

of the delinquents, and a black man, who was found hidden among some bushes and could not give a good account of himself, was taken to the city, and on being interrogated, confessed that although he was one of the parties, he did not fire the shot, the person who did so being one Joaquim Seifeiro, a mulatto saddler who lived in the house of the Barão. This man was said to be of a very vicious disposition and of strong passions; and it was well known that a few days before the occurrence, he had been ill-used in some manner by the Barão, without just cause. At the time he was denounced, he was leading a party in the woods in search of the assassins and was not a little astonished on his return to find himself a prisoner. He strongly denied the crime of which few deemed him to be innocent; since the laws of the country do not inflict the penalty of death for a mere attempt at murder, he was therefore committed to prison, where he died twenty-six days after the perpetration of that crime, under circumstances that have given rise to suspicious reports.

BRAZIL READER (CP)

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(CROCIU), pp 69 - 75

Uprising in Maranhão, 1839-1840

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Independence brought few guarantees that the Brazilian kingdom would remain politically intact. Immense distances and forbidding terrain, by themselves, handicapped the state's power. Meanwhile, several regions, because of their unwillingness to exchange Portuguese authority for an equally foreign one in Rio de Janeiro, pressed for autonomy. Intraregional politics, itself commonly settled with violence, added immeasurably to Brazil's political instability. As a result, between 1822 and 1848, no fewer than five regional revolts threatened Brazil's political disintegration. As the following account shows, however, national and regional political conflicts might easily transform into vicious class and race wars. Known as the Balaiado, the Maranhão uprising of 1839-1840 taught national and regional elites that they could wage political battles only at the risk of social upheaval. Therein lies one of the keys to Brazil's political stabilization by 1850.

Before telling this history, it is necessary to know the men, classes, practices, and customs of the country that draws our attention, because such things are of great importance for the weighing of facts and understanding of many things, which without this previous knowledge would seem, at first view, inexplicable. The population of this province is computed at 217,000 souls, among them whites, mixed peoples, and Negroes, scattered over an area of more than 800 square leagues. Its land, although fertile, as that of the entire Empire, is little cultivated; copious rains wet it from December until June, and in this pluvial time, which only for that reason they call it winter, the weeks are linked without the intermission of one dry day; the fields are deluged, the rivers grow, of which there are many; and the flooded highways become difficult transit. Such a pestilence of fevers develop at the beginning and end of the rains that only those accustomed to the humid and hot climate can resist them.

The principal types of cultivation are cotton and rice, and for these they employ numerous arms of African slaves, those who are treated with such barbarous rigor, that even the necessary sustenance they [the landlords] deny to them; one ear of corn is their lunch, rice and manioc meal the dinner, scavenging and hunting furnish the rest for them; they walk naked or embraced with a small loincloth, except for few exceptions; and for that reason, the slaves seek to withdraw from the yoke of the landlord.

The plantation owners appropriate everything that is harvested without fretting over the land with means of industry, hardly careful to improve the cultivation; and for that reason, the province is dotted by plantations raising bovine cattle, in whose care and in the salting of meat and hides are occupied throngs of lazy men, without steady homes, for the most part a race crossed by Indians, whites, and Negroes, whom are called *cafisos*: those who are very fond of this semivagrant life, little interested in other trades, and much in scavenging and hunting, distinguishing themselves only from the savages by the use of our language. They are men of cruel temperament by the habit of herding and killing cattle, consuming the rest of life in laziness or brawls. From this brute people, there are great emigrations from this province, and thus the people of Piauí and Ceará are similar to them in practices and customs. Many of the plantation owners, in imitation of the old barons, live without any respect for the authorities, avenging by their own hands particular insults and harboring on their lands the criminals who seek their shelter, and who together lend themselves to their [the landowners'] reprisals. By such people, they [the landowners] are escorted and become feared, and it is as easy for them to arrange a murder as to deny a debt, or at least not to pay creditors, who at their opportunity, if they can, do not hesitate to employ the same means for their own good. This is the people who incited war against us; it is they who compose the army of the rebellion . . .

This province was found in peace when Senhor Vicente Thomaz Pires de Figueredo Camargo took possession of the presidency [of the province] on March 3, 1838. . . . Strong opposition was manifested against the administration of Senhor Camargo, opposition in part malicious, because those who then composed the party of the government, before rising to the public offices, as oppositionists, had been strongly attacking the government of Senator Antonio Pedro da Costa Ferreira, a person

dear to the party that now, in getting even, waged war against them [the people now in office]. A small newspaper with the title of *Bem-tevi*, written in popular language, attracted a broad party; it attacked the president and the law of the prefects, a new creation that, with the president's indication, had passed in the provincial assembly . . .

