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*The VIVA RIO Movement:  
The Struggle for Peace*

*Hilda Maria Gaspar Pereira*



**THE *VIVA RIO* MOVEMENT:  
THE STRUGGLE  
FOR PEACE**

Hilda Maria Gaspar Pereira

Institute of Latin American Studies  
31 Tavistock Square London WC1H 9HA

Hilda Maria Gaspar Pereira is currently carrying out research into violence in Brazil and Japan. She was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Latin American Studies in 1995-96.

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## PREFACE

*Rio eu gosto de voce, Rio ...*  
- Tom Jobim's song -

The seriousness of the problem of street violence, which currently affects many big cities in the world, can conceal how civil society organises in response to this situation. In some cases outsiders perceive these societies to be tolerant to the problem.

In the past five years that I have spent outside Brazil, I have closely followed the violent situation in the city of Rio de Janeiro through Brazilian and international newspapers. Over the years, I started detecting changes in society's behaviour towards the problem of violence. My observations were confirmed with the birth of the movement, VIVA RIO, in the second half of 1993. Civil society, finally, began to react to the deteriorating situation in Rio. Since then this movement has become my main focus of study.

This research paper represents my views on civil society's mobilisation in response to the problem of violence, demonstrating that at least in the case of Rio de Janeiro, civil society has not been tolerant towards this serious problem. I did my fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro from October to December 1995. I collected my data by direct observation, periodically visiting the movement's office, where I also had access to its internal documents. In addition, I had the chance to conduct several interviews with people directly and indirectly involved in the movement. Newspaper articles were one of the most important sources since the Brazilian media has given the movement extensive coverage.

Moreover, I attended a number of meetings of the new movement, VIVA SANTA, which has applied VIVA RIO's experience to the district of Santa Teresa in the city of Rio de Janeiro. I also had the chance to observe the movement's process of mobilisation and the organisation of the demonstration 'React Rio' (*Reage Rio*). I used this opportunity to conduct interviews with participants in the demonstration. The inspiration behind this paper is Maria Dulce Gaspar who has supported and helped clarify my ideas about the situation of violence in Rio and its effects since the beginning of my studies in anthropology.

I am deeply indebted to several people who helped me in many ways. Among them my special thanks to: Leslie Bethell, Eddy Stols, Renne Devisch, Joan Lemman, Alba Zaluar, Barbara Harris, Tom Hewitt, Maxine Molyneux, Marcos Bretas, Michael Roberts, Kena Salinas, and Mahrukh Doctor; and to the

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Last but not least, I also owe my gratitude to my husband Ken Endo who, just like the problem of street violence in Rio, has never left my mind. It was he who constantly motivated me to work on this paper as well as who gave me academic assistance in nearly all aspects of the research project.

A final word on dedication. This paper was written in memory of Augusto César Vannucci whose personal force and lasting inspiration I have never failed to appreciate.

Hilda Maria Gaspar Pereira  
October 1996



# **The *VIVA RIO* Movement: The Struggle for Peace**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper investigates how civil society has mobilised itself in response to the problem of street violence in the city of Rio de Janeiro. In so doing, it focuses on the social movement *VIVA RIO*.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of the contemporary history of Brazil, it is not possible to think about the development of civil society without considering that in 1995 the country celebrated only its tenth anniversary as a democratic regime.<sup>2</sup> Brazilian civil society played an important role in the transition to democracy. Alfred Stepan, a political scientist specialising in authoritarianism and democracy in Brazil, affirms that the special character of the Brazilian transition came from the dialectic between regime concession and societal conquest. Moreover, in the mid-1970s not only did various new social movements emerge, but also intricate and creative 'horizontal relations of civil society with itself' (Stepan, 1989, p. xii).

After successfully negotiating the stage of transition into democracy, civil society faced the challenge of establishing its role within the democratic regime. This task was rendered more complex in view of the unstable international situation which followed the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, this new condition offers civil society the possibility of being more creative and participatory. At the same time it pushes the state and the market to become more responsive and accountable.<sup>3</sup>

It is within this context that a new general tendency in social organisation is

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper Cohen and Arato's working definition of civil society is applied: it is understood 'as a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication'. See Cohen and Arato (1992, p. ix).

<sup>2</sup> It is true that during the military regime that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985 civil society was not totally suppressed by the state. According to Mainwaring (1989, p.168), who studied social movements in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in Brazil, especially at the end of 1970s, the flourishing of popular movements suggested not only an erosion of the military regime, but also the birth of an autonomous civil society. This view is perhaps exaggerated, but there can be no doubt about the role that grassroots movements played.

