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Brazilian Abolitionism, Its Historiography, and the Uses of Political History*

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Abstract. Explanations of the Abolitionist movement's success in Brazil (1888) have, since the 1960s and 1970s, emphasised the movement's material context, its class nature, and the agency of the captives. These analyses have misunderstood and gradually ignored the movement's formal political history. Even the central role of urban political mobilisation is generally neglected; when it is addressed, it is crippled by lack of informed analysis of its articulation with formal politics and political history. It is time to recover the relationship between Afro-Brazilian agency and the politics of the elite. In this article this is illustrated by analysing two conjunctures critical to the Abolitionist movement: the rise and fall of the reformist Dantas cabinet in 1884–85, and the relationship between the reactionary Cotegipe cabinet (1885–88), the radicalisation of the movement, and the desperate reformism that led to the Golden Law of 13 May 1888.

Keywords: Brazil, abolition, historiography, political history, Afro-Brazilian mobilisation, slavery, empire

The political history of Brazilian Abolitionism (1879–88) is complicated – and more often assumed than understood. The necessity of demonstrating how people really worked within and against contemporary political constraints or how subaltern agency interacted with the elite decision making that actually changed the law and contained Abolitionism has been ignored or poorly addressed. Abolitionism, and the Afro-Brazilian agency integral to it, would be more accurately understood if they were successfully reintegrated into the political realities and history of the time. By doing so, we might more ably recover the possibilities, constraints and facts of this critical page in Afro-Brazilian political struggle.

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This article is an attempt to introduce such a reintegration. After briefly stating the problem and discussing the evolution of the historiography, it will attempt an analysis which recovers the parliamentary history of Abolitionism, reintegrates it with the history of the Abolitionist movement, and shows how they developed interactively until the dénouement of 1888. The sources include not only the established secondary literature, but also accounts published by contemporaries and archival sources that can only now be brought into play. The article will demonstrate how the Dantas administration derived from the pressures of the Abolitionist movement and how that cabinet's fall and the reactionary policies of the Cotegipe administration radicalised the movement, forcing the Crown and Parliament to legislate the end of slavery in order to contain a struggle that was now slipping beyond the law and into the streets and plantations.

The achievement of abolition is properly understood in historical context. Too often, because we know that it was accomplished, and that slavery had already faded from all of the rest of the Americas, there is a tendency to think of it as inevitable. It certainly did not seem that way to contemporaries, and for good reason. There may also be a tendency among scholars raised in other post-slaveholding societies to view the situation along their own racial and regional lines. It is useful to start, then, with a brief reminder of Brazilian realities at the point where the movement began. One can presume that in 1879, when the first Abolitionist speeches were made in Parliament, most people in the empire were wholly or partially of African descent. Indeed, before the end of the Atlantic slave trade in 1850, given that people were cheap and owning them was a critical factor in status and mobility, one can also assume that most free people of colour either owned other people of colour or hoped to do so. Slaveholding in Brazil was as old as Brazilian society, present throughout the population whether by region or by class and, however racialised in concept, not defined by race.[1]

[1] Demography is largely speculative in Brazilian historiography up to the twentieth century. That being said, many scholars begin with the first official census, 1872, which indicates that 38 per cent of the national population was 'white', with the remainder divided between 20 per cent 'black' and 42 per cent 'mulatto': see Thomas Skidmore, 'Racial Ideas and Social Policy in Brazil, 1870–1940', in Richard Graham (ed.), *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870–1940* (Austin TX, 1990), p. 8. Note that the categorisation of an individual was highly subjective, very much a 'social construct'. In US terms, for example, the number of whites indicated is probably too high, as miscegenation had been common for more than 300 years, 'passing' was commonplace, and other status markers were often conflated with phenotype. For comments on slaveholding among people of various strata and among people of colour, see Mary C. Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1850* (Princeton NJ, 1987), pp. 342–3, 366; and Zephyr L. Frank, *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Albuquerque NM, 2004), chs. 1, 2, 4 and 5. For regional distribution, see Stanley J. Stein, *Vassouras, A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900: The Roles of Planter and Slave*

The end of the Atlantic trade did, of course, bring about significant demographic changes: a rapid decline in the slave population, a shift in location towards the dynamic coffee region of the southern coastal hinterland, and a steep decline in slaveholding among the urban free.[2] Nonetheless, critical aspects endured; slavery remained the preferred labour source for the critical elements of the economy, and it was accepted as part of life by most Brazilians and strongly supported by the social and political elite.[3] Yet despite these important, abiding aspects, between 1879 and 1888 Brazilian slavery was eliminated without civil war, a social revolution, or general racial violence. Indeed, the final decision was made by a majority of the most conservative political representatives of the traditional slaveholding elite. This does not, at first glance, make sense. How has it been explained by historians?

The Main Historiographical Trends

One can reduce the explanations to four successive trends. In each of them the role of Afro-Brazilians themselves becomes progressively more significant. We can label these the 'elite celebratory' trend (1888–1940s), the 'classical Marxist' trend (1950s–1960s), the 'radical agency' trend (1970s), and the 'subaltern agency' trend (1970s and onwards).

The elite celebratory trend held that the movement to abolish slavery was born of Brazil's naturally growing civilisation and progress, began in Parliament, and successfully convinced free people of the moral and progressive virtues of ending slavery. By the end the more progressive planters, Isabel, the princess regent, and Parliament, with the support of the enthusiastic free urban majority, inevitably overwhelmed the useless efforts of a few benighted reactionaries. This analysis, culled from the statements of Abolitionists and contemporary journalists and statesmen, became the commonplace. It remains popular, although long disputed by historians, who have since buried it.[4]

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in a Plantation Society (Princeton NJ, 1985 [1958]), p. 295; Robert Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery, 1850–1888* (Berkeley CA, 1972), Appendix 1, Tables 1 and 2.

[2] Stein, *Vassouras*, p. 295; Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 48–65, Appendix 1, Table 3; Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro*, pp. xxii, 65; Frank, *Dutra's World*, pp. 84–6, 100.

[3] Joaquim Nabuco, *O abolicionismo* (4th edition, Petrópolis, 1977 [1883]), pp. 57–8, and *Um estadista do Imperio: Nabuco de Araujo: sua vida, seus opiniões, sua epoca* (3 vols., Rio de Janeiro, [*c.* 1897–98]), vol. 2, p. 389, and vol. 3, pp. 21–7; Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 16–17; Warren Dean, *Rio Claro: A Brazilian Plantation System, 1820–1920* (Stanford CA, 1976), pp. 123, 140.

[4] For an example of this common view, see Maurilio de Gouveia, *História de escravidão* (Rio de Janeiro, 1955); contemporary sources include Cristiano Benedito Otoni, *Autobiografia* (Brasilia, 1983 [c.1908]); Osorio Duque-Estrada, *A abolição* (*esboço historico*)*: 1831–1888* (Rio de Janeiro, 1918); Afonso Celso, *Oito anos de parlemento* (2nd edition, Brasilia, 1981 [1901]); Tobias Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos para a historia* (Rio de Janeiro, 1913); Evaristo de

The classical Marxists of the mid-twentieth century advanced our analysis by critiquing this elite, self-congratulatory narrative of crusade and conquest. Indeed, these analysts de-emphasised the agency in this political process by arguing that abolition was an inevitable, dependent variable, given the economic and technical change reshaping the society and vested class interests. In their most useful analysis, it was not the moral and progressive ideas and progressive planters who compelled change, but the larger material forces, and the urban middle-class activists derived from them, which made such ideas applicable and dynamic. The ideas had been in place since Brazil's independence: it was the socio-economic context which changed and rendered the ideas a useful façade for larger, more significant change. If, in the celebratory trend, the captives were redeemed by a moral and progressive elite, in the classical Marxist trend it was the urban middle class which represented the movement of history; elements of the Afro-Brazilian masses who got involved did so only late, in the inevitable collapse of a doomed system. Indeed, the captives were designated a dependent variable in the shift towards modern capitalism, rather than the principal object of moral and progressive concern. Once liberated, they were discarded, to fend for themselves as a poorly prepared proletariat in an increasingly modern, competitive, capitalist society.[5]

Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista, 1879–1888* (Rio de Janeiro, 1924); Joaquim Nabuco, *Minha formação* (Rio de Janeiro, 1900 [1893–99]); J. M. Pereira da Silva, *Memorias do meu tempo* (2 vols., Rio de Janeiro, 1895, 1896). 'Culled' is used advisedly, as the perspective and analysis of the various contemporaries cited varied considerably.

[5] The use of 'Marxist' may be disputed: Weinstein uses 'structuralist' as well, and Cardoso seems to assume Marxism and to discuss authors' analyses within that; see Barbara Weinstein, 'The Decline of the Progressive Planter and the Rise of Subaltern Agency: Shifting Narratives of Slave Emancipation in Brazil', in Gilbert M. Joseph (ed.), *Reclaiming the Political in Latin American History: Essays from the North* (Durham NC, 2001), pp. 81–101; and Ciro Flamarion S. Cardoso, 'A abolição como problema histórico e historiográfico', in Ciro Flamarion S. Cardoso (ed.), *Escravidão e abolição no Brasil: novas perspectivas* (Rio de Janeiro, 1988), pp. 73–110. Although Otávio Ianni and Fernando Henrique Cardoso's early works are often cited, its focus on Rio and São Paulo and its iconic role in the literature privilege one particular work: Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Da senzala à colônia* (2nd edition, São Paulo, 1982 [1966]), which is what is summarised here. All three are part of the *paulista* school which had such a dramatic impact on the social sciences in the post-war era; Costa cites and summarises the arguments of another *mestre* of the school, Floristan Fernandes, in discussing the post-abolition plight of freedmen: see Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil meridional: o negro na sociedade escravocrata do Rio Grande do Sul* (São Paulo, 1962); Otávio Ianni, *As metamorfoses do escravo: apogeu e crise da escravatura no Brasil meridional* (São Paulo, 1962); Florestan Fernandes, *A integração do negro na sociedade de classes* (São Paulo, 1964). While Costa notes the contribution of Paula Beiguelman, *Formação política do Brasil* (2nd edition, São Paulo, 1976 [1961]), this work is generally neglected; it actually takes political history very seriously, but somehow neglects not only Afro-Brazilian agency but also that of the Abolitionists, focusing upon a struggle between institutions representing larger socio-economic interests.

