

History

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1562 map by Spanish Diego Gutiérrez

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discovery and settlement



Portuguese discoveries (1487-1497)

In the 15th and 16th centuries Portugal, an Iberian Kingdom with barely a million inhabitants, was hemmed in by the Atlantic and a hostile Castile. After years of struggle against the Moorish occupation, the Portuguese turned their attention and energy to the sea and what lay beyond. While the Spaniards set out in search of a route to the Orient by voyaging to the West, the Portuguese opted for the so-called Southern Cycle down the African coast. Reaching the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, they were led by the navigator Vasco da Gama across the Indian Ocean to discover the sea route to the Far East in 1497. They knew of the existence of lands across the Atlantic and they had made several expeditions to the West before Columbus discovered the Antilles in 1492, but they had kept the knowledge to themselves in order to forestall the ambitions of Spain, England and France. For a small nation, secrecy was the only available method of safeguarding the rewards of bold and successful exploration against exploitation by more powerful maritime rivals.

The Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) settled the question of possession of the new lands between Spain and Portugal. It was agreed that territories lying east of a meridian 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands should

belong to Portugal, the lands to the west to Spain. This imaginary line, from pole to pole, cut through the eastern-most part of the South American continent and constituted Brazil's first frontier, although the formal discovery by Pedro Álvares Cabral did not take place until six years later in 1500.

First settlements (1530-1549)

Cabral's voyage was soon followed by other Portuguese expeditions. The most exploitable wealth they found was a wood that produced red and purple dyes, *pau-brasil* (from which the country derived its name). Organised occupation only began in 1530, when Portugal sent out the first colonists with domestic animals, plants and seeds to establish permanent settlements. The existing small enclaves in the north-east were consolidated. São Vicente on the coast of the modern State of São Paulo was founded in 1532, and the city of Salvador, later chosen as the seat of the Governors General, followed in 1549. The land was sparsely inhabited by indigenous tribes, some peaceful and others – especially in the interior – fierce and warlike. As more of the land was settled, a system of administration became necessary. As a first step, the Portuguese Crown created a number of hereditary fiefs, or captaincies. Fourteen of these captaincies, some larger than Portugal itself, were established in the mid-16th century, and the beneficiaries, called *donatários*, were responsible for their defence and development. The captaincy system lasted long enough to influence the basic territorial and political pattern of modern Brazil.

The moist and fertile seaboard of what is now the State of Pernambuco was very suitable for growing sugar and was also conveniently located as a port of call for sailing ships travelling from Portugal to West Africa and the Orient. The sugar plant and the technique of its cultivation had reached Brazil from Madeira. A trade in slaves to work on the sugar plantations was soon developed. During this period large numbers of slaves, mostly from West Africa, were sent to Brazil. The sugar was exported to markets in Europe where rising demand was beginning to outrun supplies from traditional sources.



*Portuguese colonial tiles with historical motifs
in Salvador*

The union of Spain and Portugal (1580-1640)

These developments were interrupted by events in Europe. When King Sebastian of Portugal died in 1578 without leaving a successor, Philip II of Spain succeeded in his claim to the vacant throne in Lisbon. From 1580 to 1640, the two peninsular kingdoms were linked together under the Spanish crown. Thus, by the union of the two countries, the whole of South America became, for that time span, a Spanish possession. Paradoxically, Portugal's 60 years of union with Spain were to confer unexpected advantages on her transatlantic colony. In the absence of boundaries, both the Portuguese and the Brazilians started penetrating deeper into the vast hinterland.

The main starting point for this exploration was the captaincy of São Vicente, and it was from their base in São

Paulo that the pioneers pushed the frontier forward from the seaboard into the interior. Expeditions (known as *Bandeiras*) in search of Indian slaves cut their way through forest, climbed the difficult escarpments, and marched across the inland plateau. The expeditionaries (*Bandeirantes*) are known to have brought back with them Indians captured from Jesuit missions scattered in the interior of the country. Thus, without realising it, the *Bandeirantes*, by crossing the borders drawn by the Treaty of Tordesillas, expanded the boundaries of the future independent Brazil.

In 1640, when the Portuguese under John IV recovered their independence, they refused to abandon the lands they had occupied and colonised west of the original Tordesillas line. Claiming what has since become recognised in international law as the right of *uti possidetis* – the right derived not only from title but also from useful possession – the Portuguese succeeded in establishing themselves as the lawful owners.

