

The journey of Pedro I to Minas Gerais in 1831: political conflicts and the formation of the constitutional monarchy in Brazil¹

A viagem de D. Pedro I a Minas Gerais em 1831: embates políticos na formação da monarquia constitucional no Brasil

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RESUMO

O artigo reconstitui a viagem do Imperador à província de Minas Gerais em 1831, focalizando as interações entre as elites políticas locais e o poder central, representado nesse momento pelo próprio Imperador. O tema insere-se em um campo de investigação que tem ampliado a noção de política a partir do conceito de “espaço público”, não somente empregando-o como entidade conceitual, mas enfatizando sua dimensão física. A conclusão principal é que o crescimento dos liberais mineiros no espaço público tornou o objetivo do Imperador de isolar politicamente os liberais exaltados uma tarefa muito mais complicada do que o esperado. O trabalho sugere que o aumento da impopularidade de D. Pedro I após a viagem e a consequente Abdicação do trono resultou muito mais de circunstâncias advindas do aprofundamento da implementação da monarquia constitucional do que propriamente de seu suposto caráter absolutista e antinacional.

Palavras-chave: Brasil Império; espaço público; viagem de D. Pedro I a Minas.

ABSTRACT

The article reconstitutes the journey of Emperor Pedro I to the province of Minas Gerais in 1831, focusing on the interactions between local political elites and the central government, represented at that time by the Emperor himself. It is part of a wider research field that has expanded the notion of politics by drawing on the concept of ‘public space,’ using it not only as a conceptual entity, but emphasizing its physical dimension as well. The main conclusion is that the expansion of liberals in the public space of Minas Gerais made the Emperor’s goal of politically isolating the exalted liberals a much more complicated task than expected. Suggested in the paper is that the increasing unpopularity of D. Pedro I after the journey and the subsequent abdication of the throne were due more to circumstances arising from the further implementation of the constitutional monarchy than to his supposed absolutism or anti-national attitude.

Keywords: Brazil Empire; public space; journey of D. Pedro I to Minas Gerais.

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On 30 December 1830 Pedro I, with Empress Amélia and their entourage, left on a journey to the province of Minas Gerais with the aim of reducing tensions with regional liberal leaders and gaining support for political confrontations in the imperial capital. During a period of almost two months they visited various towns and *vilas* such as Barbacena, São João Del Rey, São José Cachoeira, Sabará, Caeté, and Mariana, before reaching their final destination – the provincial capital Ouro Preto. The fact that Pedro abdicated less than a month after his return shows that the journey was not successful in terms of its intended purpose, but this does not imply that it completely lacks importance. To the contrary, it seems that the Emperor's journey to Minas, since it temporarily concentrated a series of events which acquired their own significance in this context, can be considered a moment of singular importance to analyze the role of the provinces in the configuration and the feasibility of the monarchical-constitutional state, a question of increasing interest in historiography (Silva, 2005; Slemian, 2006; Oliveira, 2009). The article thereby proposes to reconstitute the Emperor's journey to Minas Gerais in 1831, focusing on interactions between local political elites and the central authorities, represented at this moment by the Emperor himself.

For the configuration and feasibility of the constitutional monarchy, the article specifically refers to the troubled process of the construction of new constitutional foundations after Independence under the auspices of the relationship of the central administration in Rio de Janeiro with the other provinces. From this perspective, the paper is inspired by recent literature which identifies the existence of a relatively fluid dynamic of negotiation between the Court and the provinces, thereby contributing to the criticism of the centralization-decentralization binomial present in many previous analyses (Dolhnikoff, 2005; Slemian, 2007; Gouvêa, 2008).

The analytical perspective adopted allows new questions to be posed about the historiography of Pedro I's journey to Minas Gerais. In Monteiro (1946) and Sousa (1957), for example, the interpretation of the journey is linked to the analysis of the end of the First Empire, reiterating the discourse of liberals at the time, a discourse which highlights the despotism and anti-national character of Pedro I as fundamental factors for the end of the First Empire.² It is not surprising then that these authors considered the journey as disastrous in terms of popular repercussion, and that it had reinforced the unpopularity of the Emperor, which since the beginning of his journey had been high. The evidence used to prove these statements, however, does not

appear convincing based on what we know now. We argue that to understand the repercussions of the journey in the political scenario we have to analyze what it represented at the time. In other words, as a strategy which revealed the willingness of the Emperor to negotiate and/or accommodate the proposals of the liberal elites from Minas, even though this strategy failed in the end in relation to its objectives. Following this line of argumentation, we intend to help reassess the supposed despotism of Pedro I (which is said to have explained the failure of the journey) and to reflect on the importance and role of the province of Minas in the process which led to the end of the First Empire (which helps to understand why Pedro decided to undertake the journey), questions which have not been sufficiently emphasized in the historiography of the period in question (Ribeiro, 2002; Basile, 2001; Pandolfi, 2012).³