The radical agency trend accepted much in the classical Marxist one: its attention to materialist change, its regional economic distinctions, and its attention to the emergence of a new, modernising urban middle class, as well as its hostility towards the elite. However, it also reintroduced an emphasis on Abolitionists' agency and the issues of political decisions and ideology. Still, one of the most curious aspects of this return to political history is that in many cases the parliamentary history central to imperial politics is only partially recovered or understood. With such poor parliamentary history, Abolitionism is often decontextualised in terms of the constraints and dynamic critical to policy and legislation. The emperor's role, for example, is lost or misunderstood, and the political parties' complexity and interactions suffer the same fate. Nonetheless, these historians contributed a very great deal: a capable and well-organised narrative of the Abolitionist movement's development, with attention to regional peculiarities; a very useful review of the ideologies of the political actors at play, along with an impressive analysis of the interplay among the Abolitionist movement, the collapse of rural slave labour, and the parliamentary decision to contain the revolutionary potential set loose; and, finally, a rigorous analysis of the Abolitionists in the national capital, pointing to key divisions between the parliamentary leadership and the local agitators and radicals, to Abolitionism's relationship to the larger urban concerns of Rio's agitators, and to Abolitionists' connections to other movements of the time.[6] Understandably, for these analysts, the role of the Afro-Brazilians looms large. No longer the passive strata redeemed or a dependent variable dismissed, they are now seen as a significant component of the movement, making a critical difference in the streets and plantations through demonstration, resistance and flight. Finally, the problem and possibility of racial solidarity is posed and advanced.[7]

[6] See Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*; Robert Brent Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil* (New York, 1975) and Rebecca Baird Bergstresser, 'The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1880–1889' (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1973) for these contributions, in the order noted. Richard Graham must also be cited here for his contribution to understanding the English influence on Brazilian Abolitionism and the emergence and role of the urban middle class: see, particularly, his 'Causes for the Abolition of Negro Slavery in Brazil: An Interpretive Essay', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 123–37, and *Britain and the Onset of Modernisation in Brazil: 1850–1914* (Cambridge, 1972). Both Conrad and Bergstresser ably critique his analyses. See also Roger Frank Colson, 'The Destruction of a Revolution: Polity, Economy and Society in Brazil, 1750–1895' (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1979): although the Abolitionist movement is not Colson's concern, the larger economic shifts and conflicting interests of the time are, and since financial crisis coloured parliamentary preoccupations, the dissertation remains indispensable. Regarding Abolitionism, his comments about what he calls the 'Santos zone' are particularly useful; cf. John Schulz's useful recent study, *The Financial Crisis of Abolition* (New Haven CT, 2008).

[7] Costa, in discussing popular mobilisation (see *Da senzala à colônia*, pp. 396, 397, 403, 408, 414–16), neglects the issue of race, although she does note it on p. 422; elsewhere

The current trend, emphasising subaltern agency, obviously derives directly from this aspect of the radical agency trend. However, it is also part of a larger historiographical trend which turns away from formal, national political narratives altogether and, as such, de-emphasises the history of abolition as a national political movement in favour of various aspects of abolition as local, social or cultural phenomena. Thus, we have analyses of Afro-Brazilian resistance in one county or another, as a lived experience, of local variations of Abolitionism as a movement or as resistance, and so on. The benefits these studies bring in terms of celebrating Afro-Brazilian agency or exploring other neglected aspects and details of the period tend to be counterbalanced by the de-emphasis on, or even dismissal of, the role of the national political elite or the Abolitionists, and by a certain abandonment of Abolitionism as a necessarily interconnected, national political process – critical to explaining the nature and the timing of many of the phenomena studied. The lack of such a dynamic, informing context obscures why and how such things occurred, and implies only a partial understanding of their significance. To sharpen the point, daily resistance and negotiation cannot explain the urban mobilisation of free Afro-Brazilians as political activists in the early 1880s, nor the dramatic shifts and significance in captives' agency in 1887 and 1888. The role of urban street fighters or the rural resistance and mass flights of that era cannot be understood in terms of their origin or impact without a clearer sense of the political realities and the larger political process of which they were a dynamic, interactive part.[8]

(pp. 426–7), she dismisses Afro-Brazilian racial solidarity, discussing the lack of it on the one hand but, on the other, emphasising Afro-Brazilian presence in the urban mobilisation and among the agents of rural mobilisation. Her explanation may derive from her perspective: 'O movimento abolicionista não se colocava em termos raciais. Era primordialmente uma questão socio-econômica …'(p. 427). Bergstresser ('The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery', especially ch. 5), looking for it, finds it, at least in the leadership. Patrocínio, in particular, emphasised racial solidarity. Although Costa (pp. 426–7) cites both Nabuco and Antônio Bento speaking to the issue, she uses them to support her argument that such an appeal failed. Toplin (*The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, pp. 69–72), in analysing the respective roles of whites and Afro-Brazilians in Abolitionism, suggests a class-based, de facto racial discrimination within the movement. Conrad (*The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, p. 144) accepts Costa's position.

[8] Examples of a subaltern agency approach to abolition are increasingly common, as Weinstein and Cardoso make clear; the citations here are by way of example. Early works stressing slaves' agency, independent of Abolitionists, include Dean, *Rio Claro*, ch. 5; and Cleveland Donald Jr., 'Slave Resistance and Abolitionism in Brazil: The Campista Case, 1879–1888', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1976), pp. 182–93. Sidney Chalhoub's *Visões da liberdade: uma história das últimas décadas da escravidão na corte* (São Paulo, 1990) uses several criminal cases to demonstrate the transition to freedom via Afro-Brazilians' negotiation and resistance. Maria Helena Pereira Toledo Machado, 'From Slave Rebels to Strikebreakers: The Quilombo of Jabaquara and the Problem of Citizenship in Late-Nineteenth-Century Brazil', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 86, no. 2 (2006), pp. 247–74, and her *O plano e o pânico: os movimentos sociais na década da Abolição* (Rio de

It may be suggested that, in both the classical Marxist and the subaltern agency trends, the focus tends to be on a single cause or emphasis, with other significant variables de-emphasised. The misunderstanding or neglect of parliamentary history already noted in discussing the radical agency trend, is stronger, if anything, in the works concerning subaltern agency. It is ironic that the sources left by Abolitionists and their contemporaries point to the multicausal explanation that is more realistic in understanding political events; they understandably also take parliamentary history seriously. While we have gained much by the works of professional historians since the 1950s, it is disturbing to see how much we have lost from the works of these amateur historians of 1890–1924.[9]

It is along these lines that one might propose an approach to the Abolitionist movement which is more inclusive, more synthesising, and which recovers the narrative and analysis of the formal political history of the time informed by both the achievements of the four trends and access to archival resources which contemporaries and radical agency historians did not use. The efficacy of this approach may be indicated by analysing two conjunctures critical to the Abolitionist movement: the rise and fall of the Dantas cabinet (1884–5), and the rapid triumph of the Golden Law (13 May 1888) itself.[10] In both of these moments the integration of the movement's history with parliamentary history is both clear and critical to our understanding. The history of the Dantas administration demonstrates the initial impact of the movement and the failure of the formal elite political structure to engage it successfully. The triumph of abolition itself derived from the radicalisation which followed Dantas' failure. It involved radicalisation on

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Janeiro, 1994), emphasise slave agency in São Paulo; Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares, *A negregada instituição: os capoeiras no Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro, 1994), ch. 5, focuses on the role of *capoeiras*. Beyond the issue of subaltern agency, other directions have been opened up, for example a promising trend towards shifts in juridical and cultural attitudes affecting slavery and abolitionism that includes Joseli Maria Nunes Mendonça, *Entre a mão e os anéis: a lei dos sexagenários e os caminhos da Abolição no Brasil* (Campinas, 1999), and Eduardo Spiller Pena, *Pagens da casa imperial: jurisconsultos, escravidão e a Lei de 1871* (Campinas, 2001); there is also new work on provincial abolitionism, including Roger A. Kittleson, *The Practice of Politics in Postcolonial Brazil: Porto Alegre, 1845–1895* (Pittsburgh PA, 2006), and Dale Torston Graden, *From Slavery to Freedom in Brazil: Bahia, 1835–1900* (Albuquerque NM, 2006).

[9] One is struck, for example, by how inclusive, dynamic and balanced Moraes' 1924 analysis is. Indeed, he anticipates the emphasis on interaction used in this article (see, for example, *A campanha abolicionista*, p. 326: 'Nenhuma historia offerece melhores e mais suggestivos exemplos dessa acção e reacção reciprocas do que a historia da Abolição, entre nós.').

[10] During the monarchy (1822–89), the Council of Ministers was often referred to as the cabinet. Cabinets were known by the date of their appointment by the emperor. In the historiography, however, particularly after the 1847 establishment of the position of President of the Council of Ministers (prime minister), they are often referred to by his name. In this case, the minister was Manuel Pinto de Sousa Dantas.

the part of the reactionaries fearful of the movement, who sought to repress it under the Cotegipe administration. It also involved radicalisation on the part of the Abolitionists and their allies, who, frustrated after Dantas, challenged the crown and the Cotegipe cabinet, and began to sap the established social and political order, forcing a rapid shift in strategy and tactics on the part of the political elite.

The Dantas Cabinet and the Initial Failure of Abolitionist Reform

The significance of the Dantas cabinet (6 June 1884–5 May 1885) is twofold: it addressed the pressures for reform and, in its failure, it led to a critical radicalisation among proponents and opponents of abolition. Published sources agree upon Manuel Pinto de Sousa Dantas' association with the rise and increasing success of the Abolitionist movement. While the movement had sustained reverses in late 1881, by 1884 matters were quite different.

The Abolitionists had initially organised groups among journalists, deputies and military officers in 1880, responding to the first calls for abolitionist reform from two or three deputies in the Chamber. One of those deputies, Joaquim Nabuco, would rapidly rise as the movement's parliamentary leader.[11] These pioneering Abolitionists had first found their voice in the paper *Gazeta de Notícias*. In mid-1880, they had secured, in the *Gazeta da Tarde* and its co-editor, José do Patrocínio, their radical forum, their most celebrated spokesman, and, in the newspaper's journalists and building at the edge of downtown Rio, the key organisers, the site for street demonstrations, and the starting point for parades that publicised their cause in the streets and in nearby theatres. By mid-1881 Patrocínio had emerged as the sole editor of the paper, and the militant phase of the movement had begun, through the organisation of local Abolitionist societies and popular mobilisation in the streets designed to recruit among the working masses.

