

PERNAMBUCO

in the Brazilian Federation

1889-1937

ROBERT M. LEVINE



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Preface

THIS BOOK FORMS part of a collaborative project that has produced independent but parallel studies of three Brazilian states under federalism: Pernambuco, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo. The basic rationale for this project is set forth in the Introduction, pp. xv–xxii, which appears in all three books.

I am thankful to my colleagues, Joseph L. Love and John D. Wirth, for the opportunity to have worked so long and intimately with them on this collaborative research effort. We remained in frequent contact with one another from the early conversations about a joint project to the last stages of editing. The volume outlines are similar, not only from chapter to chapter but, as far as feasible, within each chapter itself. Though we attempted to keep repetition at a minimum, each book necessarily draws on a common stock of information that was freely shared throughout the research and writing. Many tasks were shared, while others were assigned individually. Love and Wirth compiled the code book for the collective biographies of the three state political elites; Love and I designed the SPSS program for the comparative biographical study. We spent twelve months in 1969–70 in Brazil, and met three times. Later, Love and Wirth spent a summer in Rio and Brasília, and I worked in the Public Record Office in London. We arranged to meet at least once a year since 1967.

With a few exceptions, I have used modern spelling for Portuguese words, proper names, and places in the text. In the Notes and Bibliography, however, I have followed the convention of citing authors and titles as they appear on the title page. The currency of Brazil for the period

under study was the milreis (written 1\$000), and the largest monetary unit was the conto (or 1,000 milreis and written 1:000\$000 or simply 1:000\$). In 1942 the milreis was replaced by the cruzeiro, one milreis being equal to one cruzeiro. Dollar equivalents are given in Appendix C.

Many archivists, scholars, and other interested persons generously lent their aid in the research for this work. I would particularly like to thank the following persons for their assistance: in Recife, Lúcia Nery da Fonseca of the Arquivo Público Estadual; Olímpio Costa Júnior of the Biblioteca Pública; Gavin D. Black, formerly of the Great Western Railway Company; Vamireh Chacon and Gadiel Perruci of the Federal University of Pernambuco; the redoubtable Gilberto Freyre of Apipucos; and Henriqueta Castello Branco.

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Research funds were provided by the U.S. Office of Education, the American Philosophical Society, the New York State Research Foundation, and the Foreign Area Fellowship Program of the Social Science Research Council. A Senior Fulbright-Hays Lectureship, under the sponsorship of Dr. Manuel Diegues Júnior, enabled me to test some of my hypotheses and interpretations in Brazil during the summer of 1973.

Above all, I am grateful to Joe Love and John Wirth. Beyond the professional aspects of the study, probably the most valuable aspect of all was

the lengthy exercise in collaboration. Its rewards supplement whatever contribution this individual volume may make. And finally, my thanks to Barbara E. Mnookin, my editor at Stanford University Press, for her patience, fortitude, and common sense.

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Introduction

THIS IS ONE of three independent but coordinated studies on the regional dynamics of Brazilian federalism from the beginning of the Republic in 1889 to the establishment of the Estado Novo in 1937. The objective is to write comparative history from the regional perspective, that is, to pinpoint similarities and differences among three leading states, while identifying modes of interaction at the national level. The role of São Paulo, which is located in the Center-South, and which received the greatest benefits from export-led growth, is examined by Joseph L. Love. Politically powerful Minas Gerais, situated between the prosperous southern states and the impoverished Northeast, is analyzed by John D. Wirth. Pernambuco, the Northeast's most important state, is treated by Robert M. Levine as a case study in political and economic decline.

The period under study begins with the devolution of power from the centralized Empire to the states, and follows the course of the Union's gradual assumption of authority and responsibility over the ensuing half-century. Recentralization began well before the "Old Republic" (1889-1930) was abolished by coup d'état in 1930; it was formally and stridently proclaimed by the Estado Novo dictatorship, Getúlio Vargas's unitary regime from 1937 to 1945.