The study is inserted in a field of investigation which, by expanding the notion of politics with the concept of 'public space' (Habermas, 1984),⁴ has generated insights for many scholars in their deepening of the study of the relations of politics with the practical dimensions of personal and local interactions.⁵ François-Xavier Guerra (1992), for example, instead of treating the public sphere in the singular and only as an immaterial space, refers to concrete places which characterized the new public spaces formed by the expansion of the means of communication and the emergence of new spaces of sociability in the formation processes of Ibero-American nations during the passage from the Ancien Regime to Modernity. In another approach, scholars have recently expanded the understanding of the physical dimension of the concept of 'public space.' This approach, a tributary of the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Pierre Bourdieu (1990) and recently returned to in the historiography, has been fruitful in showing how the public sphere as a conceptual entity is mediated by the real world (Kingston, 2006; Foa, 2006).⁶ In this sense, the physical public space can be thought of as a rare product, whose appropriation presupposes certain uses which can guarantee specific gains, thereby becoming an object of dispute between rival political groups in the province of Minas during the journey.

The article is divided into three sections. The first analyzes political life in the province of Minas, showing that the implementation of the constitutional monarchy gave projection to Minas liberals in the public space, understood both as a conceptual entity and in its physical dimension. After this the journey itself is looked at, with an emphasis on the interactions between the Emperor, local political leaders, and the population in general. Among the various

aspects analyzed, we seek to specifically highlight what the journey represented at the time, as a process in which disputes of groups trying to get support for their projects were expressed, and not a *post eventum* perspective, which suggests that it failed as a political strategy. We conclude the paper suggesting that the increase in the unpopularity of Pedro I after the journey and his consequent abdication from the throne resulted much more from relatively fortuitous circumstances, arising out of the further implementation of the constitutional monarchy under his government (and visible in the political conflicts during the journey), than from his supposed absolutist and anti-national character.

POLITICAL LIFE IN THE PROVINCE OF MINAS AT THE TIME OF THE EMPEROR'S JOURNEY

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Minas Gerais was the most populous province in the Empire and enjoyed an important geographical location in the provision economy (Lenharo, 1979). The population of the province was estimated at 848,177 inhabitants in the 1830s, of whom 572,099 were free and 276,098, slaves (Rodarte et al., 2011, p. 6). With the difficulties of an economy dependent on mining around 1750, a transition occurred to a more diversified economy, aimed at the existing internal market (Libby, 1988). The oldest occupied regions remained in a hegemonic position due to the dimension of the urban network and since they enjoyed locational economic advantages which allowed them serve as commercial entrepôts for more peripheral regions (Rodarte et al., 2011, pp. 13-14).

The increase in the economic importance in Minas of producers specialized in the supply of victuals to the capital defined the regional political interests of the province during the First Empire (Lenharo, 1979, p. 19). These producers, who became known as moderate liberals, kept themselves out of the political disputes which occurred in the capital, occupying political and administrative space, predominantly at the provincial and local levels, through electoral processes for Municipal Councils, Provincial Councils, and in a subordinated manner, to the Chamber of Deputies (Oliveira, 2009, pp. 45-46).

The press, which would become an important part of the political public space in Minas Gerais until 1860, initially emerged in the old mining areas. This region covered a relatively small part of the province between Pouso Alegre and

Diamantina, including the cities of Campanha, São João Del-Rei, Tiradentes (at the time São José Del-Rei), Barbacena, Ouro Preto, Mariana, and Sabará (Camisasca; Venâncio, 2007, p. 4). During the 1828-1833 period 37 periodicals were registered in the province of Minas Gerais (Veiga, 1898, p. 169).

Added to the proliferation of periodicals was the construction of other organized spaces to disseminate liberal political culture, such as literary societies and public libraries which had the political and educational mission of shaping public opinion. Their collections contained periodicals from Minas and the other provinces, as well as a large volume of books by enlightened authors and subjects related to France and its history (Morais; Villalta, 2013).

As in the capital, the majority of periodicals in Minas Gerais were liberal, but followed a more homogenous editorial line than in Rio de Janeiro, where the periodicals presented themselves as moderate and exalted. The former criticized the Pedro I's government, especially its ministers, nevertheless sparing the figure of the Emperor from attacks. The exalted liberals,⁷ however, tended to use more combative language in their criticism of the government and defended the federative form of government. Despite presenting differences, the references to 'exalted liberals' and 'moderate liberals' need to be understood in terms of a certain amount of imprecision in the delimitation of political groups at this moment, which were not cohesive, nor did they have any party discipline. In fact, it was this that allowed, as will be analyzed during the article, the sharing of common positions among liberals from Minas, who were known for their moderation, and the exalted liberals from the capital. One of these positions was the defense of federalism, which became the principal point of attrition between the Emperor and the Minas liberals during the journey. Federalism, whose primordial principal was the defense of more autonomy for the provinces to administer justice and internal economies, was not intrinsically incompatible with constitutional monarchy. For example, the 1827 Justice of the Peace Law implied a greater decentralization of power not only at the provincial level, but also the municipal, to the extent that it allowed citizens to actively participate in municipal bodies through elections (Coser, 2008, pp. 941-949; 2009, pp. 462-465).