In late 1881 national elections swept the parliamentary leadership of the movement out of office. However, the movement's urban middle- and working-class base in the capital was secure; indeed, if anything, it spread its appeal and reached out to the provinces. The *Gazeta da Tarde* sent a committee to help found a São Paulo Abolitionist centre and journal in 1882, allying with the celebrated Abolitionist lawyer, Luís Gama, and students associated with the city's prestigious law faculty. With Gama's death that

[11] On the historical background to Dantas' ascent, see Nabuco, *Minha formação*, pp. 233–4; Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos para a historia*, pp. 9, 64–8; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 92–117; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 52–5; Costa, *Da senzala à colônia*, pp. 401–5; Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, chs. 12–14, especially pp. 194–8, 212–13; Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, pp. 99–101. The relative ignorance of parliamentary history becomes clear as one moves from Monteiro and Moraes to Conrad and Toplin.

same year, a more volatile, militant Abolitionist, Antônio Bento de Sousa e Castro, took over the provincial movement's leadership. That same year, 1882, Patrocínio voyaged to Ceará, to support and learn from Fortaleza Abolitionists who had begun their organisation and successful attacks on the inter-provincial slave trade the year before.

As early as 1883, then, considerable pressure from the movement was evident, both in the capital and elsewhere. The emperor began to press various Liberal chieftains to move forward in addressing the problematic 1871 Law of the Free Womb, and a whisper of this was heard in the emperor's speech at the opening of Parliament in May, when he called upon Parliament not to forget slavery's 'gradual extinction'.[12] Patrocínio and two other key Abolitionists agreed that a 'new phase' of propaganda should begin in response to this promising turn in the crown's direction.[13] Immediately thereafter, various Abolitionists in Rio met at the *Gazeta da Tarde*'s office and deepened and strengthened their organisation, founding the *Confederação Abolicionista*, meant not only to ally the various Abolitionist clubs and societies in the capital, but to form the rallying point for the nation's Abolitionist militants. It also began to lay the groundwork for an underground railroad for escaped slaves, involving safe havens in homes in the city, settlements outside Rio and, if necessary, conveyance to Ceará, which was now entering the final moments of the struggle to make the province entirely free of slavery. Indeed, in January 1884, with the triumph of the movement in Ceará and its impact on Amazonas and Rio Grande do Sul, the national scope and public mobilisation of the Abolitionist movement were clearly effective.[14]

More importantly, in Rio itself the gains of that national mobilisation, under the direction of the more militant Abolitionists, stood in harsh contrast with the parliamentary niceties associated with politics under the

[12] 'Gradual extinction' was the alleged purpose of the controversial 1871 legislation, Brazil's first abolitionist reform, which was effectively imposed upon the nation by the emperor. While the enslaved were left captive, children born of slaves after 28 September 1871 were declared free. However, the legislation's constraints and ineffective enforcement rendered that freedom largely illusory. For the law's impact, see Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, ch. 7; for its origins and political significance, see notes 21 and 27 below.

[13] On the decision for a 'new phase' of Abolitionist propaganda in May 1883, see André Rebouças, entry 4 May, diário 1883, Coleção André Rebouças, lata 464, Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro [hereafter CAR].

[14] One should note that the movement in Ceará had an independent origin. Indeed, it inspired not only other provinces, but also the movement in the capital. It was linked to the national movement in Rio by Patrocínio's voyage there in 1882–3, and its mobilisation tactics of street-by-street public manumissions were later employed by Patrocínio in Rio. The references to Amazonas and Rio Grande do Sul point to the liberation of the first and the abolitionism adapted by the second: see Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, ch. 13, and Kittleson, *The Practice of Politics*.

monarchy. After all, the militants who had carried the movement's standard forward after 1881 emphasised reaching out to the middle class and the working poor, and they did so with noisy demonstrations, strident journalism and demagogic appeal. Mass participation, quite possibly heavily Afro-Brazilian, as well as the decision to establish an underground railroad and fugitive safe houses and settlements, combined with the Ceará technique of street-by-street abolition campaigns, all of which was unprecedented and uncontained, clearly put the established political order under considerable pressure.[15] By March 1884 the *Gazeta de Noticias* noted that the elite parties' chieftains had taken notice. The paper opined that it was necessary to 'direct and use the torrent'.[16]

The actual nature of urban Afro-Brazilian mobilisation is often assumed from the results rather than discussed. Nonetheless, a glimpse can be had of its mechanisms, for in the historiography one finds one account, by a participant, of the techniques actually involved. Osório Duque Estrada, a young admirer of the movement who later joined it as a journalist, specifically recalls how the Abolitionists set up new *sociedades emancipadores*. He writes how they would make their appeal directly to the '*povo*' (the mass of common working people) and '*populares*' (individuals from that mass) in demonstrations that assembled at the office of the *Gazeta da Tarde* on the rua da Uruguaiana. He mentions how the organisers would select one of the best-dressed of the *populares* to bear the standard as they marched since, apparently following the established model of religious processions, each Abolitionist society or club had its own standard and paraded behind it. They would march to a designated theatre (the Recréio Dramático or the Teatro Politeama are often mentioned, the one on the rua Espírito Santo, the other on the rua do Lavradio, both further away on the city's outskirts), where they would celebrate the inauguration of the new society and take a collection to

[15] Afro-Brazilian participation is disputed, as the historiographical review above (note 7) indicates. The argument here takes a very conservative, minimal position, and assumes that it is not unreasonable to propose that Afro-Brazilians were likely to be attracted to such a movement in at least the same proportion as they constituted in the free population of Rio. The racial composition of Rio's population, of course, is speculative. The first 'reliable' census data indicate that in 1872, the total population of the city was 274,972. Brazilian nationals totalled 190,693, of whom 144,882 were free. Of these, 58,590 were people of colour (37,167 *pardos*; 21,423 *pretos*) – in other words, 40 per cent of the total free population of Brazilian nationals. It is likely, of course, that some of those mobilised were not only free people of colour who were moved, as whites were, by the agitators' romantic, crusading appeal, but the captives themselves. Many urban slaves worked without supervision in the street, after all, and their own interests were clearly at stake. If they did participate in sufficient numbers, this would help to make people of colour more than half of those involved. On the census data, see *Recenseamento Geral do Brasil, 1872: Municipio Neutro* (Rio de Janeiro, 1872), p. 60.

[16] Quotation from *Gazeta de Noticias*, 31 March 1884, taken from Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, p. 52, note 49.

emancipate individual slaves. It is noteworthy that the money collected was very little; the people recruited were hardly well-to-do.[17]

In this way, using the romantic, moralising propaganda of the movement, an unprecedented appeal to the urban poor was made, successfully recruiting them into a sustained political movement. Surely, more work on that appeal and recruitment would be useful. Surely, too, the same can be said of the response within the established political world. Nonetheless, while the response of the political elite still lacks a careful study of both parliamentary debates and private correspondence, a great deal is obvious in the actions of that elite.[18] For example, in response to the Abolitionist advances up to 1884, the historiography notes that Dantas was made prime minister and the government undertook reform seriously for the first time since 1871. However, significant aspects of how this occurred, and why it may have seemed adequate, have generally been misunderstood or ignored, as have been critical aspects of Dantas' political failure. All of this lies within the realm of parliamentary history.

Such history requires that we remember something of the institutional and political development of parliamentary government in Brazil. The constitution of 1824, imposed upon the nation by Pedro I, emphasised the authority and direction of the monarch, but also established a bicameral legislature. The lower house, the Chamber, was made up of groups of deputies, each representing the various provinces and elected indirectly. Free men with a minimal income or other evidence of personal independence voted for a local provincial college of electors; these voted the deputies into office. The upper house, the Senate, was made up of members appointed by the monarch from a list of the three candidates most voted upon in each province by the same method. Given the influence and deference associated with the socio-economic elite in town and country, their preponderance in elections was assumed. While the monarch, the cabinet and party leaders

[17] Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 92–3. Duque-Estrada was an Abolitionist working with Patrocínio by 1887. The comment about the donations combines Duque-Estrada and Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 137–8, 148.

[18] Despite the lacunae noted here, it is in the study of both the movement's mobilisation and the direct political response of the elite that the established literature has been richest. For the events and propaganda, see Costa, *Da senzala à colônia*, part 3; Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, chs. 10–14; Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, ch. 4; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 92–109; and Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 22–55. However, handling of the debates in most of the major works is limited to support for the historians' points, rather than analysis of the debates themselves. Rui de Barbosa's correspondence related to the Dantas cabinet is in the *Fundação da Casa de Rui Barbosa* (Rio); Nabuco's correspondence is in the *Instituto Joaquim Nabuco* (Recife); Cotegipe's in the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*; João Alfredo's in the library of the *Universidade Federal de Pernambuco*. To my knowledge, relatively little or no published use of these collections has been made by any of the historians concerned with abolition to date.

generally had the final, determining impact on the individuals who took office, very few of them did not represent, in origin and perspective, some faction of the local socio-economic elite. More radical, democratic deputies of a different background were very few and far between, and generally sprang from urban bases.

The monarch's authority and direction were established by his charismatic authority as a dynast and his constitutional authority as both the moderating power (a fourth power, designed to oversee the function of the other three in the national interest) and the head of the executive power (acting through the Council of Ministers, the cabinet, which the monarch appointed). Between 1826 and 1837 Liberal leadership in the Chamber had successfully used parliamentary obstruction and debate to establish the idea that the ministers appointed to the cabinet should represent the majority, and should resign once they lost that majority's support or the confidence of the monarch.

In the 1840s Pedro II and his ministers undercut the representative quality of the process of bringing a cabinet to power and keeping it there. The constitution had long established that the monarch could appoint whomsoever he chose to his cabinet; however, new centralising legislation gave the cabinet new power to intervene in the electoral process, to the point that it could corrupt it and produce a majority in the Chamber supportive of its policies. The cabinet's capacity to form a supportive majority was also increasingly enhanced by the growing opportunities and needs for state patronage, as well as electoral reforms in the 1850s which weakened the political clout of the two national parties and consequently enhanced that of the cabinet.

