great contempt, and looking at us said, "He calls me mad!" The man of the pillar was eyeing his soup, with his arms as before, extended above his head. The director desired him to eat his soup, upon which he slowly and reluctantly brought down one arm, and ate a few spoonfuls. "How much sugar have you made to-day?" asked the director. "Fifty thousand kingdoms!" said the man. . . .

The director then led us to the gallery above, where are more cells, and the terrible "*Cuarto Negro*," the Black Chamber; a dark, round cell, about twelve feet in circumference, with merely a slit in the wall for the admission of air. The floor is thickly covered with straw, and the walls are entirely covered with soft stuffed cushions. Here the most furious madman is confined on his arrival, and whether he throws himself on the floor, or dashes his head against the wall, he can do himself no injury. In a few days, the silence and the darkness soothe his fury, he grows calmer, and will eat the food that is thrust through the aperture in the wall. From this he is removed to a common cell, with more light and air; but until he has become tranquil, he is not admitted into the court amongst the others.

From this horrible, though I suppose necessary den of suffering, we went to the apartments of the administrator, which have a fine view of the city and the volcanoes, and saw a virgin, beautifully carved in wood, and dressed in white satin robes, embroidered with small diamonds. On the ground was a little dog, dying, having just fallen off from the *azotea*, an accident which happens to dogs here not infrequently. We then went up to the *azotea*, which looks into the garden of San Fernando and of our last house, and also into the barracks of the soldiers, who, as _____ observed, are more dangerous madmen than those who are confined. Some rolled up in their dirty yellow cloaks, and others standing in their shirt-sleeves, and many without either; they were as dirty-looking a set of military heroes as one would wish to see. When we came downstairs again, and had gone through the court, and were passing the last cell, each of which is only lighted by an aperture in the thick stone wall, a pair of great black eyes glaring through, upon a level with mine, startled me infinitely. The eyes, however, glared upon vacancy. The face was thin and sallow, the beard long and matted, and the cheeks sunken. What long years of suffering appeared to have passed over that furrowed brow! I wish I had not seen it. . . .

Having stopped in the carriage on the way home, at a shoemaker's, we saw *Santa Anna's leg* lying on the counter, and observed it with due respect, as the prop of a hero. With this leg, which is fitted with a very handsome boot, he reviews his troops next Sunday, putting his *best foot foremost*; for generally he merely wears an unadorned wooden leg. The shoemaker, a Spaniard, whom I can recommend to all customers as the most impertinent individual I ever encountered, was arguing, in a blustering manner, with a gentleman who had brought a message from the general, desiring some alteration in the boot: and wound up by muttering, as the messenger left the shop, "He shall either wear it as it is, or review the troops next Sunday without his leg!"

7. Dom Pedro II: A Political Portrait

Historians and biographers of Dom Pedro II (1825–1891) have written sufficiently concerning his amiable, democratic traits, his patronage of arts and letters, and his scholarly tastes and accomplishments. But Dom Pedro's best claim to fame is the skill with which he guided the Brazilian ship of state for almost half a century. Joaquim Nabuco (1849–1910), famous Brazilian abolitionist, diplomat, and historian, paid tribute to the emperor's political wisdom in his monumental biography of his own statesman-father, first published in 1897.

The commanding figure of the Second Empire was that of the Emperor himself. To be sure, he did not govern directly and by himself; he respected the Constitution and the forms of the parliamentary system. But since he determined the fate of every party and every statesman, making or unmaking ministries at will, the sum of power was effectively his. Cabinets had short and precarious lives, holding office only as long as it pleased the Emperor. Under these conditions there was but one way to govern, and that was in agreement with him. To oppose his plans, his policies, was to invite dismissal. One or another minister might be ready to quit the government and the office on whose duties he had just entered, but cabinets clung to life, and the party imposed obedience to the royal will from love of offices, of patronage. So the ministers passively assented to the role that the Emperor assigned to them. The senate, the council of state, lived by his favor and grace. No leader wished to be "incompatible." He alone represented tradition and continuity in government. Since cabinets were short-lived and he was permanent, only he could formulate policies that required time to mature. He alone could wait, temporize, continue, postpone, sowing in order to reap in due season. Whenever he needed to display his own unquestioned authority he shunted the most important statesmen away from the throne. . . . Having these examples before them, younger men learned that without the Emperor's confidence and approval they were nothing. . . .