Minas liberals, who had an important representative in the *Universal* newspaper, were predominantly moderate. In general, they advocated reforms which could provide more autonomous politics in relation to the central government, but they refuted republicanism and affirmed their commitment to monarchy. According to *Universal*, the idea of federation that it advocated

would be represented by the Provincial Councils and by elected municipalities and their respective attributions demarcated by the law (*Universal*, 7 jan. 1831; 31 dez. 1830, p. 1). Another periodical *Novo Argos*, in turn, argued that it did not preach Federation and only defended reforms in some articles in the Constitution, such as the alteration of article 165 which authorized the Government to nominate and dismiss the presidents of provinces at its will. In its view, this was the source of all the ills of Minas, by bringing to the presidency of the Province enemies or foreigners who did not know it (*Novo Argos*, 10 mar. 1831).

Although communication between the provinces was hindered by the difficult roads and precarious means of transport, the post office, capable of covering only 30 kilometers per day, was an important factor in the circulation of ideas (Jinzenji, 2008, p. 58; Camisasca; Venâncio, 2007, p. 6). Notwithstanding the criticism of the post office for its slowness in delivering letters, which often were sent to other provinces before reaching their final destination, the scope of a periodical in the nineteenth century was much greater than the region where it was published.⁸ Although they were not read at the same time in the various locations they reached, they circulated with a short time lag for the standards of the time, which was a striking transformation in relation to the immediately preceding period. This sharing of ideas and events certainly created an imaginative bond, allowing these people to relate in a new form.

The history of other peoples, for example, was disseminated by the press and contributed to the consolidation of a clearer notion of the epoch and place.⁹ Minas liberals especially used the past as an example of successes and failures, in order to guide the future of political life. Episodes of valorous men from antiquity who did not surrender to the tyranny of kings and rulers were also frequently remembered to inform the population of a new epoch, when the despotism and arbitrary will of kings would be replaced by the law and the Constitution (*Universal*, 28 jan. 1831, p. 3).

These transformations were reflected in the strengthening of an identity for Minas liberals as a group which shared proposals and visions of common worlds, notwithstanding individual differences. Particularly interesting was how the Italian journalist Líbero Badaró, based in São Paulo and editor of the newspaper *Observador Constitucional*, became, after his murder in November 1830, a hero of the Minas liberals and symbol of the freedom of the press (*Universal*, 31 dez. 1830). The Badaró myth gained amplitude to the extent that the biographic

details of his life were explored (Girardet, 1987). As a doctor he had cured a seven-year-old girl of a serious illness (*Pregoeiro Constitucional*, 29 dez. 1830, pp. 128-129). In “Artigo Necrológico,” a type of obituary of the nineteenth century, his biography is written in detail in four pages to consecrate him as the man who died for liberty. Dying he is said to uttered the phrase: “I die a liberal, but I do not die in liberty” (*Pregoeiro Constitucional*, 5 jan. 1831).

The principal periodical opposed to the Minas liberals was the *Telegrapho* newspaper, which circulated from 1828-1831, with the expression *telegráfico* being used by liberals as a synonym of absolutist. The lack of information about *Telegrapho* in manuals and articles about the press, as well as the fact that only two issues are available from 1830, restricts us to collecting information about its actions in the liberal press. As an illustration of the antagonism of *Telegrapho* towards liberals, it is enough to point out that the periodical was not in favor of the measures to grant more autonomy to the province in relation to the central government, which liberals wanted. For the *Telegrapho*, the appointment of provincial presidents and military commanders had to be made by the central governments (*Universal*, 5 jan. 1831, pp. 1-2). For this reason, the liberals accused João José Lopes,¹⁰ possibly one of its principal editors – called the ‘chief *telegráfico* – and the other *telegráficos* of being “sycophants” of the monarchy (*Universal*, 22 dez. 1830, p. 4).

The final aspect of the public space in the politics of the province that we want to highlight, since the Emperor journey to Minas Gerais was marked by elections, is related to the electoral process. Both in Brazil and in other Latin American countries, the elections of the nineteenth century became mechanisms of legitimation of the new liberal order and a means of choosing the representatives who would fill the constitutional conventions (Adelman, 2014, p. 512). In the Brazilian provinces, the affirmation of local forces found important space in direct elections for councilors and the magistracy in the First Empire (Campos; Vellasco, 2011, pp. 379-384). Since there was no direct correlation, for example, between the those elected as justices of the peace in the Minas province and the highest economic indicators (Campos; Vellasco, 2011, p. 393), we can infer that the elections in general had a degree of unpredictability and were intensely disputed. As shown at the epoch, the electoral colleges were “composed of men for the most part independent of the government, and safe from any fear, since they observed the law, of those who governed” (*Pregoeiro Constitucional*, 22 jan. 1831, p. 151).

The electoral process ongoing in the nineteenth century allowed the political projection of men linked to the provisions trade with the capital who, in general, made up the liberal group in Minas Gerais (Lenharo, 1979, p. 19). This was visible in 1831, when the election results were favorable to the liberals (*Universal*, 1 out. 1830, pp. 2-3; 22 out. 1830, p. 3; 21 jan. 1831, p. 4). The importance of the dispute and, at times, the unpredictability of the elections appeared symbolized in the journey itself. It was believed that the presence of the Minister of the Empire José Antonio da Silva Maia alongside the Emperor would favor his re-election as deputy, which did not happen.