Our purpose is to bring together insights into the complex dynamics of state-level social and political structures, which have always been crucial in Brazil, but particularly during the nation's most decentralized phase, the years under study. Political events define the chronological limits of these studies, yet the coups of 1889 and 1937 and the

very different constitutions that attended them are partly arbitrary benchmarks. Important political events in the states did not always mirror national events, nor did they bear the same meaning. Moreover, the neatness of this periodization is blurred by socioeconomic continuities that dilute the impact of what historians used to call "turning points." We refer both to the historic North-South shift in power and resources, which started around 1850 and rendered the Northeast an internal colony of the dynamic South, and also to the modernizing forces—social differentiation, urbanization, the growing internal market—which the political events overlay.

Though the issues of federalism are ostensibly a set of political problems, the economic, social, and cultural contexts receive extensive treatment in these books. This fact is evident from the format of the studies, which are organized on thematic rather than chronological lines. To calibrate change over time, however, each author used a chronology appropriate to his own state while relating regional events to those at the national level and those in the other states.

We also use the concept of political generations to order the several themes. Leaders born before 1869 were socialized under the Empire, with its centralized bureaucracy. Those born in the 20 years before 1889 knew the Republic as young men in the period of its greatest decentralization. Leaders in the third political generation came of age after 1910, when the impetus for a more integrated polity affected the military, fiscal, and economic policies of the nation and the states. The origins, career expectations, and experiences of these three political generations are discussed in Chapter 5. Generational analysis also informs the chapter on integration which follows it.

These volumes explore the regional dimensions of change, adaptation, and rigidities of the Old Republic and the initial phase of the Vargas government. Structural changes were extensive: in the economy, coffee and rubber exports reached their apogee and went into sharp decline; manufacturing underwent its initial surge in a complicated set of rhythms. For much of this period economic growth was largely dependent on exports and foreign capital, including investments in government bonds for infrastructural development. By the 1930's, Brazil had shifted its dependence in financial and economic affairs from Great Britain to the United States. This coincided with the acceleration of industrialization by import substitution.

Brazilian society likewise was transformed: the nation received a

net inflow of between two and one-half and three million immigrants in the years 1889-1937, more than any other comparable period in its history. By the 1930's, internal migration was also greater than in any previous decade. Rapid urbanization and improvements in public health accompanied these population shifts. By 1940 the nation had two cities, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, with populations over one million, and 21 other cities with populations in excess of 100,000. In the cities the early labor movement was the crucible for anarchist and communist activity, only to be channeled and controlled from the top down by a government apparatus in the 1930's. In the complex interplay between federal and state units, government assumed new tasks not only in social control but also in social welfare, education at all levels (grossly neglected before 1889), and commodity marketing inside and outside the country. The period under study was also the classic age of banditry and messianism, principally but not exclusively in the Northeast, though both phenomena were vestigial by the time of the Estado Novo.

The political system established by the constitution of 1891 seemed anomalous in Latin America, even anachronistic in light of the centralizing tendencies in Mexico, Colombia, and Argentina. Yet a decentralized Republic suited the interests of powerful export-oriented groups, and the ancient patron-client system found its political expression in the *política dos governadores* by 1900. This system, directed by the president of the Republic and the governors of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, was an arrangement for the mutual support of incumbent elites at all levels of government. With a preponderantly rural population and low levels of political participation (only 1-3 percent of the population voted in federal elections before 1930), *coronelismo*—boss rule—prevailed in the countryside and made urban political groupings irrelevant until the 1920's. Without the moderating power of the Empire to remove incumbents from office, the Republic had no constitutional solution to the problem of entrenched establishments. Violence at local, state, and federal levels remained an indispensable tool in politics, sometimes involving the army, sometimes not.

In the 1930's Vargas consciously pursued a policy of deinstitutionalization of the most important state machines of the Old Republic—the Republican Parties of Minas Gerais, São Paulo, and Rio Grande do Sul. Meanwhile new antiliberal parties on right and left threatened the hybrid liberal-corporatist constitution of 1934. The Estado Novo

dictatorship, outlawing all parties, was the culmination of the effort to depoliticize Brazil, as well as to centralize its government; yet success was limited, as our examination of the states reveals.

States are the units of analysis because they were the foci of political loyalty and political organization: there were no enduring national or multistate parties in the era in question. Even Pernambuco usually behaved as a politically self-centered region, despite its being the "natural" leader of the Northeast. In fact, Pernambuco's failure to marshal the Northeast as a bloc in Congress is an important theme in that state's history. Aspects of regionalism that did not follow state boundaries—markets, for example—are examined, but for the most part these books focus on the states.