In effect, if the emperor were unhappy with the cabinet, he could indicate his lack of confidence, thus forcing its resignation, and then appoint a new cabinet. If the new cabinet did not have a supportive majority in the Chamber, it would ask the emperor to dissolve it, call new elections, and then use its ministerial powers and patronage to attempt to elect a majority that did support it. The corruption of the representative quality of the Chamber occasioned criticisms of the emperor for personal intervention and increasing calls for electoral reform, beginning in the 1840s and sustained by both of the two national parties. However, the impact of the 1880 electoral reform on improving the representative quality of government is doubtful. It included direct elections of the deputies, to be sure, but the electorate was now so qualified that the number of voters decreased dramatically. In effect, in the 1880s, if anything, the electoral process emphasised the political power of the socio-economic elite more dramatically than the older system, and without affecting the cabinet's capacity to corrupt the electoral process. Certainly, the emperor's role had not been diminished, either.

The two traditional national parties were the Conservatives and the Liberals, with roots in the 1830s; a Republican party, founded in 1870, existed but, given the constraints noted above, it was very much in a minority. Of the two major parties the Conservatives were traditionally more coherent ideologically and more disciplined as a party, although they had been divided into two wings, dissident and reformist, by the struggle over the Law of the Free Womb in 1871. The Liberal party had originated as an alliance of various fractions opposed to the original, reactionary party from which the Conservatives had evolved. They had unified in that opposition, but had been divided into a more radical and a more moderate wing as early as the 1840s; they were consequently less disciplined. However, the Liberals derived a great deal of their energy and appeal from their minority, radical wing, which, since the 1850s, had tended to attract increasing support from a growing urban middle class.[19]

All of this helps us to unravel the complications of the parliamentary difficulties of the 1880s. In brief, Dantas' ascent as a Liberal points to the traditional divisions and consequent weakness of his party at the time. After all, he was the sixth Liberal prime minister in six years. Neither an ongoing financial crisis nor the looming abolitionist issue had been managed successfully by any of the Liberal cabinets. They simply could not unify the moderate majority and reformist minority of the Liberal Party behind their cabinet programmes for long and had fallen, one after the other. In essence, without party unity, no overall Liberal majority in the Chamber could be maintained. Instead, invariably, one or other Liberal fraction would ally with the Conservative minority in the Chamber when a vote of confidence in the cabinet was called, and topple a cabinet to which they had become hostile.[20] Added to this parliamentary impasse was the emperor's role. While he may well have brought in the Liberals in 1878 in part to do something about the obvious failure of his pet project, the 1871 Law of the Free Womb, the Liberal moderates and their leaders, who dominated the party, had been hostile or indifferent to abolitionism. It was only the manifest success of the Abolitionist movement which provided the pressure and political justification for the emperor's appointment of Dantas, who was linked to the party's reformist minority, to undertake a project of moderate abolitionism.

[19] This analysis of parliamentary history draws on Jeffrey D. Needell, *The Party of Order: The Conservatives, the State, and Slavery in the Brazilian Monarchy, 1831–1871* (Stanford CA, 2006), especially chs. 3, 4, 5 and 7; and the same author's 'Variations on a Theme: Liberalism's Vagaries under the Brazilian Monarchy', in Iván Jaksic and Eduardo Posada-Carbó (eds.), *El liberalismo latinoamericano del siglo XIX: ensayos de historia política e intelectual*, with prologue by Natalio Botana and epilogue by Frank Safford (Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica, forthcoming, autumn 2010).

[20] Pereira da Silva, *Memorias do meu tempo*, vol. 2, pp. 183–273; Otoni, *Autobiografia*, chs. 15–16.

It seems clear that the emperor's intention was not only to contain the obvious threat posed by the Abolitionist movement in the streets, but to revive a 'safe' process of gradual abolitionism.[21]

Dantas' appointment immediately galvanised Abolitionist support in the streets; in the Chamber, he was personally linked to key Abolitionists.[22] Dantas used one of them, Rui Barbosa, a protégé, to write up and defend his project in the Chamber. The Abolitionist militants shifted from public pressure against the established order to public pressure favouring the cabinet and its reform. The project itself indirectly recognised one key aspect of militant Abolitionism, however moderately, by freeing 60-year-olds without indemnification. The issue of no indemnification was shocking. After all, if the slaves were legitimate property, one's right to that property was protected by law, and if the state took that property, one had to be indemnified. If the state did not pay, it implied (as the Abolitionists argued) that the enslaved were not property like any other and – more to the point – that the state should and could interfere with slaveholding, and even end it.[23]

In these ways, the Abolitionist movement, particularly in the immediate wake of urban (and, presumably, Afro-Brazilian) mobilisation, had a direct impact on parliamentary history. It provided the basis for Dantas' rise and the context explaining his decision to push for a reform which, in terms of parliamentary precedent, was radical.

[21] On the emperor's role regarding 1871, see Needell, *The Party of Order*, chs. 6–7. It may well have been his abolitionism which swayed the emperor's choice of the Liberals in 1878, ostensibly to undertake electoral reform. After all, while both parties supported electoral reform (on the Conservatives' position, see Needell, *The Party of Order*, pp. 263f, 281), only Liberal reformists were on record as embracing abolitionism: see Pereira da Silva, *Memorias do meu tempo*, vol. 2, pp. 272–6, 282; Otoni, *Autobiografia*, p. 200; Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos para a historia*, pp. 64–8; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 52–5. The failures and frustrations of the Liberal cabinets and the emperor's role are precisely the sort of issue that Conrad (*The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 212–13) and Toplin (*The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, pp. 80, 81, 199–201) do not manage well.

[22] Dantas' son-in-law, Jerônimo Sodré Pereira, was the first deputy to raise the issue of abolition in the Chamber, on 5 March 1879. Dantas' son, Rodolpho Epifânio de Sousa Dantas, now a deputy, was a close friend of Joaquim Nabuco, the second deputy to raise the issue in 1879 (22 March), and the acknowledged parliamentary chieftain of the Abolitionists; Rodolpho was an even closer friend of Rui Barbosa, a protégé of his father, and a militant Abolitionist since the 1860s.

[23] On Abolitionist support for the cabinet, see Pereira da Silva, *Memorias do meu tempo*, vol. 2, chs. 14–15, *passim*, particularly pp. 280–1; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 158–60, 187; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 63–8, 79, 81–3; see also Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, ch. 14, both for this support and for the significance of the sexagenarian law (pp. 213–16); cf. Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, p. 102, on the law. Conrad makes the point that the sexagenarian law was resisted not only as an attack on property rights but because it would free the significant fraction of African captives who were in fact younger but had been registered as born before 1831 in order to avoid legal problems with the ban on the African slave trade after that date.

Nonetheless, Abolitionist support and the confidence of the emperor did not suffice. Dantas could not obtain the votes he needed from the Chamber's Liberal majority to survive a vote of confidence. In desperation, he reached out to the key Conservative Abolitionist, João Alfredo [Correia de Oliveira], to ask for his support in securing votes from the Conservative minority in the Chamber. João Alfredo refused. When the emperor, who had encouraged such an alliance, pressed him personally, João Alfredo refused again.[24]

The result was Dantas' request for the dissolution of the Chamber and new elections, in an attempt to recruit a Liberal majority more supportive of the cabinet. The emperor granted the request. The election results, however, actually demonstrated the unpopularity of the cabinet's abolitionism among the restricted electorate of the times. Indeed, the elections led to a larger Conservative minority. In the 1885 session Dantas, in vote after vote, was denied a credible majority. Finally he was forced to resign; the emperor could not expect that even a new election would make a difference.[25]

Reaction, Radicalisation, and Triumph

The literature is clear on the immediate parliamentary results of this failure. The emperor appointed his favourite among the Liberals, the canny chieftain José Antônio de Saraiva, to try to unify the party and to pass the abolitionist reform. Saraiva, who had the electoral reform of 1880 to his credit, understood the magic of compromise and revision when trying to find where the votes were. He drafted a 'revision' of Dantas' project which was explicitly designed to 'tranquillise the slaveholders', and it did. The majority of deputies in the Chamber liked it; the Abolitionists opposed it vociferously. Indeed, even the Conservative minority in the Chamber perceived it as an advantageous resolution to the threat that Dantas' original project had posed, as the clauses of this revised version actually benefited slaveholders. It raised the value of the captives, thus slowing the process of emancipation; it also set up an indemnification process based on public funds to pay for emancipating slaves at those new prices, so that those who were actually freed reimbursed their owners handsomely with the public's money. It also made

[24] Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos para a historia*, pp. 180–2.

[25] Otoni, *Autobiografia*, pp. 215–18; Pereira da Silva, *Memorias do meu tempo*, vol. 2, pp. 282–3; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 74–8. These sources differ on whether the elections were corrupted to favour the cabinet or not. In either case they indicate the voters' rejection of the project. Otoni makes a point of stating that Dantas' electoral pressure was designed to bring in a Liberal majority without emphasis on abolitionism per se: he apparently assumed a Liberal majority would back him for partisan reasons. If this was his calculation, he was wrong.

sure that the 60-year-olds freed by the legislation worked additional years to indemnify their owners, thus underscoring the legitimacy of slaves as property. It was no wonder that, in the end, even the Conservatives in the Chamber helped pass the bill.[26]

The Conservatives' role here was part and parcel of their growing strength, despite the repeated appointment of Liberal cabinets. In the turmoil associated with Dantas' failure, they sensed in the Liberal divisions the potential for a return to power, and they were not shy about it. When João Alfredo refused an abolitionist alliance with Dantas in 1884, he had held out another choice to the emperor. He had offered a successful abolitionist reform under Conservative auspices. In contrast to the unstable, divided, and ineffective Liberals, he argued that the Conservatives, reactionaries and reformists alike, were unified under the Baron de Cotegipe.[27] If Cotegipe backed an abolitionist reform, the party would as well. To whet the emperor's appetite, João Alfredo also made certain that Cotegipe confirmed his willingness by a public statement in September 1884, at the banquet that the Conservative abolitionists held annually to celebrate the Law of the Free Womb.[28]

As the role of the Conservative minority in the Chamber had demonstrated, both in Dantas' administration and in Saraiva's, the Liberals' divisions had provided Conservative opportunity. By throwing their weight to one wing or the other, they had been able to condemn or support the successive Liberal cabinets in the votes of confidence critical to cabinet survival. Their unwillingness to support Dantas' reform had led to Dantas' defeat; their willingness to support Saraiva's revised project had guaranteed

[26] On the Saraiva project, Pereira da Silva, *Memorias do meu tempo*, vol. 2, p. 297; Otoni, *Autobiografia*, pp. 220–3; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 163–9, 179; cf. Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 94–5. See also Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 222–3.