In this way, the manner in which the public space for politics was configured in Minas, particularly the mechanisms and structures of local government, and the exchange of information profoundly impacted on the political life of the province during the First Empire. These transformations, which occurred rapidly for the parameters of the time, made the Emperor's aim of finding political support through his journey to Minas Gerais in 1831 a much more complex task than he may even have imagined.

THE RECEPTION OF HIS ENTOURAGE IN THE PROVINCE OF MINAS GERAIS

Pedro had already gone to Minas in 1822 to look for support from the local powers against the Portuguese *Cortes*, which demanded his return to Portugal and decreed a series of measures which were interpreted as recolonizing (Rocha, 2008, pp. 9-21). On this occasion, he was successful, thanks above all to prior negotiations carried out by the dispatch of emissaries (Bittencourt, 2013, pp. 152-160). The local authorities in Minas Gerais ended up adhering to the regency of Pedro I, annulling both autonomist tendencies and other ones sympathetic to the *Cortes* in Lisbon (Nascimento, 2013, pp. 32-44).

At the end of the First Empire, the situation was different. The Carioca liberals, above all the exalted ones, made scathing criticisms of Pedro I's government, especially of the 'secret cabinet'¹¹ and the Emperor's ministers. The approximation between the exalted liberals and the Carioca military (Pandolfi, 2012, pp. 286-291), as well as the popularity of the exalted periodicals in Rio de Janeiro, contributed to the de-legitimation of Pedro I's government (Pandolfi, 2014a). The exalted liberals, despite not participating in the central power, had their own political identities made concrete in networks of

(counter) power which embraced various provinces (Morel, 2005, pp. 109-111). Sympathy for the exalted liberals was manifested by *Universal*, the most famous periodical in the province of Minas, by citing *Republico* as the one “who knew how to unite true love of the *Patria* to a talent and courage that were not vulgar” (*Universal*, 3 nov. 1830, p. 3).

Although the Minas liberals did not use such combative language as the exalted Carioca liberals, they defended common slogans, such as the defense of more autonomy for the provinces. In this section, we will examine the hypothesis that the journey of the Emperor was aimed at gaining the support of the Minas liberals to politically isolate the exalted liberals and thereby increase the Emperor’s political support in the Capital.

The entourage which left with Pedro I for Minas included the Empress, Baroness Stuomfeder, the Empress’ personal servant or *veador*, six *reposteiros* (a type of servant), a doctor, a chaplain, and five more private servants (*Viagem do Imperador D. Pedro I a Minas-Gerais em 1830 e 1831*, p. 307).¹² Also part of the committee was the Imperial Minister José Antônio da Silva Maia. He was the most unpopular figure, seen as an ally of the *secret cabinet* “which issued orders without sending them through the competent secretaries” (*Universal*, 24 jan. 1831, pp. 3-4) and was accused of abandoning the jurisdiction of his responsibility as an Imperial Minister by leaving the capital for the journey (*Universal*, 11 fev. 1831). To reach Ouro Preto, the Imperial party used the so-called ‘New Road,’ whose principal route left the port of Estrela, passing through Petrópolis, afterwards reaching Encruzilhada. After crossing the Paraíba and Paraibuna rivers, they passed the Matias Barbosa customs post, Juiz de Fora, Barbacena, São João Del Rey, and Ouro Preto. This was also the route used to transport foodstuffs from Rio de Janeiro port to Minas Gerais. At the end of the eighteenth century, with the mining crisis, the flow of merchandise was reversed, with cattle, sheep, chickens, lard, cheese, and other subsistence foods, were sent to the Carioca market (Lenharo, 1979, pp. 57-59).

News of the journey was announced in advance by various periodicals in the province, not always in a favorable manner. *Universal* reported it with satisfaction and, at the same time, expressed concern about the sacrifices which the reception would demand of citizens to “show the love they devoted to Pedro I” (*Universal*, 15 dez. 1831, p. 2). *Pregoeiro Constitucional* also had reservations about the journey, especially the expenses it could impose on citizens, thereby defending a reception without ostentation (*Pregoeiro Constitucional*, 22 dez. 1830, p. 125; 19 jan. 1831, p. 147).

Notwithstanding the negative observations about the journey, positive reactions appear to have gradually prevailed. For one reader, the journey would serve to show the truth to many people deluded by the *telegráficos* and for everyone to know that the Constitution is “Our Emperor’s golden child” (*Universal*, 9 fev. 1831, p. 4). Moreover, it was believed that the Emperor would not be indifferent to the misery and for this reason the committee would not bother the militia and farmers, as had happened in the period of the absolutist Councils which demanded donations to receive a captain general or even any ‘executioner’ (*Pregoeiro Constitucional*, 5 fev. 1831, pp. 132-133).

