



From the campaign to the Presidency: the presidency of Campos Salles (1898)

Ana Luiza Backes (Chamber of Deputies)



The election of Campos Salles represented the milestone when the new republican regime began to organize itself. After an extremely conflict-ridden period following the proclamation of the Republic, his candidacy united most of the former *campaigners* (as republican militants were called during the Empire). During the campaign and in the election, Campos Salles isolated his opponent, Lauro Sodré, from the state of Pará, who was identified with the radical republicans, known as *Jacobins* or *Florianistas* (nationalistic and in favor of State intervention).

After the election, Campos Salles brought about an agreement between the country's main political forces, quelling the conflicts that were threatening to paralyze the work of Congress. Thus, he managed to approve international lines of financing (funding loans) and a program of monetary and budgetary restrictions that was demanded in return by international financial centers.

The agreement, enshrined in the so-called *Reform of the Internal Regulation*, established the bases of the colonel system and the dominance by political oligarchies that was to be a feature of the whole period of the First Republic.

Background: The republican campaign movement

Both candidates in the elections of 1898 were from the republican *campaign* movement. The *campaigners* were in favor of the Republic, the creation of an impersonal State bureaucracy—based on competence—federalism, and the separation of Church and State. A substantial proportion of these people had supported the abolition of slavery in 1888, even though some of the big São Paulo landowners held an ambiguous position, as they wanted the end of slavery only when they had solved the labor problem in the coffee sector.

On taking power, the republicans sought to create their own mythology—a new era was beginning in Brazil, guided by science and reason, in opposition to the Empire, a time of backwardness, lethargy and privilege. New urban policies on hygiene and sanitation changed the cities, demolishing entire neighborhoods and constructing buildings related to the scientific project (hospitals, mental asylums, etc.).

The change to the Republic, however, did not take place without conflicts.





Campos Salles as minister of Justice portrayed by *Revista Illustrada* magazine of 1889, No. 569, page. 3. Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil.

Manuel Ferraz de Campos Salles

He was a São Paulo landowner and attorney. A longstanding republican, he won the position of general deputy for the movement back in the time of the Empire, one of the only campaigners elected in the period. He was one of the main leaders of the São Paulo Republican Party (PRP), founded in 1873, a powerful political machine that operated during the First Republic. He held the position of minister of Justice in the provisional government of Deodoro da Fonseca, remaining in post until 1891. He was a senator for the state of São Paulo between 1890 and 1891, again between 1894 and 1895, and later from 1910 to 1914. From 1896 to 1897, he was the governor of São Paulo.

Lauro Nina Sodré e Silva

Born in the state of Pará, he took a degree in military engineering at the Escola Militar da Praia Vermelha, in Rio de Janeiro, where he embraced the cause of republicanism and the positivist doctrine of the French philosopher and sociologist Augusto Comte. He was the first governor of the state of Pará; He was also Pará's representative in the Constitutional Congress of the Republic and was elected senator four times, three times for Pará and once for the Federal District.



Lauro Sodré, portrayed in *Revista Illustrada* magazine of 1897, No. 734, cover. Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil

The conflicts of the first decade of the Republic

After the overthrow of the monarchy, there followed an extremely troubled decade, which included armed conflicts. Floriano Peixoto resisted the rebellion known as the *Navy Revolt*, in which monarchists supported by foreign powers tried to bring down the government. Along with most longstanding republicans, he supported the president of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Julio de Castilhos, in another armed conflict, the *Federalist Revolution*, in that state. These conflicts left their mark, including the *Florianista* movement (named after supporters of Marshal Floriano Peixoto) which was fiercely nationalistic.

Once the enemies of the Republic had been defeated, other problems became evident. The new constitutional order, as it began to function, had no answers to the frequent confrontations between presidents and Congress. How to achieve a parliamentary majority in this new system? Under the Empire, the Moderating Power had allowed the emperor to dissolve the houses of Congress legally, appointing a prime minister who would conduct the electoral process in the states. A parliamentary majority had been guaranteed, although through a reversed process, from top to bottom.

In this new order, how to guarantee the election of deputies who would support the elected president? The first way tried was through intervention in the states, by bringing down their governments—the mechanisms that had been legal in the Empire were used again by force. Deodoro and Floriano overthrew the governments of most of the states, successively. This path led to many confrontations, sometimes bloody ones. Prudente de Moraes, when he took office, put pressure on the National Congress to establish legitimate forms of intervention in the states, without success. The conflicts continued, however, until the inauguration of Campos Salles and the reform of the internal regulation that he conducted.