The gold cycle (1690-1800)

The second half of the 17th century saw Portugal freed from Spanish rule, the north-east of Brazil liberated from a 24 year occupation by Dutch forces, and the weakening of Brazil's sugar economy.

The next cycle of Brazilian history began with the discovery of gold. While the gold rush that followed drained thousands of people away from the coastal plantations, it also attracted fresh immigration from Portugal. Other consequences were the growth of cattle farming in the interior to provide meat and leather



Gold interior of church in Salvador

for the mining centres and the emergence of new cities in what is now the State of Minas Gerais. Altogether nearly 1 000 tons of gold and 3 million carats of diamonds were taken from the region between 1700 and 1800. The growth of gold mining in Brazil was an important development that influenced the course of events, not only in the colony but also in Europe. Although the gold was controlled by Portugal and shipped to Lisbon, it did not remain there. Under the Methuen Treaty of 1703, England supplied textile products to Portugal. These were paid for with gold from the Brazilian mines. The Brazilian gold that ended up in London helped to finance the Industrial Revolution.



Coffee berries

Coffee

However, the boom in gold and diamond mining, like that of sugar, was destined

to be followed by the rise of an even more important source of wealth – coffee. Just as mining caused a migration of people from Pernambuco and Bahia southwards to Minas Gerais, so the spread of coffee growing advanced the settlement of empty land still further to the south. Coffee first reached Brazil via French Guiana in the 18th century. The early plantations were in regions in the hinterland of Rio de Janeiro well provided with slave labour; but the abolition of slavery and European immigration into the State of São Paulo in the late 19th century caused coffee growing to move southwards to the region where soil conditions, climate, and altitude combined to create an ideal environment. Soon this combination made Brazil the biggest coffee producer in the world.

Another important event in the second half of the 18th century was the transfer of the seat of colonial government. After more than 200 years in Salvador, the capital was moved to Rio de Janeiro, where it dominated the main access route to Minas Gerais and was closer to the growing population centres in the southern regions of the colony.

the colonial period

independence



'Proclamation of Independence'

independence

H i s t



Dom João VI

r y

The feeling of nationhood

The role of Portugal during the period it ruled Brazil was essentially that of intermediary between the colony as producer and the European economic centres as consumers. Monopolising all trade with Brazil, Portugal retained a substantial part of the profits, and this led to growing discontent among the settlers and to the aspiration to trade independently from Portugal. The fight to expel French and Dutch invaders from the north-east at the beginning of the 17th century contributed to a growing feeling of nationalism in the Brazilian colonists.

Stirrings of unrest stemming from the urge to secure political freedom began in earnest in the second half of the 18th century. Although the concept of independence was generally shared, some movements against the Portuguese authorities were clearly regional in scope. The Minas Conspiracy (*Inconfi-*

independence



Imperial Crown

Transfer of the Portuguese court to Brazil (1808-1821)

In 1808, as Napoleon's armies began the invasion of Portugal, the decision was made to transfer the monarch and his court to Brazil, where he would remain until 1821. The establishment of the royal administration in the colony for a period of 14 years would accelerate the march towards independence, but from now on with a unique undertone. The Portuguese Crown, consciously or not, took some measures that eased the transition toward independence. The elevation of Brazil, in 1815, from the status of a colony to that of a United Kingdom with Portugal may be seen as an example. Another lies in the fact that, although Napoleon's dominance ended in 1815, King João VI preferred to remain in Rio de Janeiro. Six years later, in 1821, King João VI had to yield to unrelenting pressures from the politicians back home. He returned to Lisbon, but left the Crown Prince in Rio with the title of Viceroy Regent. Furthermore, in the presence of members of colonial society, the King supposedly advised him, 'Pedro, my son, when the time comes, place the crown on your head before an adventurer puts it on his'.

dência Mineira), the most significant of these isolated movements, took place in the centre of what was then the gold-mining region. Its enthusiastic leader was a young cavalry officer, Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, nicknamed Tiradentes. Tiradentes had found support mainly among intellectuals seized with the same libertarian ideals that had inspired the French Encyclopaedists and the leaders of the American Revolution. The conspiracy was discovered and its leaders received very harsh sentences. Tiradentes was hanged in a public square in Rio de Janeiro. Other movements, some of which had wide support, occurred in Pernambuco and Bahia, where the decline of the sugar economy aggravated the problems created by the country's subordination to Portugal. None of them, however, was important enough to seriously undermine the Portuguese domination at the time.