On one point he had strong feelings and was very sensitive: He must not be suspected of having favorites. . . . No one but he knew what the next day

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Joaquim Nabuco, *Um estadista do imperio: Nabuco de Araujo, sua vida, suas opiniões, sua epoca*, 2 vols. (São Paulo, 1936), 2:374–385. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

would bring. He set the course of administration, now steering in one direction, now in another; and only he knew the true course of the ship of state. . . .

The work of government was carried on in this fashion; what are the Emperor's wishes, what does the emperor not wish? The statesman who would not adjust to these conditions condemned himself to complete failure. For this reason the advocates of a new idea accomplished nothing until they had awakened the interest of the Emperor and gained his sympathy. Once that was attained, all parties and governments followed the Emperor's lead like an avalanche. So it was with everything, especially in the great question of his reign, slavery; the pronouncements of Rio-Branco in 1871, of Dantas in 1884, of Cotegipe in 1885, only came after Dom Pedro had been won over to their point of view. In 1888 Cotegipe took advantage of the absence of the Emperor to carry out immediate abolition, but if the Emperor had been in the country he also would have been summoned to solve the problem, though in another way.

His power, however, was a spontaneous, natural phenomenon, the result of our social and political condition. If that power had no check it was not because of the Emperor, but because it was impossible to have free elections with a people like the Brazilian, and because free elections would only have made the electorate more attached to the government, whatever it might be—that is, to the power that had the right to make appointments. That is why his power was indestructible. In effect, there was only one means—short of a republican revolution—of compelling him to surrender his personal power: to confront the omnipotent Crown with independent chambers. But that was just the impossibility; that was the great illusion of the propagandists for direct elections, and afterward of the statesmen who expected direct elections to bring about a regeneration of the representative system. . . . When, after long resisting the project, the Emperor, who in the end always let himself be conquered—but professing to be only conquered and not convinced—yielded . . . what were the consequences? That as a result of the first experiment in honest elections anarchy and corruption prevailed everywhere; that the parliament came to reflect the general sickness of the localities—the thirst for jobs and influence, the dependence on the government. . . .

The Emperor always exercised his power: (1) within the limits of the Constitution; (2) in accord with the fictions and usages of the English parliamentary system as adapted by our own parties; and (3) yielding always to public sentiment and opinion. "The honor of my reign can only consist in complying with the Constitution which I swore to obey." The distinguishing feature of his government was the sacrament of form; from the day on which his majority was proclaimed to that of his abdication he never abandoned his role of constitutional monarch. Then, too, the progress of affairs in his reign was not his work; he was only the clock, the regulator, that marked the time

or gave the rhythm. In matters of politics, to be sure, the minister never proposed and the chambers never approved any measure that he had not sanctioned; it was he who sounded both sides of the channel that was being navigated. But the origin of his inspirations was to be found elsewhere. If everything that was deliberate and personal in his reign reflected the Emperor's directing will and consciousness, the march of events always proceeded ahead of the wishes of the imperial mover or moderator. Every day, everywhere, his individual action was annulled by the action of social forces over whose agents, reactions, and collisions he had no control. . . .

The Emperor inspired and directed, but he did not govern. He might check on every nomination, every decree, every word of his ministers, but the responsibility for their actions was theirs. He rarely intervened in the political and administrative machinery—the parties with their adherents and official hierarchies, their personnel and transactions. He did not even wish to know about the internal life of the parties, nor did he establish direct and personal relations with them, but only with the leaders who one day would be presidents of the council. We have seen how he proceeded with the latter: he always reserved the right to dismiss them when he chose; that right he always possessed. All ministries had their elements of disintegration. He could impede or facilitate the process of dissolution, as he pleased; there was always an anxious opposition party at his orders, awaiting a summons; within the ministerial camp itself there were rivalries to be used; and he always had at hand the instrument of dissolution. Throughout his reign, from 1840 to 1889, all the statesmen who served under him were conscious that their mandates were not final, their positions uncertain and dependent. . . . But even if their mandates were precarious, even if they entered upon their duties knowing that the first serious disagreement with the monarch must lead to their dismissal, nevertheless the Emperor scrupulously respected the sphere of ministerial action. Nor could the ministers complain of the observations made by the Emperor in the council, for in his role of devil's advocate he elucidated questions, clarified his nominations, deduced precedents, compared the reports brought to him from all quarters . . . lending to each administration the prestige of his high position and the assistance of his vast experience. At the same time he left to the ministers the political patronage, the distribution of jobs among their partisans, and the administration of affairs, including the realization of the ideas they had advocated while in the opposition. In many branches he hardly intervened at all—in the fields of justice and finance, for example.