We believe the three states covered were the logical choice for study, especially since Love had previously written *Rio Grande do Sul and Brazilian Regionalism*. In the era under examination, São Paulo and Minas Gerais were the economic, demographic, and political leaders, and only Rio Grande could hope to challenge their control of federal policies and institutions. Pernambuco was the most important state in Brazil's leading "problem" area—the poverty-stricken Northeast—and it provides a dramatic and, in many ways, representative case study of Brazilian regionalism from the "underside." Nonetheless, we realize that regionalism and its socioeconomic context cannot be fully understood without studies of other units, especially Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, and the old Federal District. Much remains to be done.

Region and regionalism are defined with reference to the problem at hand, which is to study politics and its social and economic bases over several decades. Thus, a region is defined as having the following characteristics:

1. It is part of a larger unit and interdependent with other regions that, together with the first, constitute the larger unit.
2. It has a definite geographic size and location, being politically bounded.
3. Each region has a set of component subregions, which are contiguous.
4. The region generates a set of loyalties on the part of its inhabitants, which vary in importance and intensity over time.
5. Loyalty to the region, however, is subordinated (nominally at

least) to loyalty to the larger unit—the nation-state—among the politically effective sectors of the region's population; this loyalty may also vary in importance and intensity.

Regionalism is here defined as political behavior characterized, on the one hand, by acceptance of the existence of a larger political unit, but, on the other hand, by the quest for favoritism and decisional autonomy from the larger unit on economic and social policies, even at the risk of jeopardizing the legitimacy of the prevailing political system. Thus the emphasis is not on regional peculiarities per se (e.g. folklore, patterns of dress and speech), but on those factors that can be demonstrated to affect the region's political, economic, and social relations with the other regions and the larger unit of government, in this case a nation-state.

Attitudes toward regionalism changed during the period under review. The hopeful modernizers of 1889 saw decentralization as a device to obtain a more efficient allocation of resources than could be achieved through the central government. By contrast, the authoritarian centralizers of 1937 blamed "selfish regionalism" for a host of social, economic, and political dislocations they vowed to set right by action at the center. Both groups thought of regionalism in policy terms, but reached radically different conclusions on its validity. Grounded in Brazilian historical experience, this prescriptive aspect of regionalism becomes part of the definition.

Regional elites believed their states were socioeconomic as well as political units which demanded allegiance. But when state was pitted against nation, their allegiances were ambivalent, as shown in the experience of São Paulo in the 1930's. Furthermore, their success in establishing the significance of the region was in doubt, or at least ambiguous. Outright failures occurred, notably in the case of Pernambuco, which could not establish political coherence. Exogenous market forces and the terrain channeled economic growth in ways the leaders of Minas did not want. Opportunities to live and work in Rio de Janeiro, the center of patronage and stylish city-state, eroded the regional ideal among Pernambucanos and Mineiros, in striking contrast to their Paulista counterparts. Above all, the interpenetration of manifold and complex structures across regional boundaries sapped regional coherence.

In holding to the regional ideal, however, the elites soon realized

that regionalism was not necessarily incompatible with a strong federal government. State and nation were not necessarily antagonistic; they were part of a continuum along which the balance of forces shifted. Compartmentalized state economic policies were abandoned as early as the severe depression of the late 1890's. The elites soon came to measure and define regionalism in relation to other units and the central government. Shaping the terms of these relationships was in fact the essence of regional policymaking. Viewed this way, regionalism becomes more complex and significant than it would be if the problem were only that of nonviable states struggling against the centralizing tide.

Relationships changed as the nation became more integrated. By the time of World War I, elites were even less inclined to counterpose region to nation, although the aim of state policy was still to extract favorable terms. Thus the state elites welcomed integration when they could influence or control it, and on the whole accepted it when they had to. We devote considerable attention to the integration process, which began well before the 1930 Revolution.