'Coronation of Dom Pedro I'

independence

Proclamation of independence (1822)

The irritating opposition of Lisbon's politicians to this state of affairs and the cajoling from close Brazilian advisers attracted the young prince to the cause of independence. Barely a year after the King's return to Portugal, on 7 September 1822, the Crown Prince proclaimed the independence of Brazil as an Empire and had himself solemnly crowned Emperor Pedro I on 1 December 1822. The mastermind behind Brazilian independence was José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, a distinguished Brazilian geologist and writer who had become the most important and trusted of the Prince's advisers. While the Spanish vice-royalties in America had to fight fiercely for their independence (to end up as 18 different republics), Portugal and Brazil settled the matter by negotiation, with Great Britain acting as a broker. After a relatively short war of independence (1822–1824) Brazil became an Empire under Dom Pedro I, who, nevertheless, continued to be the heir to the Portuguese throne.

the empire



Dom Pedro I



Dom Pedro II

Pedro I (1822-1831)

The first ruler of independent Brazil was a striking personality. He made an important contribution to the acceleration of the social and political evolution of the 19th century by granting Brazil in 1824 and Portugal, two years later, constitutional charters that were extremely advanced for the time and broke away from the concept of the Divine Right of Kings. In 1826, on the death of João VI, Dom Pedro inherited his father's kingdom. However, he abdicated the Portuguese throne soon after in favour of his infant daughter, Maria da Glória, who became Queen Maria II. In 1831, he abdicated the throne of Brazil in favour of his son, Dom Pedro II, who was still a minor. This decision, prompted in part by differences with the Brazilian Parliament, was also motivated by an

adventurous spirit which took him back to Portugal to oust his brother, Miguel, who had usurped the throne from young Queen Maria.

Pedro II (1831-1889)

Unlike his father, Pedro II grew up to be a stern, temperate, scholarly monarch. During his rule of half a century, Brazil reached political and cultural maturity, and the unity of the vast country was firmly secured. Political and social institutions developed peacefully and attained stability. A competent administration was created, slavery was progressively eliminated until its complete abolition in 1888, European immigration was actively promoted, and health and welfare schemes were planned on a national scale. The influence exercised by the Emperor on the people and institutions of the country did much to

ensure that the transition from Monarchy to Republic, when it eventually came, took place without bloodshed.

the empire

Although peace and stability were maintained within the country under the Empire, Brazil was exposed to external threats along its southern frontier during this period, which brought about the War of the Triple Alliance. This was a long and unpopular war (1865–1870) in which Brazil united with Argentina and Uruguay against Paraguay. Under the peace treaty of 1872, Brazil guaranteed the territorial integrity of Paraguay and renounced all its claims to indemnities and payment of war debts. This was the last armed conflict Brazil has ever had with any of its ten neighbours.

the republic



Opera House in Manaus



Baron of Rio Branco

End of the Empire: abolition of slavery (1888)

The final abolition of slavery is usually regarded as the most immediate cause for the fall of the monarchy. With the Emperor away in Europe, his daughter, Princess Isabel, acted as Regent. On 13 May 1888, responding to the collapse of slavery as a workable system and yielding to pressures from

the abolitionists, she signed the so-called Golden Law (*Lei Áurea*) abolishing slavery in Brazil.

the republic

It must be noted that by the end of the 19th century, slavery in Brazil was declining under pressure from immigrant labourers whose wages cost less than the upkeep of slaves. Nevertheless, the Golden Law set off a reaction among slave owners that rapidly eroded the political foundations of the monarchy. After a few months of parliamentary crises, the Emperor was deposed on 15 November 1889, by a military movement that proclaimed the abrogation of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic.

This institutional transformation, albeit profound, was carried out without bloodshed. Although treated with all possible respect, the Emperor and his family had to be asked to leave the country. Accompanied by some close associates, they went into exile in France. Most of the leading figures of the country lent their support and collaboration to the new regime; among them was one of Brazil's most outstanding statesmen, the Baron of Rio Branco. It was his wisdom and skilful diplomacy that enabled Brazil to end, by treaty or arbitration, nearly all its outstanding frontier disputes.