<sup>3</sup> See introductory remarks by Siddartha in Fernandes (1994, p. x).

emerging in Brazil. To some extent the most important component within the current political situation is the Campaign Against Hunger. Created in March 1993, the principal influence behind its establishment was Herbert de Souza (Betinho) – a well known sociologist in Brazil. In brief, the Campaign Against Hunger created many committees, spread throughout the country, to combat the problem of misery and hunger. The campaign has a national profile. It is based on voluntarism, with a very flexible organisation which allows the participation of all, and, as such, mobilises people from very diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

This new wave of mobilisation led by the Campaign Against Hunger illustrates one of the innovative ways in which civil society has managed to play a role within contemporary Brazilian democracy.<sup>4</sup>

In brief, civic mobilisation in post Cold War Brazil has a basic motivation: civil society has realised that it need no longer wait for structural changes within the country in order to act efficiently on behalf of solidarity, justice, equality and freedom. Temporary local campaigns with feasible aims are becoming important, and changing difficult situations (Soares, 1996, p. 294).

The *VIVA RIO* social movement belongs to this new trend in civil society mobilisation. It is the focus of a case study which I have followed since its origins in the second half of 1993. *VIVA RIO* was chosen first because it highlights the mobilisation aspect of civil society in Brazil (or more precisely in Rio de Janeiro) and second because it deals with one of the most difficult issues in the contemporary world: the problem of street violence. In this respect, the mobilisation itself is considered more important than its results.<sup>5</sup>

The *VIVA RIO* case study attempts to show that civil society has not become desensitised towards the frightening level which street violence has reached – and which is still rising – in Rio. Through the analysis of its several projects a more detailed view is offered on how society is dealing with the specific problems of violence. To some extent the diversity of *VIVA RIO*'s membership gives the movement great scope to manoeuvre within the various networks. As the

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<sup>4</sup> In order to understand the contemporary dynamic of social participation, one should not forget the triggering influences of the civic movements against dictatorship in Brazil (Soares, 1996, p. 301, footnote 16).

<sup>5</sup> Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro (Director of the Centre for the Study of Violence, University of São Paulo, Brazil and current Rapporteur of the United Nations in Burundi) affirmed during a seminar at the London School of Economics in March 1994 that the fact of mobilisation was somehow more important than its achievements, if one considers that democracy in Brazil is still in its infancy. Civil society has only recently been able to exercise its role in democratic conditions and, understandably, this process takes some time before it is fully activated. Civil society also needs to adapt itself to the current external and internal situation which Brazil is facing.

movement is based on partnership, such a diverse group of members has enriched and multiplied its action and projects.<sup>6</sup>

Before starting the analysis of the case study, general background information on the recent situation in the city of Rio de Janeiro is given, in order to show how serious the problem of violence has become in the city, and its social, economic and political implications. Focusing on an innovative movement allows us to investigate how society is playing its role in a democratic Brazil. It also enables us to take a more realistic view of the problem of street violence in the city of Rio de Janeiro. That is certainly not to deny the seriousness of the situation, but rather to delineate the problems along the lines of VIVA RIO's existing approach to the solutions.

## THE CONTEXT

In this section general background information is given about the recent situation in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Some important aspects are highlighted in order to help the reader to understand the circumstances in which the social movement VIVA RIO emerged and developed. Rather than a detailed analysis of the topics, priority is given to providing an overview of the problem of violence in the city and its implications.

### Perceptions of Violence in Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro has apparently become one of the most violent cities in the world. Yet a closer examination may reveal a gap between the reality and the perception given by the national and international media (which often describe the situation as uncontrollable and grave). One might say that the city is facing a double challenge: its negative image and the real situation concerning the problem of violence.

To some extent the Brazilian media has been sensationalist when dealing with the subject of crime. It seems that the aspect of time is neglected in accounts.

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<sup>6</sup> Borrowing again Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro's words, VIVA RIO represents a very creative form of Carioca (Rio) civil society mobilisation, which mixes a diverse social group of people. São Paulo could not have such a movement as VIVA RIO, in view of its more divided social distribution. Nevertheless, the recent intensification of street violence and crime in São Paulo has triggered the creation of a movement called React São Paulo (Reage São Paulo). The rise of this movement clearly shows that the local people have been mobilised against street violence, although, as Pinheiro rightly pointed out, the scope of mobilisation has been mainly confined to the middle class (*Folha de São Paulo*, 21 August 1996).