On 14 January 1831, *Universal*, along with the news that His Imperial Majesty was already in the province of Minas, published sonnets to praise his presence. It also took advantage to publish small sayings warning against absolutist monarchs. One of them stated that “an absolutist king is always weak,” in an allusion to liberal anxieties about more provincial autonomy (*Universal*, 14 jan. 1831, pp. 2-4).

Pomp and ostentation, despite the optimistic expectations for simplicity, predominated in the reception of the Imperial party everywhere, burdening and causing trouble for the population, even though receiving the Emperor could represent a personal honor and the recognition of the importance of the province (*Universal*, 22 dez. 1830, p. 3; 26 jan. 1831, p. 4). In various locations militia companies from neighboring towns were ordered to assemble when the Imperial party was passing to present the necessary salutes. Threats to the absent and the demands for the ‘splendor’ of the uniforms and weapons led some soldier to compare their luck to that of misfortunate slaves (*Universal*, 2 fev. 1831, p. 4).

In Sabará especially preparations to receive the Imperial party were a serious burden on the population. For example, on 20 January many soldiers had to absent themselves from their fishing boats to take part in the general parade. However, since the exact day of the Emperor’s entrance was not known, they had to wait until 12 February, when they were dismissed. As well as all this disturbance, from what it appears they had no right to pay (*Correspondência, Curral ElRei 15 de fevereiro de 1831. Novo Argos*, 1 mar. 1831, p. 4).

In the most important towns, it was not just the arrival of the Imperial party that was commemorated. In Sabará, the day after his arrival, the Emperor went to the *Companhia do Gongo Soco* iron foundry, received the deputy sent from the Municipal Council of the *vila* of Pitangui, and gave “his hand to kiss to many people.” At night he went to the theater to watch the presentation of

a ‘tragedy,’ while in the intervals between the acts, symphonies and poetic works were presented and cheers given to His Imperial Majesty, the imperial family, and the Constitution of the Empire “as it was sworn, without alteration.” The columnist insisted on emphasizing in the cheering of the Constitution the Emperor’s opposition to proposals to alter some of its articles, as demanded by the Minas liberals identified with the defense of federalism (*Viagem do Imperador...*, p. 347).

Federalism, however, was only strongly criticized by Pedro I when he reached Ouro Preto, although during the journey he had criticized the party with that name as “disorganizing” and “demagogical.” In Sabará the Emperor gave thanks for the vows of fidelity, stating that he could count on “honorable and truly constitutional Brazilians” to sustain the integrity of the Constitution against the attacks of the “disorganizing party” (*Viagem do Imperador...*, pp. 345-346). The Municipal Council of Ouro Preto, in turn, hoped that the presence of the Emperor in the province could resolve the disagreements among the local Minas elites: “The August Presence of H.I.M has to call all *Mineiros* to a center of peace, union, and harmony...” (*Universal*, 2 fev. 1831, pp. 2-3).

Pedro I reached Ouro Preto on 22 February 1831. Instead of taking the shortest road, the Imperial Party gave the honor of entering through the suburbs. When they reached the main streets, they passed under triumphal arches set up by the commercial corporations, public employees, and the military. The Imperial party entered the city accompanied by cavalry from the military guard and an immensity of people on foot, dismounting at the beginning of Rua do Rozario, where they were awaited by members of the Municipal Council, the vicar of Ouro Preto and other ecclesiastics, as well as many citizens deployed in rows. After this the Emperor was led to the Church of the Third Order of Carmo. After the Emperor dispensed the holy orator from reciting the discourse due to tiredness from the journey, the ceremony was continued with the *Te-Deum*. Following this, Pedro I went to the State House and from the parapet issued his Proclamation¹³ (*Universal*, 23 fev. 1831, p. 3).

In this Proclamation, the Emperor ‘named and shamed,’ referring to the existence of a *disorganizing party* which, under the influence of the events in France, was spreading pamphlets and slander against his person and the government with the intent of getting government positions and committing private vendettas. He mentioned the existence of a party which preached the adoption of a “federative form” and for this reason attacked the Constitution. He asked the people not to let themselves be induced by pernicious doctrines

which could lead to the “perdition” of Brazil (Proclamação. *Universal*, 23 fev. 1831, p. 3). After issuing the Proclamation, the Bishop of Mariana, said to be a *telegráfico*, positioned himself beside the Emperor, declaring in a speech that the *Mineiros* wanted religion, the Emperor, and the Constitution, but not federalism. He also asked Pedro I to defend them from the enemies of the Constitution (Viagem do Imperador... pp. 360-362).

The Proclamation issued in Ouro Preto was a ‘turning point.’¹⁴ In the local sphere it aggravated further conflicts between liberals and the *telegráficos*. The liberals began to harshly attack the Proclamation in the press and to emphasize the unpopularity with which Pedro I had been received in the province, something which had not been observed previously. Thoughts and maxims with indirect criticisms of the position adopted by Pedro I were published. In these insurrection was justified due to the government’s attacks on national sovereignty (*Universal*, 25 fev. 1831, p. 4). While the *Telegrapho*, as to be expected, praised Pedro I following the Proclamation. Its editor asked in the first person, as if he were the Emperor: “Have I given proof of being a tyrant, who intends to cause harm to the Nation, or your True Friend, who Desires to hold each one of you in My heart?... Ah! *Mineiros* embrace the truth based on facts; despise lies and their inventors!” (*Universal*, 28 fev. 1831, p. 4).