In the Brazilian case, integration was the product of two congruent forces, namely, the interpenetration of social, economic, and political life across regional boundaries *and* the partial transfer of decisions and resources to a national level of political organization. We believe that the former reinforced, but did not directly cause, the latter. Thus we give attention to the interaction of congresses and meetings at state and national levels. Yet the ambiguities of the centralizing impetus are revealed in detailed case studies of state budgets and fiscal policies, and in our discussion of military forces.

Two concurrent kinds of relationships marked the integration process. One, on the horizontal dimension, occurred within and among groups based on common bonds, affinities, and shared interests. The other, structured vertically, was the process of interaction among unequals: clientelism is a prime instance. Having examined both types of social interaction, we found striking the weakness of group and interest associations and the persistence of vertical structures, though this varied by state. Furthermore, it is clear that the elites modernized selectively, minimizing social mobilization. By this yardstick Brazil was far from being a fully integrated society by 1937.

In probing the complex processes whereby the parts fit together, we also focus explicitly on the role of state policymakers—what they

wanted, tried to get, and settled for. Though political integration was far from uniform or complete by 1937, we think our analysis of regional decision-makers is a way to understand what was achieved. By looking at the terms of interaction we hope to carry analysis beyond the vague proposition that the elites, in learning to cooperate, willed national integration.

Our initial hypothesis was that the states functioned as "halfway houses," pioneering in areas of social and economic legislation, and slowly ceding responsibilities to the federal government after World War I. It later became clear, however, that government responsibility at *both* state and federal levels was increasing down to 1930, and that some state responsibilities were still vigorous until 1937 and beyond. This is another way of saying that regionalism was not the antithesis of interpenetration and integration, which took place on all levels of government.

One of the most instructive aspects of the regional approach is the opportunity for comparison, and there are several topics for which comparative regional analysis is especially appropriate.

1. The political consequences of different patterns of economic growth are seen more clearly: Pernambuco in decline, Minas with a relatively weak economy, and São Paulo in rapid expansion developed different political strategies at the state and national levels.

2. The alleged causal links between the level of socioeconomic development and types of political organization are brought under triangulation, allowing for a better view of other factors affecting leadership and organizations.

3. Different center-periphery relationships are highlighted in these studies. Pernambuco tended to predominate among the Northeastern states, but was itself a satellite of the central government; Minas was on the margins of the Center-South; São Paulo enjoyed a rapidly expanding domestic market; all had their export links and contrasting patterns of international financial obligations.

4. Similarities and differences in identically defined political elites are thrown into relief by the comparative analysis of computerized biographical data.

5. The role of the states in fostering or impeding political and economic integration emerges from the comparative study of state militias, budgets, specialized congresses, and associational activity.

As histories of Pernambuco, Minas, and São Paulo, these studies are

schematic, not exhaustive. The stress is on structures, parallels, and linkages, rather than on detailed narrative exposition, for which there is still need. We hope that some of the richness of a unique regional society emerges in each volume. Inevitably, each study reflects the type, amount, and quality of source materials and previous studies available to the individual authors, who are responsible for their own volumes. In sum, each study stands alone; but all three follow the same design, which is the product of collaborative effort.

It was our intention not only to illuminate the Brazilian past but also to make a contribution to the literature on social and political change. The three works are case studies of major subnational units during the early phases of modernization. In charting the strategies of the elites to promote or retard change and the political consequences of shifts in the economic base, we hope these volumes will be read by students of the processes of capitalist modernization as well as by those interested in the unique features of Brazilian history.

We also hope to contribute to the comparative literature on regionalism and federalism. The problems and perspectives of regionalism are far from dead in the United States, where such issues as revenue sharing and state vs. federal control of energy resources are widely debated. Furthermore, it seems clear that many of the world's underdeveloped countries are experiencing profound currents of regionalism (often reinforcing ethnic cleavages), as social mobilization brings new groups into the political process. One form this can take is separatism and civil war, as the recent tragedies of Bangladesh and Nigeria illustrate. There is also a possibility that regionalism will lead to a more creative definition of the nation, as may be occurring in parts of Western Europe. Finally, in Brazil itself the issues of federalism are by no means dead, and it has yet to be demonstrated that the allegiance of the masses to the nation-state of Brazil parallels those of political and economic elites.

R.M.L.

J.L.L.

J.D.W.

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