-1930). During this period he was also president of the Pan-American Committee of Legal Consultants meeting in Rio de Janeiro, participated of the Liberal Alliance campaign, presided the activities of the Permanent Committee for the Coding of the International Public Law, and was the foreign representative of the United States in the committee created by the Treaty of 1914, signed between the United States and England. He died in Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro, on February 13, 1942.

### **Presidential Period**

When the president took office, the country, according to the 1920 census, had a population of 30,635,605 and 13,346 factories employing 275 thousand workers. There was a prevalence of consumer goods such as textiles, food, clothes and shoes, which represented 70% of the production. A new global crisis affected the Brazilian economic activities, causing a drop of almost 50% in the price of coffee. Epitácio Pessoa, pressured by the coffee producers from São Paulo and Minas Gerais, intervened in the market, printing currency and thus, ensuring the recovery of the coffee prices. In October of 1921, the government implemented a new policy in defense of coffee, for the third time in the history of the Republic, securing a loan from England.

The stabilization of prices was also reached by means of the recovery of the global economy after the 1920 crisis, the reduction of crops in 1922 and 1923 and because of the prohibition of alcoholic drinks in the United States.

The political crisis of this period was expressed in the dissatisfaction of the Army, the dissatisfaction of the urban population and in the regional tensions of the dominating elites, when Rio Grande do Sul emerged as a center of opposition to the agricultural exporting nucleus. In 1922, the political environment became quite tense due to the fierce competition among the candidates to succeed President Epitácio Pessoa. The oligarchies from Rio Grande do Sul, Bahia, Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro formed the Republican Reaction, nominating Nilo Peçanha as candidate. This nomination breached the agreement between São Paulo and Minas Gerais, which established the nomination of Artur Bernardes from Minas Gerais as presidential candidate, already having defined Washington Luís from São Paulo to succeed him. Artur Bernardes' campaign against Nilo Peçanha, who once again was running for president, was considered as one of the most exacerbated of the Old Republic.

Epitácio Pessoa faced the political crisis created by the demands made by the Military Club, commanded by Field Marshal Hermes da Fonseca, for the resignation as presidential candidate of Artur Bernardes, by deciding that the letters published by the *Correio da Manhã* newspaper, falsely attributed to Bernardes were authentic. These letters attached former president Hermes da Fonseca and the Army. The closing of the Military Club and the imprisonment of Hermes da Fonseca, which occurred on July 2 1922, triggered the Revolt of the Fort of Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro four days later, already under the effects of the state of siege declared in the country. The deflagration of a military revolution was expected; however, the other forts in the city did not join the movement and the legalist troops attacked the Fort of Copacabana, killing 271 of 301 rebellious servicemen. The death march of 16 servicemen accompanied by 2 civilians, who left the fort along Atlântica Avenue to face the government troops became known as the "18 of the Fort ". Only two survived: Lieutenants Siqueira Campos and Eduardo Gomes. This episode marked the beginning of the long rebellious movement that would reach the entire country, called Tenetismo (Lieutenant Movement).

Source: National Archive – Information Center of Presidential Collections

## **Summary**

Eighth Period of the Republican Government - 15.11.1918 to 15.11.1922

2nd phase: 28.07.1919 to 15.11.1922

! Born: Umbuzeiro - PB, on 23.05.1865

! Died: Petrópolis - RJ, on 13.02.1942

- | Profession: Lawyer
- | In Office: 28.07.1919 to 15.11.1922 (03y03m22d)
- | Age when taking office: 54 years old
- | Type of election: direct
- | Votes received: 286.373