The Emperor’s attitude in Ouro Preto was interpreted as an adoption of a position in favor of the *telegráficos*, who were said to be “very content” with the Emperor’s bad reception of the liberals. It was speculated that the Emperor had been convinced by intriguers that the liberals “were the heads of the Minas federation.” This had been possible since the keyword at that time to make someone unpopular or hated was ‘federation,’ used in replacement of the old word ‘republican’ which no longer awoke feelings of ‘horror and indignation’ in the incautious people (*Astro de Minas*, 5 mar. 1831, p. 4). In the symbolic field, the liberals reacted with the generalized use of the *national tope*,¹⁵ leading the pro-government Minas periodical *Amigo da Verdade* to ask for police measures to counter the use of this insignia (Correspondence to “O Constitucional Inabalavel”, *Astro de Minas*, 8 mar. 1831, p. 3).

Although republican intentions were denied by the liberals from Minas Gerais, the ideas of federalism that they defended raised suspicions among readers. One reader suspected that the periodicals supporting federalism, especially *Pregoeiro Constitucional*, wanted to implant a ‘Republic in Brazil,’ which in his opinion was still not suited to the country. In response to this letter, the editor stated that a ‘confederation’ or ‘federative system’ was a

society of many states gathered together for the common security in which each of them, although they preserved their sovereignty, adopted the same form of government. Its advantage, in the opinion of the periodical, was to neutralize at the same time, the inconveniences of centralization and those of absolute independence. It also stressed that the difference of positions between liberals lay in the degree of independence of the provincial governments, since while some defended that it should be total, others defended some restrictions, though none of them wanted to establish a “Republic in Brazil” (*Pregoeiro Constitucional*, 23 mar. 1831, pp. 213-221).

The debate about federalism, instead of dying out after the Emperor’s criticism, instead gained further amplitude in the press, and was responsible for the record sale of one thousand copies of each of the issue numbers 67, 68, and 69 of *Novo Argos*. This periodical came out in defense of a federalism, in its words, with “few innovations” and without “dangerous leaps.” Despite praising Pedro I for recognizing the specificities of the provinces by creating the General Councils, it defended more powers for this body, such as the right of suspending the president of the Province, the commander of Arms, the bishop, and the judges, and suing any of them that “had become a criminal” (*O Novo Argos*, 1 mar. 1831, pp. 1-2). It defended the alteration of Article 165 of the Constitution which attributed to the government the right to appoint and dismiss the presidents of the province in favor of their nomination in lists with three names (*O Novo Argos*, 10 mar. 1831, pp. 1-2).

Due to the polysemy of the term federalism in the 1820s and 1830s (Fonseca, 2013), these collocations allow us believe that the editors of *Pregoeiro Constitucional* and *Novo Argos* tried to dissociate their conception of federalism from the understanding of ‘federalist republicans,’ a denomination coined by José Bonifácio to refer to those who did not want to be republicans of a single republic, but wanted each province to be a republic which exercised a despotic power. This is the understand of federalism which possibly caused Minas liberal to defend a federalism with “few innovations” and without “dangerous leaps.” They also dissociated federalism from the comprehension of the republic as a form of elective government, which was only defended in the Confederation of Ecuador and in the provincial civil wars “except in the last case” (Starling; Lynch, 2009, pp. 233-237). Apparently these editors did not see an intrinsic contradiction between federation and monarchy, even suggesting that the federation would avoid the feared ‘fragmentation’ of the territory, an interpretation also made by other federalist monarchists (Fonseca, 2013, p. 109).

The then undefined reason for the Emperor's journey to Minas was clarified in the eyes of Minas liberals – the fight against federalism. According to *Astro de Minas*, if this was the motive, the Emperor should have issued the Proclamation in the first city he visited. It alleged that because the reason for the journey was then unknown, the Emperor received demonstrations of cordiality from *Mineiros* (*Astro de Minas*, 8 mar. 1831, p. 1). The Carioca exalted liberal *Tribuno do Povo* argued that the *free press* was not part of “the disorganizing party” and that the federative form was permitted by the Constitution. It rejected the accusation that the *disorganizers* wanted to get state positions, stating that there were no positions to aspire to, since with a few exceptions they were in the hands of “incompetents” and the “enemy.” Finally, it lamented the misfortune of Pedro I to be surrounded by traitors (*Tribuno do Povo*, 14 mar. 1831).

The Carioca pamphlet *Cartas ao Povo* blamed the “Proclamation” for causing discord and called for vigilance for “honor” and “national glory.” It considered the Proclamation unconstitutional because it attacked article 174 of the Constitution, which “established the principle of a four-year reform of everything that was Constitutional” (*Cartas ao Povo*, 26 mar. 1831, p. 4). It understood that the federation, *even in the rigor and terror of the word* did not disobey any constitutional article, though it considered that the necessary reforms could be achieved outside of the federal system, to improve the various branches of public administration and to expand the powers of the General Councils in the provinces.