*The first republican president,
Marshal Deodoro*

Federation and presidential system

The newborn republic adopted a federal system that has kept the same characteristics until today. Under federation the provinces of the Empire were transformed into states. The parliamentary system was replaced with a presidential one; a bicameral Congress (Chamber of Deputies and Senate) was created, as well as a completely independent Supreme Court. At the state level the same structure was adopted. President after president, elected under the rules of the prevailing constitutional system, succeeded one another in office until 1930.

the republic

The new Republic (1930-1937)

The so-called First Republic lasted until 1930 when, for the first time, the government was overthrown by force. The

main aim of the victorious revolutionary movement headed by Getúlio Vargas, a politician from the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, was the reform of an electoral and political system which, in the absence of strong national parties, had led to the practice of electing presidents supported by the governors of the leading states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais. The governors, in turn, secured the election of congressional representatives pledged to carry out the policies of the central government. Getúlio Vargas, who was to govern Brazil for the next 15 years, came to power at a troubled time. The country was feeling the effects of the world depression, which drastically reduced the price of coffee. The domestic political scene was affected not only by the resultant financial crisis, but also, as the decade advanced, by clashes between militant minorities inspired by ideas from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy on one hand, and by the Communist ideology.



Catete presidential palace in Rio

The Vargas era (1938-1945)

In 1934, after the Vargas regime had been consolidated, a new constitution was introduced which greatly widened the franchise and gave the vote to women. In late 1937, shortly before the presidential elections were due, the heated political atmosphere and disruptive activities led President Vargas to declare a state of emergency. Vargas followed up his declaration by dissolving Congress and assuming extraordinary powers to govern by decree under an authoritarian charter. However difficult the times, some important policies



President Vargas (centre) with President Roosevelt (left)

were adopted then which included the introduction of advanced social welfare legislation, a reform of the educational system and substantial progress in industrialisation, including the construction of Brazil's first big steel mill (1942–1946).

When World War II started, the Vargas government could not ignore the spontaneous preference of the majority of Brazilians for the Allies. Popular sentiment, further inflamed by the hostile actions of German U-boats off the Brazilian coast, forced the President to abandon a neutral stance. In August 1942 Vargas declared war on the Axis powers. Brazil equipped a 25 000-man strong Expeditionary Force which, attached to the US Fifth Army, fought in Italy. Brazil was the only American country, besides the US and Canada, to send armed forces to the European theatre of war.

Post-war Brazil (1945–1964)

As the war in Europe drew to its close, Vargas was forced to resign and elections were held to appoint a successor. Going to the polls for the first time in 15 years, the electorate gave the majority of their votes to General Eurico Gaspar Dutra who had been Vargas's Minister of the Army during the war. A new democratic constitution was approved by a constituent assembly in 1946. It remained in force until 1967. Dutra's term came to an end in 1951. Meanwhile Vargas, who had sat out his exile at his ranch in Rio Grande do Sul, had prepared for the elections. Vargas had come to reap some of the rewards of his progressive measures in the fields of social welfare and trade union legislation. At the conclusion of Dutra's term, Vargas was constitutionally elected president of the republic. In 1954, in the middle of a bitter political crisis, Vargas committed suicide. A caretaker administration finished his term of office.

Brazil experienced five years of accelerated economic expansion under President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956–1961), the founder of Brasília. President Jânio Quadros, who resigned after less than a



*President
Juscelino Kubitschek*

the republic

year in office, followed him. Quadros's vice-president was João Goulart. Goulart was sworn in as president only after Congress hastily voted in a parliamentary system which drastically curtailed presidential powers. In a plebiscite held four months later, however, President Goulart was able to persuade the voters to restore the old presidential system. Rampant inflation and political polarisation between left and right led to two-and-a-half tumultuous years of political and social unrest and economic crisis. Fearing Goulart's Marxist leanings, the military overthrew him in a coup on 31 March 1964.