[27] During the debates over the Law of the Free Womb, in 1871, the Conservative Party had been divided between those who had been induced to support the reform, led by the then prime minister, the Viscount do Rio Branco, and those who had opposed it. For the rest of the Rio Branco administration (1871–75), Paulino [José Soares de Sousa, filho], leader of the 'dissident' opposition to the reform, maintained resistance to Rio Branco. In the Conservative administration of the Duke de Caxias, which followed, party unity was emphasised, and Rio Branco and Paulino were reconciled: see Paulino José Soares de Souza Neto, 'Conselheiro Paulino de Souza', *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, vol. 169 (1934), p. 503. João Alfredo, a cabinet minister in 1871, had played the critical role in organising Rio Branco's Chamber majority. With Rio Branco's death in 1880, João Alfredo effectively became his political heir in the reform wing of the party. Paulino continued to dominate the traditional hard core of the party but was widely respected by all. The Baron de Cotegipe, the senior Conservative in the Senate, had supported Rio Branco, but had strong links to the traditional hard core as well, and was thus deferred to by both wings. On 1871 and the Conservatives, see Needell, *The Party of Order*, chs. 6 and 7.

[28] Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos para a historia*, pp. 182–3; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, p. 123.

Saraiva's success. However, this predicament finally persuaded Saraiva to offer his resignation.

Saraiva was conscious that he had been able to get his revised reform through the Chamber only because of calculated Conservative support. He also knew that he could not depend upon the Conservative deputies in other cases; more important still, the revised reform bill still had to pass in the Senate. Saraiva knew that he could not depend upon the Conservatives there. They had no interest in his continued political success. In effect, Saraiva could not continue to govern, much less pass the reform in the Senate, without the Conservatives' support, and this was likely to be denied him. Well known for his political pragmatism and political success, Saraiva thus decided to rest upon his laurels and resign, rather than risk defeat. Nor was any other Liberal chieftain willing to take the chances Saraiva refused; they knew better. When the emperor asked a series of the Liberal chieftains to accept the prime minister's portfolio, one after another refused.

In the end, the emperor had no choice but to call Cotegipe to power. The Liberals' divisions had proven fatal, and the baron was not only the Conservatives' leader but, in 1884, had committed himself publicly to abolitionist reform, as noted earlier. The baron, true to his word, promised to oversee Saraiva's reactionary revision of the Dantas reform through the Senate. However, upon taking office, he immediately lost a vote of confidence in the Chamber, where the Liberals finally united, if only to oppose him and his party. Cotegipe, however, secure in the emperor's support, went on to see the bill through the Senate. The day after, the emperor dissolved the Chamber with its Liberal majority. There was no point calling a Conservative to power and expecting him to govern with a majority hostile to him in the Chamber. In the subsequent voting, Cotegipe's cabinet oversaw election of a staggering Conservative majority.[29] With this majority, Cotegipe governed from August 1885 to March 1888, the longest administration of the abolitionist era and the one most responsible for the movement's radicalisation, increased popular support and eventual success.

This interpretation seems counterintuitive, but it can be explained easily enough as the logical response of an increasingly successful and radical opposition movement to an administration of violent reaction. One should note, though, that this new stage of Abolitionist radicalisation actually had its roots under Dantas. Indeed, in response both to Dantas' difficulties in the Chamber and his subsequent resignation, and to Saraiva's revisionist reaction, the Abolitionist movement, enraged and frustrated, had already begun a process of growth and radicalisation.

[29] Otoni, *Autobiografia*, pp. 220–4; Pereira da Silva, *Memorias do meu tempo*, vol. 2, pp. 298–307; cf. Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 94–5, 105, 122–3, 128.

Abolitionists began a more aggressive propaganda campaign and renewed urban mobilisation supporting Dantas as early as August 1884, and the elections later that year sharpened the edge of the propaganda and brought about extraordinary organisation and demonstrations. Nabuco was a particularly critical part of this. After his defeat in 1881, his provincial campaign in 1884 was a radical one, directed at the urban voters in Recife with tremendous popular success. His final triumph in mid-1885 (the 1884 election had been disputed and then annulled) was the focus of exhilarating mass demonstrations of unprecedented numbers in the north-east and, particularly, in Rio.[30] He went on to hammer at Saraiva's reactionary revision in a series of speeches in the session of 1885, while Patrocínio and Rui Barbosa spoke out repeatedly at demonstrations and in a series of public speeches. At this same time, mid-1885, Saraiva's government apparently began to try to put a repressive lid on militant Abolitionists by arming night patrols in Rio and violently repressing Abolitionists elsewhere; Abolitionists responded forcefully in the press and in the street. In the provinces, most notably in Campos (Province of Rio de Janeiro), Carlos de Lacerda organised and led resistance, and faced illegal and legal repression for his pains, becoming a cause célèbre in the Rio press.

This process of mobilisation, initially in support of Dantas, then in response to the failure of Liberal reformism (signalled by his fall and Saraiva's reactionary revisionism), only deepened to new levels of organisation and resistance with the ascent of the Conservatives, whose position in regard to Abolitionism was certainly as hostile as that of the Liberals' majority. After a brief ebb in activity, the Confederação Abolicionista returned to public opposition to the government, continuing public mobilisation through its meetings and private work through its clandestine activities. By early 1886, the paulista Abolitionists, under Antônio Bento's charismatic leadership, had taken a more dangerous step. They amplified their underground railroad activities by beginning to penetrate the rural sector themselves in order to organise flight among plantation slaves.[31]

[30] After his 1881 defeat Nabuco left for London, where he used the opportunity to organise European support for the Brazilian movement and to write one of its two or three greatest books of propaganda, *O abolicionismo* (1883). He returned in 1884 to take a leading part in the propaganda and support for the Dantas administration, but, like other Abolitionists, saw his election keenly disputed when Dantas successfully called for the Chamber's dissolution and the new elections in late 1884. Nabuco's election was contested and annulled. The Abolitionists brought him in to stand in another provincial district where the election had been delayed, and he was finally victorious in June 1885.

[31] On the movement under Dantas, see Pereira da Silva, *Memorias*, vol. 2, pp. 280–1, 289–90; Patrocínio, *Gazeta da Tarde*, 20 Dec. 1884; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, 159–60; on the repression under Saraiva, see Patrocínio, *Gazeta da Tarde*, 17 June 1885. Patrocínio's articles appear in José do Patrocínio, *Campanha abolicionista: coletânea de artigos* (Rio de Janeiro, 1996), pp. 39–177. Nabuco's published correspondence provides good coverage of the general

As might be clear by now, one best understands the political process here as an interactive one between the increasingly militant movement, in which Afro-Brazilian agency is necessarily a critical part, and state repression and reaction on the part of Saraiva and, particularly, Cotegipe. Indeed, after his ascent and the passage of the 'revised' reform, Cotegipe took the offensive against the newly mobilising movement, striking at it through police and secret police agents in the streets and the countryside. He also made it clear that state support for further abolitionist legislation was over. With the solid backing of the Chamber's majority, he parried each and every abolitionist project except one, to which we shall return shortly. In turn, Cotegipe's reaction compelled more strenuous Abolitionist radicalisation, political acuity and growing popularity.

The Abolitionists, knowing that they had nothing to expect from Cotegipe except violent opposition, set about trying to mount a capable response. In the short term they sought ways to undercut slavery illegally, since parliamentary redress was seemingly denied them. However, they also worked with great success to cultivate urban public opinion. They knew that public condemnation in the press and noisy street demonstrations by thousands would create a perception and reality of political crisis, comprising unremitting pressure on the Crown and the Chamber, their only hopes of combating the cabinet's policies.

The Abolitionists included capable journalists and lawyers in their number, of course, so they used cases of slaveholding cruelty or state repression in sensationalist journalism to portray the administration successfully as cruel and entirely the instrument of the privileged planters; a stubborn, violent, elitist and backward government hostile to the interests of most Brazilians and of Brazilian progress. Nabuco even dared to attack the emperor publicly, condemning his apparent abandonment of reform in speech and pamphlet.

Increasingly, as Cotegipe's repression of the movement's meetings and demonstrations grew, the Abolitionists not only publicised the abuse, but

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situation and his own electoral history; see, for example, his letters to barão de Penedo, Rio, 31 May 1884; Rio, 23 July 1884; Rio, 31 July 1884; to Rodolfo Dantas, Recife, 27 Oct. 1884; Recife, 2 Nov. 1884; to barão de Penedo, Recife, 28 Oct. 1884; 10 Dec. 1884; Pernambuco [Recife], 7 Jan. 1885; to João Clapp, Petrópolis, n.d. [very early May] 1885; to barão de Penedo, Rio, 17 May 1885; Recife, 24 June 1885; all in Joaquim Nabuco, *Cartas a amigos* (2 vols., São Paulo, 1949), vol. 1, pp. 122–38. On the Campos Abolitionists, see Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 191–2, and Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 197–8. Moraes (*A campanha abolicionista*, p. 105) claims there was an ebb in Abolitionist fervour in the immediate aftermath of the Saraiva bill, but this lasted a matter of months; see Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 187–9; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 147–8. On Antônio Bento's paulista radicalism, see Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 261–76; cf. Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 231–7, 242–5, on the resurgence and on Antônio Bento.

responded violently to the attacks of the police agents. They saw to it that the police violence in Rio promoted middle-class sympathy for the movement. In this repression, the administration's chief of police in Rio, João Coelho Bastos, earned a reputation that the movement successfully exploited. He was attacked for his use of agents provocateurs and stigmatised for capturing and returning fugitive slaves. As Coelho Bastos was infamous for shaving the heads of the fugitives to mark them, he was known on the street, and then in the Abolitionist press, as *rapa côco* (head-shaver) in the street slang of the time.