Authorship of the Proclamation was attributed to ministers and bad councilors who derided the liberals and intended to instill terror and confusion among the peoples by speaking about scenes of horror (*Tribuno do Povo*, 14 mar. 1831). After the reason for the journey came to be associated with opposition to federalism and/or demands for autonomy in relation to the central government, the Minas liberal press, which until then had not explicitly considered the First Empire as a centralizing and absolutist epoch, began to criticize more incisively Pedro I's government.¹⁶ The government was accused of being largely in the hands of people disaffected to Brazil, and the word Constitution of being used by the government only as a formality, since in practice the Emperor rewarded and nominated absolutists to ministries (*Astro de Minas*, 8 mar. 1831, pp. 2-3).

It is worth noting that at this moment the instability of local politics in Minas Gerais was often the result of the lack of clarity about the attributions

of power in the new constitutional context, marked by incompatibilities between the spheres of regional power, with the attributions granted to the president of the province, and the local powers represented by the General Council (Silva, 2005, pp. 52-57). Federalism and/or demands for autonomy in relation to the central government were included in this context. Nevertheless, this does not signify a direct opposition to the central government, reflecting more the strengthening of Minas liberals as a group to demand greater autonomy in the provincial and local sphere, or even possible action within the central government.

After the Proclamation the climate of political uncertainty worsened, although no concrete proof of this was presented. Liberals were afraid of being arbitrarily arrested and deported (*Astro de Minas*, 3 mar. 1831, p. 4). In the middle of this panic, they explained to readers that the legal resistance of peoples was a “sacred duty” of men in defense of freedom. To exemplify this reasoning, the participation of the French people in the overthrow of the “tyrant” Charles X was cited, with his place as king being taken by Louis Philippe, “virtuous and a true friend of the country” (*Astro de Minas*, 5 mar. 1831, pp. 2-4).

In the middle of the uncertainties caused by the journey, to make matters worse, the rumor spread through the streets of Mariana and Ouro Preto that the liberals wanted to enslave the *pardos* (those of mixed race). The streets of Mariana especially were full of pamphlets insulting the liberals, whose contents were considered by the Carioca periodical *Republico* to be full of imprudent rumors (*Republico*, 26 mar. 1831, p. 232). In turn, the liberals accused the *Telegrapho* newspaper of leaving the pamphlets in certain places in Mariana in order to impugn the honor of the true supporters of the constitution (*Universal*, 11 mar. 1831, p. 4). In the middle of these conflicts, the liberal press denied the accusations and published letters signed by *pardos*, engaging in the defense of the liberals and the status of *pardos* as free men (*Universal*, 16 mar. 1831, p. 2; 16 mar. 1831, pp. 2-3).

The rumor of the enslavement of *pardos* by the liberals only lost strength after the *Noite das Garrafadas* (Night of the Bottles). This name was given to the political and social conflicts which occurred between 13 and 15 March 1831 in Rio de Janeiro, during which Portuguese and Brazilians attacked each other with broken bottles and other objects in a commemoration organized to celebrate the return of Pedro I from his journey to the province of Minas Gerais. The *Garrafadas* disputes between Brazilians and Portuguese were related to the labor market and were politicized, with this event becoming proof of the

Emperor's preference for the Portuguese. In the days that followed the *Noite das Garrafadas* rumors spread and gained amplitude in the Carioca press that the Portuguese intended to recolonize Brazil (Pandolfi, 2014b, pp. 309-315). These rumors reached the province of Minas mostly through the press and ended up contributing, somewhat unexpectedly, to de-radicalizing the political conflicts between liberals and *telegráficos* in Minas Gerais in name of the union of Brazilians against the Portuguese enemies (*Universal*, 30 mar. 1831, pp. 4-6; 4 abr. 1831, pp. 1-4; 6 abr. 1831, pp. 3-4; 8 abr. 1831, pp. 2-3; 11 abr. 1831, pp. 2-3; 13 abr. 1831, pp. 2-4; 15 abr. 1831).

Pedro I abdicated less than a month after returning from his journey to the province of Minas Gerais. The news of the abdication was only announced in the Minas press 11 days after the event, in a report entitled "Triumph of Liberty" (*Universal*, 18 abr. 1831, pp. 1-2). The Council of Ouro Preto called for moderation, for the extinction of rivalries, and to ignore insidious doctrines (*Universal*, 20 abr. 1831, p. 2). In issue of 29 April 1831, *Universal* announced that the *Telegrapho* was ending without giving any explanations to readers about its motives. The ending of this newspaper was associated with the 'fall of the Tyrant' Pedro I and patron of the *telegráficos* (*Universal*, 29 abr. 1831, p. 1). With the political triumph of the liberals and the subsequent disappearance of *Telegrapho*, the controversy about the enslavement of the *pardos* lost relevance in the Minas liberal press. In this context, the local Minas elites rapidly commemorated and embraced abdication as a founding moment which gave a beginning to a national existence, making their *telegráfico* opponents symbol of an epoch governed by an absolutist and anti-national king.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The growth of the Minas liberals in the public space, also understood as a physical entity, made the objective of the Emperor the political isolation of the exalted liberals, who were his fiercest opponents, a task much more complicated than expected (assuming, as the sources suggest, that this fact had been the political calculation which motivated the journey).