That is why the most eminent men of the period were proud to hold those positions and competed for them, despite their uncertain tenure and the qualified nature of their mandates. It was from their number, from a small circle in parliament, that the Emperor always made his choices. He was, in fact, free only to alternate the parties, to pass from one group to the group in

opposition, on the same conditions, choosing from what was always a league of chieftains the name that best pleased him at that juncture. Thus they were not royal ministers, creatures of the Palace; they were parliamentary ministers, like those of France in the reign of Louis Philippe, not like those of England in the reign of Queen Victoria. The Emperor could dismiss them, as the electorate dismisses them in the United Kingdom, but aside from this difference—that there was no electoral power capable of sustaining its representatives in the case of an appeal to the country—the ministerial mandate was the same. Yet to aspire to hold office, under existing conditions, was both honorable and legitimate. The Emperor was not to blame for the absence of free elections; the parties were infinitely more responsible for this condition than he, who had almost nothing to do with the abuses that corrupted the elections. The monarch did not degrade his ministers; he respected them, treated them with dignity. As a governor he sought only one glory for himself: to make Brazil a model of liberty among the nations. The truth about his reign is summed up in the epigram attributed to Ferreira Vianna: "The Emperor passed fifty years in maintaining the pretense that he ruled over a free people"—that is, in upholding Brazil's reputation before the world, concealing the general indifference of its citizenry toward public affairs, toward their rights and liberties; in practicing and cherishing the cult of the Constitution as the political divinity of the Empire.

If the Constitution was Brazil's Palladium, Parliament was its Forum; it was for seventy years the center of the political life of the country, the scene of struggles for power and liberty. It was not a great historical theater, to be sure, but Brazilians of the old colonial stocks—whatever the feelings of the new nationalities that may in time replace them—will always regard its ruins with veneration. Nothing would have been impossible there for a true political genius, endowed with real ambition and capable of making his ideals come true; unhappily, we never had a statesman who united to genius the qualities of ambition, independence, and will power. Had one existed, he would have found no obstacle in Dom Pedro II. *He* was not responsible for the degeneration of the political spirit of the chambers, in which once had risen men like Villela Barbosa, Vasconcellos, Alves Branco, and Paula Souza. It is absurd, when one observes that the majority of these men evolved from Conservatives into Liberals, in some cases, and from Liberals into Conservatives, in others, to suppose that it was the Emperor who determined these regular movements of opinion from one to another social pole. He was not the source of that skepticism, or indifference, or political lukewarmness, that replaced the ancient fervor, seriousness, and persistence of the epoch of solid and austere character. . . .

As with parliament, so with the council of state. A grand political conception was this council of state, one that even England might envy us, heard in all the great questions, guardian of the political traditions of the Empire, in

which the opposition was called to collaborate in the wise government of the country, where the opposition had to reveal its plans, its alternatives, its mode of attacking the great problems whose solution fell to the lot of the ministry. This admirable product of the Brazilian genius, which complemented the other and equally admirable device of the Moderative Power, taken from Benjamin Constant, united about the Emperor the finest political talents of both sides, with all their accumulated experience, whenever it was necessary to confer about some serious public issue. It made the opposition, up to a certain point, a participant in the government of the country, the superintendent of its interests, the depository of the secrets of state.