The new groups that had achieved power sought to unite and founded, in 1893, a new party to defend the republican order: the Federal Republican Party (PRF). It represented the union of the various groups that had supported Floriano



Campos Salles, due to his background as a historical republican, was invited to run for office in order to defuse the polarization between historical figures and government supporters, as he himself reported in his book:

It is obvious, in the presence of such worthy witnesses, that the crisis resulting from powerful and very longstanding causes could not be overcome simply by dealing with these causes on a case-by-case basis. At the heart of everything, dominating events with its marked influence, separating the elements and generating discord, was the problem of the moment—the presidential election. This time, as always, this was the great axis upon which the politics of the Republic turned. [...]

The opposition supporters, as I have already noted, boasted of being the puritans, the representatives of Brazilian republicanism, pointing to their most eminent colleagues as the legitimate repositories of the true republican traditions. The supporters of the government, however, would not cede this primacy to their adversaries and displayed the list of veterans of the Republic who had found a home amongst them. It was under these circumstances that my name began to emerge from the gloom, regarded as a historical republican, in the service of the republican ideal right from the start of the fight against the decadent regime. (pages 83-4).

The then governor of the state of São Paulo launched his candidacy on October 31th, 1897.

The struggle for power between oligarchic groups reached its zenith at this time. On the one side was a large part of the São Paulo Republican Party, which had the support of the legalistic wing of the Army and of groups in the states; on the other side were the ranks of São Paulo politicians who were supporters of Francisco Glicério, and historic republicans, with Quintino Bocaiúva, allied to military groups, fervent Florianistas and positivists from the state of Rio Grande do Sul. At festivals on Independence Day, [...] a multitude calculated at 4,000 people gave enthusiastic cheers for the memory of the late lamented Marshal Floriano and Colonel Moreira César, and for Dr. Júlio de Castilhos, this at a time when Prudente de Moraes and his cabinet were present in the square. (Carone, 1970, page 1,980).

On November 5th, the attempted assassination of Prudente de Moraes, which resulted in the death of his minister of War, showed how bitter the conflicts had become—and this event changed the picture dramatically. After the attack, President Prudente once again received popular support. Thirty thousand people followed the coffin of the assassinated marshal, a crowd which also vandalized the premises of the *Jacobin* newspapers. Prudente exploited the incident to seek control of the National Congress over his succession, excluding his adversaries.



Article published on the front page of *Diario da Tarde* newspaper of 10.28.1908, Paraná, commenting on Campos Salles's book. Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil.



Cidade do Rio newspaper of 11.5.1897, on the front page. Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil.



The presidential race portrayed in Revista Illustrada magazine of 1897, year 22, No. 735. Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil.

The elections

The elections took place on March 1st, 1898. The poll was conducted under a state of emergency, which had been proclaimed after the assassination attempt against Prudente de Moras. Campos Salles was elected with a big majority. One should note the extremely low participation of the population, with less than 3% of people voting (data from 1894 indicated a total population of 15 million inhabitants). It is worth recalling also that women and illiterate people had no right to vote, which in itself excluded most of the population.

