

This Month in Latin American History



"A independência do Brasil" by François-René Moreau¹

September 7, 1822

Dom Pedro Braganza declares Brazilian Independence

Faced with invasion by Napoleon's army, in November of 1807 the Portuguese royal family (Braganza) fled the capitol city of Lisbon, taking refuge instead in the capitol city of their most important colony- Rio de Janeiro. For over a decade, they ruled their empire from that city, even electing to remain there after Napoleon was driven out of Portugal and elevating Brazil to the status of kingdom- thus equal to Portugal itself. Frustrated, in 1820 rebellions and mutinies broke out amongst Portuguese in Europe and in Brazil, and the King, João VI, returned to Portugal to negotiate the creation of a constitution. His son and heir, Pedro, who had lived in Brazil since he was nine, remained behind to keep the peace in Brazil, where he had already taken steps to placate Portuguese troops while assuring Brazilians that their rights and privileges (which included an unfettered slave trade) would be respected. However, when word reached Pedro that the Portuguese *Cortes* (parliament) demanded his return to Lisbon, he made a public address to the people of Ipiranga, a village he was visiting as part of an inspection tour, declaring "Friends, the Portuguese *Cortes* wished to enslave and persecute us. As of today our bonds are ended. By my blood, by my honor, by my God, I swear to bring about the independence of Brazil. Brazilians, let our watchword from this day forth be 'Independence or Death!'" With British support, Brazil was able to obtain independence relatively quickly and with minimal bloodshed under a constitutional monarchy that endured until 1889, a year after slavery was abolished.

Want to know more? Take Latin American History!

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¹ <http://ensina.rtp.pt/artigo/o-grito-do-ipiranga/>