That was the system of the Empire from 1840 to 1889. Political life went on in the chambers, in the press, in the provinces, as in England—but the parties did not display moderation, would not resign themselves to free elections; and as a result the last word belonged, willy-nilly, to the power that named the ministers, and not to the chambers from which they came. But the difference was hardly apparent, because the Emperor did not upset situations abruptly or capriciously, being always guided by public opinion or necessity. The fact is that this dual mechanism, monarchical-parliamentary, in which the monarch, as well as parliament, was a director, instead of being a kind of automaton moved by the chambers, ensured the tranquility and security of the country for four generations. Had the Emperor not had supreme direction, had he not been the independent arbiter of the parties, had he been limited to signing the decrees presented to him, had he been helpless to change the situation except through the effect of elections, his reign would very likely have been nothing more than a continuation of the regency or an anticipation of the Republic, and the imperial power, slave and instrument of the oligarchy, would have disappeared in a few years in the whirlpool of factions. Men intellectually superior to the Emperor, governing in his name, statesmen of greater capacity than his own, dispensing with his intervention and accustoming the country to regard the throne as vacant, would only have unleashed the forces of anarchy against themselves—while he, by the sagacious and moderate exercise of his role of constitutional emperor, kept his authority intact for half a century, whereas his father, the founder of the Empire, had only managed to stay in power for nine years, and the three regencies for four, two, and three years. . . .

There was much that was noble about this imperial policy, a policy of always pushing down the road that seemed straight to him, scorning the resistance that must be overcome, heedless of the resentments that might one day cut off his retreat. It was a decided and resolute policy that sought to prevent the formation of *maires du palais*, of personalities that might put him in the shade; that sought to extinguish the old revolutionary foci of the First Empire and of the Regency, military and political; that worked to extirpate feudalism, defiant of justice, superior to the law, an asylum for outlaws; that

struck down with one blow the powerful slave traffic; that later carried the Five Years' War to the last stronghold of López in the Aquidaban; that attempted to achieve the gradual extinction of slavery in his realm; that sought to subject the Church to the temporal power. But the inner and profound characteristic of the royal policy was its indifference to the interests of the throne. . . .

At bottom, Dom Pedro II had the same attitude toward the throne as Dom Pedro I. Neither would maintain himself in power by bloodshed; they would be emperors only as long as the country wanted them, only as long as everyone wanted them; they would not haggle with the people. The one willingly made the sacrifice of May 13, 1822, when he implicitly renounced for love of Brazil the crown of Portugal and its Empire; the other did not regret years of self-abnegation and sacrifice for his country. Deposed, he went into exile, burdened with debts which were nothing compared with the charities that he had provided out of his civil list. And he paid these debts, in what was perhaps the only case of its kind in the history of monarchy, by selling the furniture and jewels of his palace at public auction, leaving to the State his library, his only wealth. . . .

The Emperor's persistent policy of indifference toward consequences was thus a policy of tacit renunciation. It was not the policy of a sovereign convinced that the monarchy was necessary to the country and determined to regard it as his primary political interest. If they dismissed him, the fault would not be his; an honorable settlement of this kind would do for him. In one of his notes the Emperor wrote: "If the mistaken conduct of the monarchical parties should give victory to the republicans, what will that prove? The monarch will not on that account cease to be an honest and disinterested man—disinterested in all that does not touch the welfare of his country, which for him cannot exist outside the Constitution."

This voluntary dependence of his on the good will of the country was so strong that, deposed from the throne, he did not once affirm his right to rule by virtue of any of the old pacts—that of the Independence, of the Constitution, of April 7, of his majority, and much less by virtue of his traditional Portuguese right.

His was a policy entirely independent of circumstances, indifferent to the personal consequences of his actions. It did not lean on any class, corporation, or party; it presumed the general good will; it rested on the spirit of progress, on trust in his rectitude, on the movement imparted to society by new reforms, on confidence in the general good sense, on disinterested support that would frustrate the intrigues of private interests and assure the unimpeded progress of the nation. . . . If the result should prove the contrary, the royal stoic would resign his throne without a murmur, regretting only for love of Brazil—perhaps his only passion—that he must die in a foreign land. . . .

PART SEVEN

CONSTRUCTING THE NATION-STATE