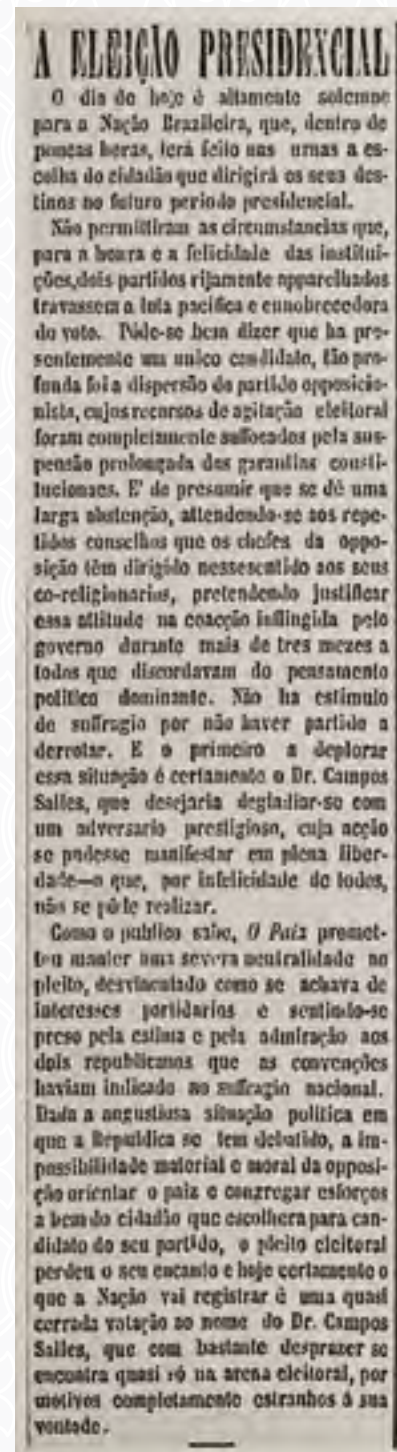
Election result

Candidates	Votes	%
Campos Salles	420,286	90.9
Lauro Sodré	38,929	8.4
Others	3,146	0.7
Total		100

Source: Bolívar Lamounier and Octavio Amorim Neto.
In: Dieter Nohlen, Elections in the Americas a Data Handbook.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, page 229.

Campos Salles took office on November 15th, 1898, and governed until November 15th, 1902. Before his inauguration, in April 1898, the president-elect left for Europe, on a trip aimed to renegotiating Brazil's foreign debt and obtaining new lines of financing.

O Paiz newspaper of 3.1.1898, on the front page. Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil.





The departure of Campos Salles for Europe, portrayed in *Revista Illustrada* magazine of 1898, year 23, No. 713. Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil.

Financial agreements known as funding loans were signed; to put these into practice, the president of the Republic would need a legislative majority. It was necessary not only to win support for his economic policy, but also to recover international credibility, showing that the republican regime was working under a *modern* institutional model (parliament, elections) and that the president was able to guarantee the agreements that had been signed.

Although weakened, the *Florianista* wing remained active in Congress and was preparing for the legislative elections of 1899 (at that time, parliamentary elections did not coincide with presidential elections). If the elections were to be held under the current rules, it was forecast that there would be serious difficulties in deciding who the winning candidates were.

The process of *recognizing the elected candidates* in the Chamber of Deputies always took place after the election, when all the candidates who claimed to have been elected in their districts presented their credentials as victors, along with minutes

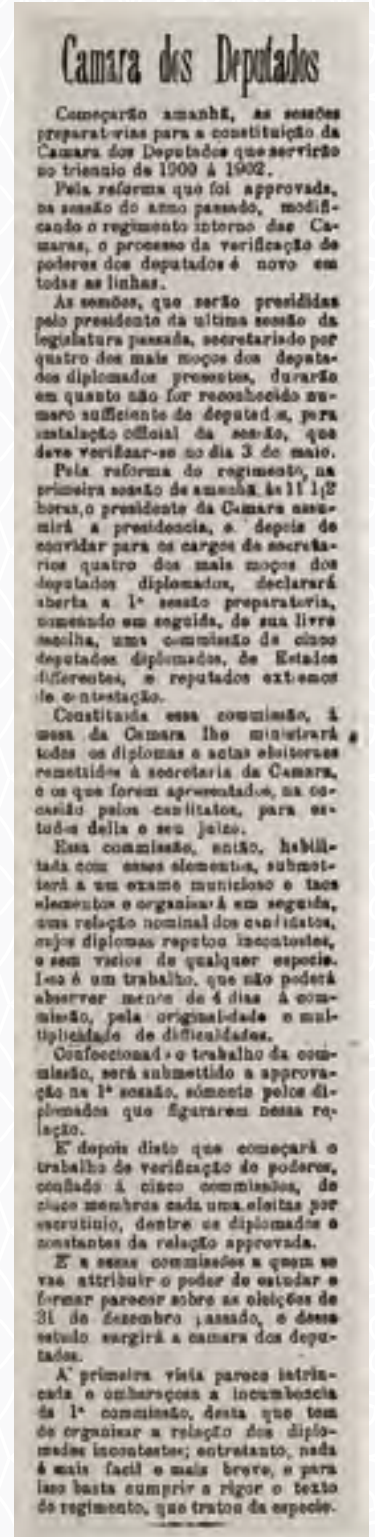
and certificates verifying the election and the votes they had received. When there was a particularly fierce contest, there were sometimes two parallel elections, two receiving boards that gathered and counted the votes. This was what was expected to happen in 1899, with dozens of districts presenting more than one winning candidate who demanded recognition.