Military rule (1964–1985)

The period 1964 to 1985 was one of military rule, with some relaxation of control after 1979. This period saw five presidents, all of them generals in the armed forces. The first, Castello Branco, came to power on a wave of anti-communism. His main task was to stabilise the country's political and economic situation. Extensive amendments were made to the Constitution to provide the government with the powers and mechanisms to achieve those goals. During the next 15 years, 1968–1983, the government issued several Institutional Acts that were, in effect, presidential decrees. Many individual and collective rights were suspended during this period. New austere measures affected economic and political life. Collective bargaining was eliminated, strikes were virtually outlawed, and the working class movement was curtailed.

By 1968, in the term of President Arthur da Costa e Silva, the economic strategies appeared to be working. Inflation was contained and foreign firms began to make new investments, assured of the regime's stability. Politically, however, in response to the continued unrest, the government became increasingly repressive. President Costa e Silva resigned in 1969 because of illness. He was immediately succeeded by a mili-



President Figueiredo (centre)

tary junta and two months later by Emílio Garrastazu Médici. Between 1967 and 1974 Brazil enjoyed one of the greatest rates of economic growth in the world with real growth as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) reaching 14 per cent in 1973. By the mid 1970s Ernesto Geisel, who was then president, proposed a period of decompression in gradual steps which would lead to restoration of democratic rule. In 1979, João Baptista Figueiredo was inaugurated President. This was also the beginning of the opening ('*abertura*'), the process of restoring the political rights which had been revoked. Many of the country's exiles were allowed to return. The year also marked an acceleration of the public's demand for re-democratisation. Figueiredo maintained a steady hand on the opening process. In 1982, the country held direct elections for state governors, the first such elections since 1965.

Return to democracy (1985)



President-elect Tancredo Neves

In 1984 there were nationwide demonstrations demanding immediate direct elections ('*Diretas Já*') to choose a new president. In January 1985, Tancredo de Almeida Neves was chosen president by an Electoral College. His election was significant because he was not only the first civilian president to be elected in 21 years, but also because he was the candidate of an opposition coalition. On 14 March 1985, on the eve of his inauguration, Neves was rushed to hospital as a result of a lingering illness he had endured for several months. The man who became acting president was Vice-President José Sarney. When Neves died five weeks later, José Sarney was sworn in as president promising to maintain the course set by Tancredo Neves. The first priority of President Sarney was the calling of general elections in order to gather a National Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution. Never in the history of Brazil was there such a high degree of popular participation in the drafting of a law. After 18 months of deliberations a new constitution was promulgated on 5 October 1988.

In the first direct presidential election held since 1960, Fernando Collor de Mello was elected President in a run-off election that took place in December 1989. On 29 September 1992, following allegations of corruption

within his government, Collor was suspended as President by the Chamber of Deputies for 180 days during which time the Senate was to complete a trial and decide whether to remove him permanently. On 29 December 1992, minutes after the Senate had begun to try him on corruption charges, Collor resigned, but the Senate decided nonetheless to impeach him by a large majority. Three hours later, Itamar Franco, who served as Vice-President under Collor, was sworn in as President to serve the remaining two years of Collor's five year term. Collor's impeachment by the House of Deputies, his trial by the Senate and his resignation mark a new chapter in the political history of Brazil. During Itamar Franco's presidency, a comprehensive plan for curbing inflation was implemented.



President Fernando Henrique Cardoso

On 3 October 1994 voters cast 78 million ballots for a new President of the Republic. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a sociologist and former Finance Minister responsible for President Franco's economic plan, received the absolute majority needed to win the presidency in a first round election. He took office on 1 January 1995, for a four year term. His first year in office saw a steady decline in the rate of inflation, opening the way for both sustained economic growth and for determined government action in social reform. Cardoso was elected for a second term on 4 October 1998.



President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva

President Lula (2003)

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was sworn in on 1 January 2003. In his inaugural speech as President of Brazil, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva said that the greatest mission of his life is to ensure that at the end of his mandate every single Brazilian is able to eat three meals a day. His dream is becoming a reality.

The battle to stamp out hunger and malnutrition is being won through a series of social policies adopted by the government. The backbone of these initiatives is the *Fome Zero* programme, an articulated effort undertaken by the federal government.

The volume of federal funds allocated to *Fome Zero* programmes attests to the government's commitment to enriching the menu of everyday Brazilians: total funding in 2005 will reach R\$ 14,5 billion, almost double the R\$ 7,36 billion invested in 2004.