The population was divided into two rancorous parties, the *bem-tevis* [hummingbirds] and *cabanos*. (*Cabanos* was the name applied, in Maranhão, to the people of the interior, or those living in cabins and huts. It denoted a rustic and fierce people.) Into the arms of the second [party], the government offered itself, although it ought to have remained neutral and balance them [the parties]. Partisan government is always unjust. The repercussions from the complaint in the province had reached the *Côrte* [the capital], and was repeated by the journalists. All this anger by the parties was excited more by the ambition for power and positions, and by the desire to triumph in the elections; those who were on top because of the party's influence did not want to descend; the others wanted to rise, and insults were traded, until at last the cry of rebellion and civil war succeeded the infamous war of words.

On December 13, 1838, in the village of Manga, situated on the left bank of the Iguarú River, in the *comarca* [judicial district] of Itapucurú, there appeared a certain Raymundo Gomes, a man of sufficiently dark color, accompanied by nine of his race; they broke into the village jail and freed the criminal inmates. There existed in the village twenty some troops under orders of the subprefect and those who were tempted by the same spirit joined Raymundo Gomes. This rebel soon started to apprehend commissioners, and to proclaim against the prefects and the president, whom he planned to topple and in his place elevate the vice president, known as an oppositionist. That a hidden hand directed this drama cannot be doubted. Raymundo Gomes was incapable of making by himself such a resolution, although by his habits he was very appropriate for executing it. Born in Piauí and son of that race crossed by Indians and Negroes that we described, raised in the country among cattle that he herded, offering his knife to his own and others' vengeance, inexperienced in the human letters, only known for some murders from which he lived unpunished, stained by the perversity of the customs that we related and the ineffectiveness of the laws, he would not commit himself to disturbing the public tranquility for political motives without an outside impulse; and when he might dare to, he would abandon his

boldness at not finding the decided support, which was incontestably given to him. Stupid instrument of a blind party that imagined to be able, when it might please them, to close the dike of popular rage, Raymundo Gomes, the cowboy assassin, was converted into chief of the *bemtevi* party, and those who lifted him from the earth's dust shamed themselves by their deed . . .

Caxias, formerly Aldéas-Altas, was the flourishing emporium of the interior of Maranhão and Piauí, the richest and most commercial city of the province after the capital, notable for the luxury of its inhabitants and the lack of good manners of many, and still more notable for being the theater of continuous vengeance and murders. Resting on the right and eastern bank of the Itapucurú, sixty leagues to the southeast of the capital, it faces on the opposite bank the parish of Trezidella, which dominates it. In all the long extension of this principal river are discovered properties, plantations, towns, and villages; and as the land that it penetrates is the most fertile and much cut by its branches, which they call *igarapés*, it is also the most populated and richest area of all Maranhão. The slaves alone are computed at around 20,000 Africans, which often threatens the public tranquility as some of them, withdrawing from the landlord's yoke and hiding out in the forests, go in sorties to rob the surrounding plantations, and armed force is necessary to capture them. This was not one of the smallest ills of the present rebellion, since the fleeing plantation owners left to the mercy of the rebels their houses and slaves, and the latter made use of the opportunity to escape the labor of the plundered fields, and went to find shelter in that area of the coast between the sandbar at Tutoya and Priá, where in a number exceeding 3,000 and commanded by the Negro Cosme, considered a witch doctor, they made great havoc. In a more appropriate place, we will address these people, who for the time being were accumulating in that area without attracting the attention of the government, which was totally occupied in matters of greater cost.

Caxias, the city of crime, refuge of criminals, the domain of minor pashas who at their will determined others' lives, was accustomed to seeing murders every day. Pious souls portended for it a great disgrace as punishment for its crimes, and God wanted it to be the bloody theater for all the horrors of the rebellion, perhaps as a correction for its depraved customs and its future improvement.

Everything in Caxias attracted the rebels; its very central position,

its riches, munitions, sympathies, and immorality invited them to besiege it . . .

The journalists in the national capital started to occupy themselves seriously with the business of Maranhão, which was poorly weighed at the beginning, as always happens, and they gave it no value. Particular reports, cities and villages captured, plantations devastated, continuous horrors, and the ineffectiveness of the provincial government frightened the people and exposed to the ministry the impossibility of pacification of this part of the Empire, if it would continue in the hands in which it was found. Also, the general government recognized the necessity of entrusting to a single man the presidency [of Maranhão] and command of the armed forces, to avoid by this maneuver delays and intrigues observed currently and in other identical circumstances . . .

Colonel Luiz Alves de Lima was thus named president and commander of the armed forces for Maranhão . . .