The pact that redefined political representation: the reform of the internal regulation

The reform of the Internal Regulation of the Chamber of Deputies emerged in this context as a short-term solution, enabling the election of a group of representatives who supported the economic policy outlined by Campos Salles. Changes were made that would apply at the crucial moment of establishing who had been elected in each district for federal deputy.

The task of recognizing deputies' victory certificates was carried out by the Chamber of Deputies itself, as was common in most countries at that time (Brazil's Electoral Justice System would only be created in 1932). The aspiring deputies would come to Rio de Janeiro carrying the documents that proved that they had been elected. From among these, a chairman was chosen to guide the work. It was up to him to appoint the Recognition Committee, which would conduct the first and decisive screening of the victory certificates, deciding first of all which certificates were valid and which were not. The Chamber, with the make-up based on this initial list, would then be sworn in and begin to hold

News report published by the daily newspaper *Cidade do Rio* of 4.17.1900, describing the changes in the internal regulation of the Congress. Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil.





preparatory sessions, officially approving the winning candidates in each state, making judgments on challenges and disputes. Obviously, the authority of the chairman to decide on the make-up of the body that carried out the screening was a fundamental power.

The reform of 1899 involved two points: a) a change in the criterion for choosing the chairman of the preparatory sessions—the position of provisional chairman would henceforth go to the oldest deputy, unless the ranks of

deputies included the chairman or any of the vice-chairmen who had served in the last legislative session; b) an alteration in the criteria for recognizing victory certificates—only those candidates whose certificates had been issued by the majority of the vote counting board in the states would now be recognized.

It is important to understand that, before the reform of the Chamber's Internal Regulation, the states' representatives did not always obey the instructions of their respective state governors. It was only after the reform that each governor began to



O Malho magazine of 6.24.1905, page. 2.
Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil.



control the representatives from his state. Before, it had been possible to recognize representatives of minorities in the states, provided that they had the necessary national connections. Once the reform was passed, only official candidates were recognized.

The change made was not, however, simply a move towards decentralization. If, on the one hand, the agreement handed the control of elections in the states over to the governors, on the other hand, it meant that the same chairman as in the previous legislature maintained control of the Chamber's work. This mechanism ensured the final control of the process for that national majority that controlled Congress, aligned with the Executive. Therefore, decentralization was partial.

In the long term, the changes ushered in a new way of making the representative system work, characterized by the dominance of oligarchies in the political system and by the exclusion of the majority of the population.

From modernization to oligarchy and exclusion

The resulting system was successful in institutionalizing conflicts between the elites, building accepted mechanisms for electing governments and allowing convergence between presidents and congresses.

The representative system was, however, made meaningless, freezing control of the states in the hands of oligarchies, allowing explicit manipulation of the vote on their part. The control of the representative process meant that the governor's group rarely lost an election in the state. This was reflected in the presidential polls—data on elections contested in the years 1910, 1914 and 1930 show that the winning candidate obtained, in the states where he was supported by the governor, an average percentage of 88%, 96% and 85% respectively of the votes; the loser, in turn, managed to obtain, in those states where the governor supported him, an average of 71%, 62% and 85%, respectively in each year.

Politics in the period of the First Republic was also exclusionary: it is enough to say that, in the election of 1930, the one that had largest popular participation of

the period, only 5% of citizens voted. The majority remained outside the process, excluded both by legal mechanisms (especially illiterate people and women, who were not allowed to vote) and by unlawful ones (the systematic use of fraud by the machines to decide the winning candidates). The republican campaign movement ended up being associated with the consolidation of an oligarchic and exclusionary system, a long way from any dreams of modernity.

Recommended further reading

BACKES, Ana Luiza. *Fundamentos da ordem republicana: repensando o pacto de Campos Sales*. Tese de doutorado em Ciência Política (UFRGS, 2004), publicada pela Câmara dos Deputados em 2005.

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Campos Salles' departure for Europe, portrayed in *Revista Illustrada* 1898, year 23, no. 713.
Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brazil.