Consequently the daily addition of horror stories has provoked a snow ball effect, inflating society's fears (Soares, 1993a, p. 2). This has led to the use of the expression 'Culture of Fear' among academics and journalists to describe Rio. The main problem is a tendency to generalise and treat all violent situations without any distinction. Moreover, this tendency is exacerbated by the distrust between the police and citizens. Such a perverse combination spreads a feeling of insecurity within society.

Luis Eduardo Soares, an anthropologist who has coordinated several research projects on violence in Rio de Janeiro, has also studied this 'Culture of Fear'.<sup>7</sup> He makes an important point within this context: it is often in families that violent offences are committed. A study by Milito and Silva, under Soares's direction, on murder rates for children (under 17 years old) during 1991 in the state of Rio de Janeiro revealed that, among children between the ages of 1 and 7 years, members of the family are responsible in 67% of the cases (Soares, Milito & Silva, 1993, p. 18). In another piece of research on violence against women in Rio de Janeiro during 1992, Soares emphasised the problem of domestic violence. In 77.6% of the cases of attacks against women, the aggressor is her husband, her ex-husband or her partner. Moreover, Soares added the statistics from the National Household Survey (PNAD) conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 1988 to reinforce his argument: in 54.3% of the cases of men and 65.9% of women who suffered attacks, the aggressors were relatives or people known by the victims (Soares, 1993b).

The reality of violence is perceived in a distorted manner. The threat represented by the 'other' can be reduced when a more balanced view of the criminal phenomena is taken. Nevertheless it is quite difficult to reach such a balanced view especially when considering the media's influence on society. This point was discussed in a seminar on media and urban violence which took place in Rio de Janeiro in July 1993, organised by a state foundation which supports research in the state of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ).<sup>8</sup>

In fact, crime rates have fallen in Rio de Janeiro since 1989, but this changing situation was not reflected in the media (*Jornal do Brasil*, 2 July 1993). The above-mentioned seminar by-passed the difficulty of the mass media. It discussed the results of research on Rio's urban crime in the international context, which

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<sup>7</sup> Luis Eduardo Soares is an anthropologist and political scientist who has been studying violence for more than eight years. He was one of the founders of a research centre on violence at the Institute for Religious Studies (ISER). Recently, he published a book about violence and politics in Rio de Janeiro (Soares, 1996). He played an important role during the creation of the movement VIVA RIO. The special relationship which ISER has with VIVA RIO will be analysed below.

<sup>8</sup> At that time Rio de Janeiro's governor was Leonel Brizola – a politician from the opposition who had a difficult relationship with the main media owners.

was conducted by the Institute for Religious Studies (ISER) with Soares as its coordinator. Although partly an attempt by the state to publicise the real (falling) number of crimes through an established research institute, the seminar also brought about a positive consequence: it gave people greater understanding of the situation, thereby placing the issue of urban violence on the public agenda.

## Some Comparisons of Violence

The phenomenon of street violence is a common problem in big cities and its characteristics are not dependent on culture. The situation in Rio is not peculiar to that city in either its content or its scope.<sup>9</sup> In this context an inter- and intra-national comparison can give a fairer idea about Rio's situation.

Soares compared the crime rates of US cities and Rio de Janeiro and found that Washington, D.C. had more murders in 1991 (77.8 per 100,000 inhabitants) than Rio (60.73 per 100,000 inhabitants). Rio also had lower rates of robbery than Washington, New York, Detroit and Chicago in the same year (Soares, 1996, p. 186).

According to research carried out by the Social Service of the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP) in 1995, Rio de Janeiro was ranked the eighth highest among cities in the world for murder rate (56 per 100,000 inhabitants); São Paulo was the tenth (47 per 100,000 inhabitants). Medellín in Colombia was the world's most violent city with a murder rate of 435 per 100,000 inhabitants (followed by Johannesburg in South Africa, whose murder rates was 100 per 100,000 inhabitants). General Nilton Cerqueira, the Public Security Secretary of Rio de Janeiro, was distressed by these statistics to such an extent that he implemented new measures to curb the murder rate in Rio, creating, at the end of 1995, a Homicide Department under the control of the Civilian Police to investigate unsolved cases. He was also concerned about the increasing number of bank and cargo robberies (*Jornal do Brasil*, 19 Oct. 1995, p. 20).