It is also critical to note the quickened pace and increasing size of the Abolitionist demonstrations. Patrocínio energised these in the *Gazeta da Tarde* and in street speeches, and used them to run for the office of *vereador* (town councillor), securing election in July 1886. In another example, thousands were organised to protest the purge of José Mariano, a noted Abolitionist, who had been thrown out of the Chamber by the credentials committee that same month. In another tactic the movement's lawyers and publicists played successfully upon gruesome cases of violence and cruelty towards particular slaves to suggest the larger barbarity of slaveholding in general.[32]

The one case of successful reform mentioned earlier was the result of such tactics. After his 1885 victory Nabuco was one of the deputies turned out of office by the Conservative election that followed Cotegipe's ascent. He simply retreated to the bulwarks of public opinion, where he had fought for abolition between 1881 and 1885 as well. He and his older brother, Sizenando, a lawyer, were among those who used journalism and the courts on Abolitionism's behalf. It was Nabuco who, in July 1886, denounced an especially gruesome flogging, successfully sensationalising the case in the press, so that it was carried into Parliament's debates. There the majority, possibly caught between their defence of Brazilian slaveholding as relatively benign and the irrefutably contrary evidence of the case in question, divided and broke on the question. In the end, they actually revoked the penalty of flogging for slaves, included in imperial law since 1835. Given the general understanding that the threat of violence was crucial to maintaining plantation discipline, this had a tremendous impact on the practice of slaveholding, particularly in São Paulo, where it has been argued that the predisposition to resistance was greater.[33] At least one knowledgeable

[32] Pereira da Silva, *Memorias do meu tempo*, vol. 2, p. 315; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 183, 186–98; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 134–8, 147–59, ch. 8, focusing on judicial abolitionism; Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 233–6; Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, pp. 190–202.

[33] Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, pp. 202–3, makes the point that the paulista frontier, as the most dynamic, lucrative and initially labour-poor region, would have recruited slave labour from either African-born captives or captives uprooted from other parts of Brazil: in effect, people less likely to be restrained by an established local moral economy.

contemporary attributes a great deal of the progressive breakdown of rural discipline in 1886–7 to this reform.[34]

In summary, the Abolitionists' radicalisation may be divided into four related responses: journalistic attacks on the reactionary turn of the cabinet and the Crown; physical and press resistance to the police violence; sensationalist coverage of the barbarity of slavery; and mounting, vociferous public demonstrations, often linked to electoral campaigns or issues. All of this increased the pressure in the imperial capital, playing out before the eyes of the monarch and the Parliament, and compelling their attention and their concern.

However, some of the most important Abolitionist pressure felt in the capital actually came from outside Rio. On the one hand, as already noted, there was the fearless Abolitionist campaign in Campos, the provincial seat of sugar planting in lowland Rio de Janeiro, a campaign which brought on unusually brazen repression, and which was defended by Sizenando Nabuco in court and publicised in Rio's press. On the other hand, there was Antônio Bento's increasingly dramatic, direct subversion of plantation slavery in the province of São Paulo. Begun by 1886, as noted earlier, this subversion was organised by Antônio Bento in the provincial capital, São Paulo, but effected in the coffee plantations themselves. His agents, the so-called *caifazes*, went out to the paulista plantations and, risking life and limb, used the Abolitionist arguments and promises of safe conduct and safe haven in São Paulo city or Santos to convince more and more to flee.[35] The resulting mass flights began with tens but then grew to hundreds of plantation captives, hundreds that were economically – and thus, politically – significant numbers by 1887.[36]

[34] Otoni, *Autobiografia*, pp. 273–6.

[35] The origin of the term *caifaz* is unclear. Conrad, without citation, suggests that it might be associated with the New Testament figure, Caiaphas, high priest of the Jews, quoted in John (11: 49–50) as calling for Jesus' sacrifice: see Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, p. 242. Perhaps Conrad is right. As he points out, Antônio Bento, a charismatic figure, carefully used Christian motifs in his campaign, organising his agents out of a religious confraternity and publishing a journal called *Redempção*. Indeed, the text (John 11:49–52) is 'Caiaphas … spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" … he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.' Perhaps, then, Antônio Bento meant to refer, through Caiaphas, to the need of his agents to sacrifice for the 'nation … for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one'.

[36] On the condemnation of flogging, see Otoni, *Autobiografia*, pp. 273–6; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, p. 199; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 215–16; Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, p. 237; and Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, pp. 198–200. The explanation in the text here is speculative, awaiting more research in the debates themselves and the archival correspondence. On Antônio Bento's work, see, for context, Pereira da Silva, *Memorias do meu tempo*, vol. 2, p. 311; and, on Antônio Bento's campaign itself,

By that time Cotegipe's position had been seriously weakened in Rio, even in the upper reaches of politics. By late 1886 the emperor was making public his dissatisfaction with Cotegipe's abandonment of further abolitionism. This is said to have influenced Cotegipe's minister of agriculture, Antônio Prado, into leaving the cabinet in mid-1887 and then breaking with the administration's anti-abolitionist policies in late 1887. It has been said that he did so out of political ambition, in the hope of attracting the monarch's favour.[37]

While this is possible, there are more obvious explanations for Prado's decision to break with Cotegipe's intransigence. They had to do with the growth of export production in his province. In São Paulo, the new frontier of Brazilian coffee exports, this demand for expanded production and even the maintenance of the production they already had were increasingly problematic, sapped by the steady demographic decline of the slave population, and threatened by abolitionist reform. The question of a viable, expanding source of labour thus affected paulista planters dramatically. While Prado steadfastly fought Abolitionism until 1887, even an end to that threat, which was clearly improbable, would not suffice, given the dwindling slave population. In fact Prado had been seeking an alternative to slavery altogether for some time. In the aftermath of the 1871 abolitionist reform Prado had figured among the paulista planters who were exploring the immigration of wage labour from Europe as a solution to the threat to slavery as a labour source. That attempt had failed, but by the mid-1880s Prado and his brother, Martinho Prado Júnior, using their powerful provincial and imperial connections and subsidies, had tried again and, in the more threatening abolitionist milieu of the era, had organised increasingly successful wage-labour immigration from Italy. By 1886, the numbers arriving were appreciable, and they would increase dramatically over the next year. The possibility of a gradual transition to immigrant labour was clear. With it, the need to fight Abolitionism to preserve slavery intact correspondingly ebbed; indeed, as increasingly radical Abolitionist actions actually threatened discipline on the plantations, undercutting dependable labour, that became more of an issue than the right to own people in and of itself. As Thomas Holloway has

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Afonso Celso, *Oito anos de parlamento*, p. 91; Nabuco, *Minha formação*, p. 227; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, p. 216; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 261–76, 304–9; Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 242–7; and Toplin, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil*, pp. 209–19. See also Machado, *O plano*, ch. 4, particularly pp. 153–6, 161–2; and Costa, *Da senzala à colônia*, pp. 425, 430.

[37] Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 159–60, discusses the emperor's trip to the province of São Paulo, accompanied by journalists and Antônio Prado, and how the emperor emphasised his abolitionism. This is a clear break from his initial support for Cotegipe as the prime minister capable of passing the Saraiva reform (see *ibid.*, p. 123): 'o que, *para o momento*, pareceu bastante a Pedro II'.

demonstrated, this need for labour stability and growth trumped the rejection of abolition, and explains Prado's apparently shocking shift towards accommodating Abolitionism in late 1887.[38]

Nor was Prado alone in such thinking: it may well be that he was pressed forward by his constituents. As Abolitionist pressure grew in São Paulo, driven particularly by the mass flights initiated by Antônio Bento, the most successful pioneer planters, desperate to maintain a steady, stable labour supply in a period of good prices and increasing production, adopted a radical plan to keep slave labour working. They offered a conditional form of abolition to their captives in August 1887, trading freedom for three more years of servitude. Prado agreed with this as a pragmatic, critical solution to the catastrophic possibilities in his province; he also thought it would successfully resolve the larger political crisis in the empire. Thus it was that, in late 1887, he stood in Senate and directly challenged Cotegipe's position. Prado argued that the example of his province suggested the practical national solution to the unrelenting mobilisation of the Abolitionists and the increasing prospect of labour destabilisation. Within days João Alfredo supported this position in the Senate as well. Faced with an unusual challenge by two significant party chieftains in such a forum, Cotegipe had to respond. He publicly announced his decision either to reconsider abolition to unify the party or to resign to enable another Conservative chieftain to do so.[39]

This occurred in September 1887. By then Cotegipe's position had been sapped on the military front as well. In early 1887, after the emperor had publicly undercut Cotegipe's policy, the monarch fell ill; at the end of June he left for a European cure. His illness and absence raised the spectre of a collapse of legitimacy and stability for both the cabinet and the monarchy

[38] Thomas H. Holloway, 'Immigration and Abolition: The Transition from Slave to Free Labor in the São Paulo Coffee Zone', in Dauril Alden and Warren Dean (eds.), *Essays Concerning the Socioeconomic History of Brazil and Portuguese India* (Gainesville FL, 1977), pp. 150–77.