Those who already were familiar with his name and reputation cheered him happily, and the newspapers of the province, to which the eminent qualities of the new chief were not secret, disposed themselves in his favor; and from now on we will note that they never made the least opposition or censure against his government, instead always exalting him, and in this each party always wanted to outdo the other. There is so much certainty that the great man, who in the execution of his sacred duties, did not aim at any other end, that it imposes silence even on jealousy and intrigue. On great occasions, great men stand out while small ones disappear.

We have said that our expeditions did not cease, and it would be verbosity to cite more than thirty gunfights monthly from which there resulted rebel deaths and prisoners, and great losses of their mounts . . .

With these continuous reversals, the insurgents started to become discouraged and only cared about fleeing, seeing certain harm and death everywhere; and as they deserted and turned themselves in to our forces, they were immediately armed and employed against their own comrades, sorely reducing the insurgents' ranks and invigorating ours.

Raymundo Gomes, appearing so badly spiritless and distrusting his forces, sent a delegation designated by some caudillos asking for a pardon, but nevertheless demanding certain conditions unworthy of attention. The president returned it to him with a proclamation that served as a response, ordering them, without any condition, to lay down all arms

in order to be pardoned, and otherwise he would continue to pursue them until exterminating them. Sending this response, at the same time, he made a force from the third column march to uphold it . . .

Raymundo Gomes, however, who because of his crimes doubted the pardon, escaped without weapons, without baggage, without followers, and almost naked, and went to offer himself to the Negro Cosme, who put him in an iron collar [to chain him to a post], and discovering in him [Gomes] the ability to make gunpowder, employed him in that exercise, always under guard. The Negro Cosme, the criminal fugitive from the jails of the capital, then started to be the important figure who most frightened the plantation owners, since he was found in the leadership of 3,000 slaves stirred up to rebellion by him. He signed his name "Dom Cosme, guardian and emperor of the *bemtevi's* liberties." He proclaimed against slavery, he gave titles and posts, he established a school for reading and writing, and hidden in the headwaters of the Rio Preto, *comarca* of Brejo, on the plantation of Lagôa Amarella, he had forward patrols, and he sent parties to rob from and incite insurrection at the surrounding plantations . . .

Through an emissary, the president knew that Francisco Ferreira Pedrosa, boss of 1,700 criminals harbored on Bella-Agua, desired to turn himself in because he now could not maintain his position and feared not being pardoned, and he [the president] sent assurance to him that he would accept him with the condition of first doing some service in return for having taken up arms against the government; that he would beat the Negroes and later turn himself in. Thus, he acted; the Negroes, in disarray and fleeing after the attack on Lagôa Amarella, ran toward Bella-Agua supposing there to find support, and they found death and subjugation. It was always the policy of the president to impede the joining of the rebels with the slaves, rendering the first averse to the second, which certainly was a joy for the province. Raymundo Gomes, who found himself imprisoned at Lagôa Amarella under the power of Cosme and who, by him, would be in the end sentenced to death, found an opportunity to escape on the same day that, as he later narrated, he ought to have received the punishment for his crimes at the hands of that other criminal; his fate, however, wanted that on that day the Negroes would be attacked; they, as he, only sought in headlong flight to cheat death, and from there he went to hide out in Miritiba . . .

Then the president continued to Miritiba, where Raymundo Gomes

hid, and through an escort, ordered him to seek his presence. Insignificant was his figure—almost Negro, which we call *fila*, short, stocky, bowlegged, long and flat forehead, timid and shifting eyes, hardly polished with reason, low and meek voice, no boldness of the conspirator—and although he might have been chief of the insurgents, he obeyed more than he ordered and never marched in front of his forces at the moment of battle, and he kept himself in the rearward, always ready to flee and avoid dangers. Out of all of them, he was not even the most criminal and cruel; instead, compared to the others, he seemed humane. Before him, the old Matroá turned himself in, all bent over with the weight of 120 years of age and crime, dragging a long sword, however, bold and boasting of having entered every great and minor revolt of the North during his life; this old man died one month after turning himself in. In Miritiba, more than 700 rebels laid down arms, all of them naked and without munitions for war, except weapons. The number of survivors in all our points reached 3,000, and when the period given [for a pardon] expired, there was still captured in the *comarca* of Brejo a band of 300 bandits, who had remained in a hostile attitude.

To complement the pacification of the province, there was imprisoned in the place named Calabouço, a district of Miarim, the infamous Negro Cosme and the rest who accompanied him. Some fifty died because of the tenacious resistance that they offered. Cosme was delivered to justice, and Raymundo Gomes, after amnestied, pledged an eight-year term of exile from the province, São Paulo being designated for him as his residence.

On January 19 [1841], the president ordered announced the pacification of the province.