The growing unpopularity of the Emperor after the Ouro Preto Proclamation against the 'disorganizing party' (an obvious allusion to the exalted liberals) had an impact on the liberal Minas and Carioca press, while the events that followed immediately afterwards had the contrary effect of joining

the Minas liberals with the Cariocas in defense of the national cause against Pedro I's government said to be 'despotic' and 'anti-national,' leading him to abdicate on 7 April 1831. Nevertheless, this does not imply that the journey to Minas Gerais in 1831 had been unpopular and something destined to fail since the beginning. No one better occupied the available public space (in its physical dimension) than Pedro. We argue that the disastrous Proclamation at the end was what made the journey of the Emperor to Minas unpopular, helping to trigger, through its dissemination in the press, the succession of events which contributed to his abdication. Although it cannot be discarded as an important factor to explain the end of the First Empire, the characterization of Pedro as despotic and anti-national can only have this role in the context of the implementation of the constitutional monarchy, in which political groups of the opposition with expression in parliament and public opinion were able to appropriate this image for their own political objectives.

Moreover, the rapid reaction against the Emperor by the Minas liberals after the Proclamation, was only possible due to the expansion of the public spaces in their physical dimension in the province of Minas. More exactly, we have argued that the proliferation of periodicals and the increase in their provincial and interprovincial circulation was a critical factor in explaining the political events unchained by Emperor's journey to Minas, by permitting that liberal Cariocas and Mineiros to share common events, personalities, and interpretations which would strengthen them as a group, notwithstanding their individual differences.

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NOTES

¹ This article is the final result of research carried out during my Post-Doctorate in Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) under the supervision of Professor Luiz Carlos Villalta, whom I would like to thank for his valuable suggestions.

² These authors reiterate Armitage’s (1943) interpretation – a resident of Rio de Janeiro at the time and a friend of influential liberal journalists – which incorporated the liberal analyses exposed in the press.

³ It should be emphasized that we have not found any recent studies in the historiography about this journey.

⁴ In the work of Jürgen Habermas (1984) the public sphere is a conceptual space in which private citizens discuss subjects of common interest, referring to the constitution of a public established as a group of public established as a group of interlocutors between civil society and the state.

⁵ For a critical review of this literature, see Piccato (2010).

⁶ Kingston (2006) showed that making public what was private was not only a semiotic strategy, but also represented a challenge in real life which had to deal with the material

limitations of the environment. Foa (2006) analyzed how the spatial exclusion of Protestants by being confined to the domestic sphere was as fundamental as theological and political aspects to understand the religious wars of the sixteenth century.

⁷ According to Basile (2012), the exalted liberals conjugated principles of classical liberalism with democratic ideas. Ribeiro (2010) relativized the radicalism of the exalted liberals and their leadership in the mutinies occurring in the Capital which, in his opinion, counted on the participation of different groups in moments of great social agitation.

⁸ For example, this occurred before they reached Ouro Preto, the periodicals sent from Bahia passed through Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, taking with this almost a month to be delivered (*Universal*, 13 dez. 1830, p. 3).

⁹ For an analysis of how the advent of the press in the West altered the physical and intellectual environment of men and women, changing especially how they related to the past, see Eisenstein (1979).

¹⁰ From what it appears, this refers to João José Lopes Mendes Ribeiro. He was a member of the *Junta* of Vila Rica in 1821 which had autonomist tendencies (NASCIMENTO, 2013, pp. 32-44). He was the predecessor of the president of the Province of Minas Gerais in 1831 José Manoel de Almeida, whose administration was approved by the liberals from Minas (*Universal*, 24 jan. 1831, pp. 3-4).

¹¹ From what it appears the 'secret cabinet' never existed. But close to this definition was the group of people of confidence of the Emperor and with daily access to him (SOUSA, 1957, p. 842).

¹² This publication contained the reports of the travel itineraries written by the official chronicler of the committee and published in *Diário Fluminense* from 30 December - 12 March 1831. The identity of the official chronicler does not appear.

¹³ "Proclamação que S. M. o Imperador fez aos Mineiros, em geral, e a todos os Povos do Brasil. Ouro Preto, 22 de fevereiro de 1831". It was published at the time in various newspapers in Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro.

¹⁴ The 'turning point' refers to an event which warns us against simple linear connections and reminds us of the importance of contingencies (TACKETT, 2003).

¹⁵ Used at the time of independence, the *tope* was green and yellow ribbon with a yellow flower called 'always alive' (*Astro de Minas*, 8 mar. 1831, p. 3).

¹⁶ Before the Proclamation, although the liberals from Minas criticized the government of Pedro I, they believed that the monarchical-constitutional system was progressively strengthened through bodies such as the General Council and the new Criminal Code, which would be added to the benefits received from the creation of the Municipal Councils and the *Juízes de Paz* (*Ofício do Conselho Geral. Universal*, 24 dez. 1830, pp. 1-2).

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