[39] Otoni, *Autobiografia*, pp. 276–7; Nabuco, *Minha formação*, pp. 227–8, 233–4; Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos para a historia*, pp. 169–70, 184–5; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição, pp.* 217–18; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 162–6. On the paulista labour predicament and the turn to abolitionism, see Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 228, 231, 248–59; Colson, 'The Destruction of a Revolution', vol. I, pp. 164–74, 186–94; and, especially, Holloway, 'Immigration and Abolition'. Cotegipe's sense of the matter is glimpsed in Cotegipe to F. de P. Roiz Alvez [Francisco de Paula Rodrigues Alves], Rio, 12 Dec. 1887, Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro [hereafter IHGB], Coleção Rodrigues Alves, lata 808, pasta 64, in which he condemns Prado's actions for spreading anarchy and making successful resistance improbable. The late paulista shift to abolitionism was the basis for the post-facto glorification of the paulista elite as more modern than others. In fact, paulistas clung to slavery as long as they could, and moved to abolition and immigrant labour only when they were forced to do so. That they did, while other planters did not, stems from their having the capital to do so, rather than a more modern mentality: see the citations above and Dean, *Rio Claro*, chs. 4 and 5.

itself, both of which were identified with an emperor whose personal charisma, however dimmed, remained critical. After reports of his illness had become public in February, the possibility of a vacuum of legitimate power may well have encouraged the officer corps to challenge Cotegipe. Junior officers were among the earliest participants in the Abolitionist movement; some were positivist republicans, as well. On either score they resented the cabinet and the monarchy. The senior officers, regardless of their position on slavery or the monarchy, deeply resented the prime minister's public and private attempts to discipline officers who were publicly involved in Abolitionism or otherwise critical of the regime. In May 1887 Cotegipe barely survived a direct rhetorical challenge by a general in the Senate and had to prepare to repress an ongoing conspiracy led by another general. Although Cotegipe managed both threats, it was only by a humiliating compromise. Matters had been close, indeed. Before the compromise in May Cotegipe had made it clear privately that he was prepared to resign rather than cede. Nor, after the compromise, did the military ease their pressure on the cabinet. In October 1887, after Prado and João Alfredo had opened up their unprecedented and unacceptable division in the Conservative party, the military struck again. They made a public denunciation of their employment against slaves fleeing from plantations, and did so by going over the prime minister's head in a petition to Isabel, the princess regent, herself. Aside from the doubtful constitutional proprieties of such a petition, this left Cotegipe bereft of state violence to secure the status quo.[40]

Thus, in interactive fashion, Cotegipe's parliamentary reaction of 1885 provoked still further Abolitionist radicalisation which, in turn, armed the forces undercutting Cotegipe's reactionary command of the state. It is a clear measure of Abolitionist impact and the captives' agency to see how they transformed political realities by 1887. How did they shape state policy afterwards?

[40] See 'A questão militar', in Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos*, particularly pp. 123–4, 135–6, 143–61. For the emperor's illness, see Roderick J. Barman, *Citizen Emperor: Pedro II and the Making of Brazil, 1825–91* (Stanford CA, 1999), pp. 332–3. For military opposition to slave flight, see also Otoni, *Autobiografia*, pp. 277–8; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 216–17, 225; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 167, 311–15. Duque-Estrada and Moraes make it plain that officers and others in the Escola Militar were among the first organised Abolitionists and that key officers played an increasing role in opposition to the cabinet. Indeed, as Thomas Holloway has reminded the author (personal communication, Oct. 2008), Abolitionism played a part in beginning the 'Military Question' that was critical to the end of the empire in 1889. Lieutenant Colonel Antônio de Sena Madureira was reprimanded for inviting the celebrated *cearense* Abolitionist, Francisco do Nascimento, to visit a Rio military school in 1884. In 1886, Sena Madureira published a critique of this reprimand, exacerbating the cabinet–military disputes: see Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos para a historia*, pp. 124–33.

The princess regent, Isabel, who had supported Cotegipe since her father's departure in mid-1887, finally began a rapid volte-face in late 1887 and early 1888. She was clearly concerned with the cabinet's failures at containment, its intransigence and its violent repression, and worried by the unrestrained Abolitionist rhetoric, increased public mobilisation in the streets and mounting numbers of captives in flight from the plantations. Each strengthened the other, and all threatened the social and political order. With unusual determination, the regent, frustrated by her failure in late 1887 to persuade Cotegipe into reform, finally forced him into resignation. She did so in response to yet another episode of street violence in Rio, after a year of increasing police provocation and violence against mobilised Abolitionists. The incident in question, ironically enough, did not even involve Abolitionists; it was rioting between police, naval officers and their associated street fighters. However, the violence and the way the police handled it implicated Coelho Bastos, the police chief associated with the cabinet's repressive tactics towards Abolitionists and slaves. The cabinet, with typical intransigence, supported the police chief. The justice minister refused to punish him. In response, the regent made it clear that she had no confidence in the justice minister's judgment or management of the affair; this, in effect, indicated a lack of confidence in the cabinet, and compelled its resignation.[41]

That was in early March 1888. Between January and late February 1888 the interaction among the captives' actions, those of the Abolitionists and those

[41] Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos para a historia*, pp. 172–7, 185–6; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 226–7, 303; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 166–9, 319–20. Isabel, abolitionist in sentiment, had nonetheless supported Cotegipe for most of 1887, as Moraes makes clear. For her shift, see Roderick J. Barman, *Princess Isabel of Brazil: Gender and Power in the Nineteenth Century* (Wilmington DE, 2002), pp. 178–82. Duque-Estrada emphasises her concern with the impact of the instability on her succession. She was also allegedly moved by Nabuco's published account of his interview with the pope, who stated his intention to publish a pro-Abolitionist encyclical (Isabel was deeply pious): see Nabuco, *Minha formação*, pp. 261, 265, 176–7; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 303–5; and Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 319–20. The critical correspondence ending the cabinet is to be found in Arquivo Histórico do Museu Imperial, Petrópolis [hereafter AHMI], POB, M199, doc.9030: it includes Isabel to Ministro [de Justiça], [Petrópolis,] 3 March 1888; Samuel Wallace MacDowell [Ministro de Justiça] to Senhora [Isabel], Rio, 3 March 1888; Isabel to Ministro, Petropolis, 4 March 1888; MacDowell to Senhora [Isabel], Rio, 4 March 1888; MacDowell to Senhora [Isabel], Rio, 5 March 1888; Isabel to Ministro [de Justiça], Petropolis, 5 March 1888; Barão de Cotegipe to Senhora [Isabel], [Rio,] 5 March 1888; Samuel Wallace MacDowell to Senhora [Isabel], Rio, 8 March 1888; Barão de Cotegipe to Senhora [Isabel], Corte, 7 March 1888. The last letter, tendering the cabinet's resignation, indicates the regent's letter to MacDowell of 4 March as the critical document alluded to afterwards in public speeches as the basis for the decision. This letter's contents have not been disclosed until now. They may be summarised as indicating the regent's lack of confidence in the chief of police, in the justice minister and in the minister's reports. It also manifests Isabel's reliance on other sources of information.

of statesmen in Rio had meshed together tightly. Cotegipe himself was rumoured to be planning a conditional abolitionist project to end the chaos. Another statesman, however, had been moving more adroitly in the wings. João Alfredo had circulated an alternative abolitionist project among the key chieftains of the Conservative Party as early as January; it guaranteed planters five years more of slave labour, followed by three years of apprenticeship. This project, clearly more conservative than the paulista solution, had the critical merit of achieving political consensus, even among the most reactionary, traditional wing of the party. These Conservatives represented the most intransigent of the slaveholders, planters from the provinces of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, who, unlike the paulistas on the newer coffee frontier, were in no economic position to abandon slavery. Paulista production was expanding and, with it, the profits and the need for wage labour. For planters from the first frontiers of coffee, heirs whose lands were spent, such an opportunity was absent; indeed, they were desperate. They would need as long a period of transition as they could obtain to manage and attenuate economic decline. João Alfredo's project, first known in January and widely circulated in late February, could not have been better timed politically. Indeed, it must have added immeasurably to the pressures on Cotegipe that led to his resignation. It is no surprise, then, that after Cotegipe's resignation the regent immediately called João Alfredo to power, making it clear that slavery was the issue she wished him to resolve. This occurred on 7 March.[42]

By 10 March João Alfredo had chosen a cabinet designed to unify his party around abolitionism. His ascent had already been greeted with support from the Abolitionist movement. Slave flight, originating in the province of São Paulo, had now spread to those of Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro, and planters there had begun negotiating conditional abolition or granting it outright, all to stabilise labour. In palace and street the sense and reality of a collapse was pervasive; in private, faced with these faits accomplis and struggling to continue management of a fragile economy and attract immigration, João Alfredo had to contain the process on the ground within a structure of law and elite consensus as soon as possible.[43]

[42] Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos para a historia*, pp. 176–7, 185–7; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 227–9; Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 324–6; Stein, *Vassouras*, pp. 250–5. João Alfredo's account of the call to power and the organisation of a cabinet is 'Organisação do ministerio do 10 de março', Arquivo João Alfredo, Biblioteca, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco [hereafter AJA], uncatalogued papers for 1888, 30. pacote; see also Moraes, *A campanha abolicionista*, pp. 326–7.

[43] The sense of crisis in the agricultural sector is clear in Cotegipe to F. de P. Roiz Alvez, Rio, 12 Dec. 1887, IHGB, Coleção Rodrigues Alves, lata 808, pasta 64; Otoni, *Autobiografia*, pp. 278–9; Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, pp. 227–8; Monteiro, *Pesquisas e depoimentos para a historia*, pp. 169–70; Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, pp. 261–2, 266–9. The prime

The very day after taking power João Alfredo and Antônio Prado, his new minister of agriculture, both consulted privately in Petrópolis, the highland summer resort just north of Rio, with André [Pinto] Rebouças, one of the most radical and influential Abolitionist leaders. Conversations between cabinet members and Rebouças became ongoing subsequently, all in the privacy of Rebouças' hotel rooms in Petrópolis. Rebouças seems to have been the key contact between the cabinet and the Abolitionist leadership, for he remained in close communication with both throughout this delicate period, travelling back and forth frequently between Petrópolis and the capital. By the end of March Rebouças had prepared drafts of reform legislation: one called for the immediate abolition of slavery, the other for an associated rural labour project. Both were far more radical than the legislation João Alfredo or Antônio Prado contemplated. Nonetheless, the ministers maintained the private new relationship and cordial relations with Rebouças (and, through him, with the Abolitionist leadership) during this period. One assumes they wanted to keep their options open; doubtless, they also hoped to co-opt the Abolitionists. However, a choice would have to be made, and the Abolitionists were pressing hard for a radical solution.

On 7 April Rebouças provided his drafts for immediate abolition and the associated labour project to the prime minister and discussed them. On 9 April an account of Prado's much more conservative plans was exposed and attacked in the Abolitionist press. Another Abolitionist, whom Prado had been consulting, may well have been the source; certainly, 'leaking' it helped to cripple its viability. Still, Prado's proposal figured in the cabinet's deliberations until 20 April. Then, sometime between 20 and 29 April, the cabinet decided to accept Rebouças' abolitionist project instead. This retreat was probably in response to ongoing Abolitionist mobilisation and an associated fear of breaking with the Abolitionists during this precarious period, one in which the widespread, increasing collapse of rural slave labour, and the clear inclination of the princess regent and any number in Parliament for a rapid resolution, made confrontation with the Abolitionist movement clearly dangerous.[44]

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minister's concern with abolition and the financial crisis is clear in Antônio Venâncio Cavalcante de Albuquerque to João Alfredo, Minas Novas, 20 March 1888; Arthur S. Hitchings to João Alfredo, 20 March 1888; José Vergueiro to João Alfredo, Fazenda Ybicaba, 23 March 1888; Inácio da Cunha Galvão to João Alfredo, Petropolis, 25 March 1888; M. A. Pimento Barros, 25 April 1888, 'Situação financeira e economica', all in AJA, uncatalogued papers for 1888, 30. pacote.

[44] Conrad alone notes Rebouças' cabinet contacts (*The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery*, p. 271) and his submission of the critical draft of legislation on 7 April 1888, citing André Rebouças, *Diário e notas autobiográficas* (Rio de Janeiro, 1938), p. 311. He argues that it was the Liberals who forced the Abolitionist position forward, claiming that the Liberals had a

It was in this context, this final combination of pressures, that the cabinet, without any acknowledgement of the private role of the Abolitionists, made their ideas known on 7 May and introduced the final legislation on 8 May, in the formal opening of Parliament. Support in both the Chamber and the Senate was so overwhelming that the law was signed on 13 May, less than a week after its introduction. The princess regent signed it in the City Palace, after having been greeted by a mass of enthusiasts in the streets, surrounded by people of all classes in the formal palace chamber, and subsequently acclaimed by thousands in the streets outside. Festivals followed for days and days. In the euphoria, most people forgot the revolutionary, related reforms for which Rebouças and the other Abolitionists had pressed. Within two years any possibility of their implementation would be thoroughly contained, buried beneath the confusion and shifts associated with the military coup which ended the monarchy on 15 November 1889. In the confusing struggle during the following decade, urban militants would be politically marginalised and an oligarchic republic established. Slavery had been eliminated from the traditional social order, but not its legacy, nor much else.

Senate majority and made it clear on 7 May that they would obstruct any other cabinet solution. However, Affonso de E. Taunay, in *O senado do Império* (2nd edition, Brasilia, 1978 [1941]), pp. 126–30, shows that no Liberal majority existed in 1888. The assessment here is based instead upon archival documents: see Rebouças' 'Projecto de Lei de Abolição', in André Rebouças to João Alfredo, 21 May 1888, with the MSS for 'Colonisação Nacional', 'Projecto de Regulamento para Coloniais Penitenciarias Agricolas', and 'Projecto de Lei de Serviços Ruraes' in AJA, 30. pacote, 1888, no number. Most importantly, see Rebouças, entries for 7 March, 8 March, 11 March, 30 March, 1 April, 2 April, 3 April, 7 April, 8 April, 9 April, 24 April, 25 April, 29 April, diário 1888 in CAR, lata 464. These detail the Petrópolis contacts with João Alfredo and Antônio Prado and Rebouças' frequent descents to Rio where he met with other key Abolitionists. The other Abolitionist with whom Prado consulted was José Carlos Rodrigues: see Rebouças' diary, addendum to entry for 30 March; indeed, Rebouças notes that Rodrigues was the real author of Prado's draft. Exactly who passed an account to Patrocínio, for publication and condemnation in the *Cidade do Rio* on 9 April (see Duque-Estrada, *A abolição*, p. 235), remains unclear. Moraes corroborates the impact, stating (*A campanha abolicionista*, p. 328) that the cabinet decision favouring immediate abolition was due to the Abolitionists' rejection of the conditions with which Prado's project burdened freedmen. That Prado's draft remained in play until after 20 April is clear; the final version was only submitted then: see Antonio Prado to João Alfredo, S. Paulo, 17 March 1888, in AJA, 10. pacote 1888, 2502; Prado to João Alfredo, S. Paulo, 12 April 1888, *ibid.*, 2507; Elias Antonio Pacheco Alves [Antonio Prado's brother-in-law] to João Alfredo, S. Paulo, 20 April 1888, *ibid.*, 2508. Rebouças' diary entries note that on 29 April João Alfredo and Costa Pereira brought his abolition proposal to the imperial princess along with her official speech to open Parliament, indicating that the decision to accept Rebouças' solution was made by that date. Others have suggested various ministers as the author of the Golden Law: Ferreira Viana, Vieira da Silva or Costa Pereira. However, as Conrad argues, the text of Rebouças' proposal makes his authorship clear; it is nearly identical with that introduced on 8 May. The AJA MS text reads: 'Projecto de Lei de Abolição: Arto. 10. Fica abolida a escravidão no Imperio do Brazil. Art. 2 Ficam revogadas *todas* as disposições em contrario'.

Concluding Comments

What has been attempted here is the interweaving of a political movement and the parliamentary response to it. This has been done to suggest what has been lost in the historiography of the last 120 years, and how contemporary records and archival materials previously untapped can take our understanding still farther.

It should be clear now that the Abolitionist movement's history itself has to be understood in terms of parliamentary history. The movement was sparked by speeches in the Chamber, its leadership combined both deputies and militants from the urban middle class, and its successes and failures were understood as such in terms of parliamentary success or failure. It was a movement designed to carry out reform through parliamentary legislation, something indicated by the support for the moderate reformism of the Dantas cabinet and, again, by the radical response to the Cotegipe cabinet. Indeed, it is worth remarking that, confronted with the repression and hostility of the reactionary cabinet of 1885–88, the Abolitionists did not mobilise to overthrow the monarchy; they mobilised to resist the reactionary cabinet, to undercut slavery, and to compel the Crown and the Chamber towards reform through consistently increasing public pressure.

This is in line with the interactive pattern of the movement from its inception. Abolitionism grew and changed as political energy flowed back and forth from the Chamber to the street and back again. Thus the movement began in the Chamber and was immediately embraced by militant journalists in Rio; together they began organising support in the urban middle and working class. The initial setback suffered by Abolitionist deputies in 1881 only galvanised ongoing militant urban mobilisation, and national organisation and alliance from Ceará to São Paulo. The monarch's 1883 speech opening Parliament inspired the Confederação Abolicionista, and better organised, continued mobilisation from the north-east through the south. The successes of the movement across the nation led to the emperor's appointment of Dantas and support for parliamentary abolitionism to contain the movement. The failure of Dantas in 1885 and the subsequent reactionary shift from Saraiva to Cotegipe lent frustration and rage to Abolitionist mobilisation, involving more militant journalism, use of the courts, successful cultivation of urban public opinion, and larger demonstrations. It also included the growth of the underground railroad and the mass flight of paulista plantation slaves.

The political pressures in the national capital, combined with the threat to dependable labour in the plantations, broke the ranks of the Conservative Party leadership in Parliament at the same time as military opposition to the cabinet reached the point of political crisis. The interest in accommodation,

a transition to free labour, and the use of foreign immigration were all championed by Conservative chieftains by the end of the parliamentary session in 1887, in opposition to Cotegipe's policy of repressive intransigence. During the parliamentary recess the continued destabilisation and police violence led to a political crisis, Cotegipe's forced resignation in early March 1888, and the ascent of João Alfredo, who came into office with a plan formulated in January 1888 for a transition to slavery over several years. His attempt to reach out to the Abolitionists through private conversation brought the movement into the cabinet's deliberations, precisely at a time when the imminent collapse of slavery, the palpable triumph of the movement and the threat to the rule of law loomed. João Alfredo, forced to accept the most radical Abolitionist solution, did so with finesse by late April, thus successfully containing the unravelling situation by the time Parliament opened in May 1888.

There is no doubt, then, that this parliamentary achievement has to be understood as something compelled by both slave agency and radical militancy. History 'from the bottom up' clearly has its place here, and has been demonstrated in the analysis through particulars, drawing upon the literature of the 1960s and 1970s and afterwards, as well as contemporary and primary sources. However, the reason for the direction 'up' is also clear, and has also been demonstrated. The history made by the oppressed and by the radicals was history made through parliamentary legislation in a dénouement that occurred among the elite. Slave agency has to be understood as linked to an organised national movement, a movement directed toward the Chamber, the cabinet, and the Crown. The radical militancy of the urban movement, with its street mobilisation and its rural subversives, has to be understood as a component in an alliance featuring parliamentary deputies and focused upon achieving parliamentary legislation. Informed contemporaries understood this in their own ways. What is offered here is a way to recover and comprehend this process for our time.

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. Las explicaciones sobre el éxito del movimiento abolicionista en Brasil (1888) han enfatizado, desde los años 60 y 70, el contexto material del movimiento, su naturaleza de clase y la agencia de los esclavizados. Estos análisis han malentendido y gradualmente ignorado la historia política formal del movimiento. Incluso, generalmente se ignora el papel central de la movilización política urbana y cuando se le toma en cuenta, ésta queda cojeando por la falta de análisis informado de su articulación con la política formal y la historia política. Toca ahora recuperar la relación entre la agencia afro-brasileña y las políticas de la élite. En este artículo se ilustra lo anterior al analizar dos coyunturas críticas del movimiento abolicionista: la subida y caída del gabinete reformista de Dantas en 1884–85 por un lado, y la

relación entre el gabinete reaccionario de Cotegipe (1885–88), la radicalización del movimiento y las desesperadas reformas que llevaron a la Ley Aurea del 13 de mayo de 1888 por el otro.

Spanish keywords: Brasil, abolición, historiografía, historia política, movilización afro-brasileña, esclavitud, imperio

Portuguese abstract. Desde as décadas de 1960 e 1970 explica-se o êxito do movimento abolicionista brasileiro em 1888 destacando seu contexto material, sua natureza classista, e a atuação dos cativos. A leitura de tais análises que gradualmente ignoraram a história política formal do movimento é equivocada. Mesmo o papel central da mobilização política urbana é normalmente negligenciado; quando tratada, a questão sofre por falta de análise informada acerca da articulação com a política formal e com a história política. Está na hora da relação entre a atuação afro-brasileira e a política das elites ser resgatada. Neste artigo, isto é ilustrado por um exame de duas conjecturas críticas para o movimento Abolicionista: a escalada e subsequente queda do gabinete Dantas em 1884–85, e a relação entre o gabinete reacionário de Cotegipe (1885–88), a radicalização do movimento e o reformismo desesperado que levou à Lei Aurea de 13 de maio de 1888.

Portuguese keywords: Brasil, abolição, historiografia, história política, mobilização afro-brasileira, escravidão, império