Concerning Brazilian cities, São Paulo also faces problems of urban violence. Alba Zaluar, an anthropologist who specialises in violence, studied the situation in São Paulo. She emphasised in 1994 that the murder rates had doubled in the last twelve years both in São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro – although some of the blame lies with the São Paulo police (Zaluar, 1994c). Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, at a seminar on the media and urban violence, stressed the high number of people killed by the Military Police in São Paulo in 1992. The magnitude of the problem

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<sup>9</sup> This was the common opinion among international and national guests during the seminar on urban violence and media mentioned before. The debate involved participants from Los Angeles, New York, Caracas, Berlin, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasília. See *Tribuna da Imprensa*, 4 July 1993.

can be highlighted by the fact that around 1,470 people were killed, while in the same period the police in New York killed 23 people (Chuahy, 1995, p. 2).<sup>10</sup>

## **The Main Problem of Violence: Drug Trafficking**

The phenomenon of street violence increased dramatically at the end of the 1980s (Fernandes & Piquet Carneiro, 1995a, p. 4). The numbers have reached the highest level within the category of murder. The main victims are male, poor, young, and the majority are blacks or mulattos (Soares, 1996, p. 230). Experts in this field agree that the introduction of illegal drug trafficking in the city represented the common factor linking the increasing number of deaths. According to Zaluar the combination of two factors greatly contributed to the recent deterioration in Rio. One was the introduction of cocaine on the Brazilian market at the end of the 1970s and the other one was that Brazil has become one of the drug trafficking routes to the USA and European countries. Before, there had been an illegal trade in marijuana, but this was much less organised and violent than the cocaine trade.

The structure of the drugs trade is very fragmented and its anarchical organisation leads to constant fights in order to maintain territory. In most cases areas are controlled by gangs of youths. The main elements of this 'new culture' are: power, wealth and its exhibition in exaggerated consumption habits. Zaluar perceptively summarised the logic of this gang war in the following way:

It is a peculiar war in which all sides finish behind bars: law-abiding bourgeois behind the bars of their condominiums and houses, surrounded by vigilantes and bodyguards; peaceful workers at the hands of bodyguards, soldiers and the terror of the drug gangs in shanty-towns, or at the hands of extermination groups in Rio's poor periphery; poor bandits in penitentiaries or in the vicious circle of the eternal debts with their enemies, the gangs, the criminal organisation. (Zaluar, 1993, p. 13)

Because of the frequent altercations, the poor communities in these areas are always under the threat of being shot in the cross-fire. In many cases the traffickers are better armed, with more sophisticated weapons than the police.<sup>11</sup>

During such battles the number of innocent victims involved can be high. But in most cases a 'code of silence' operates, which prevents families and witnesses afraid of reprisals from traffickers or from the police from cooperating with the

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<sup>10</sup> The police in São Paulo are well known for their violence, especially when conducting operations in poor districts. For details see Barcellos, 1992, p. 250.

<sup>11</sup> In a recent investigation carried out by the Federal, Military and Civil police on arms smuggling it was found that the majority of heavy arms used by traffickers are made or sold in the USA, Argentina, China and Russia. See *O Dia*, 19 Aug. 1995, p. 8.

authorities. This is an important point when considering the judicial situation, which has often been accused of fostering impunity. An analysis of murder cases in Rio de Janeiro during 1992 showed that only 8% of cases were prosecuted (Soares, 1996, p. 239). In the vast majority of cases there was not enough information about the victims, aggressors and events to launch a criminal trial. What this study suggests is that the problem is not so much the judicial system as the lack of submittable evidence.

Urban violence exposes a social problem. The poor communities who are living in the shanty towns have been denied basic civil rights. The state has failed to invest in infrastructure and basic services in these areas. The situation is well described by Caio Ferraz:

There is a complete lack of citizenship here. Living conditions are extremely precarious. The government doesn't supply water, there is no sewage disposal, there are power cuts every day, the roads have no tarmac, and the nearest school is 10 km away. We lack all basic rights.<sup>12</sup>

They are under the control of traffickers who have created a local system of power. This domination promotes an ambivalent relationship between local residents and traffickers, where most of the time a tense gun culture prevails.

It is not only the poor communities who are suffering the effects of such violence, although it is true that the problem in these areas is more severe. The conflicts between gangs sometimes crosses the boundaries of the shanty towns. The mixed social geographical distribution of the city means the boundaries are not always clearly demarcated. This cross-over led some opinion-makers to consider the situation one of civil war. A Hobbesian image of 'a war where everybody is against everybody' started being used to describe the situation of the city (Fernandes & Piquet Carneiro, 1995, p. 10). In reality the main problem, according to specialists, is caused by drug trafficking. This trafficking has not only dramatically increased the number of murders, but it has also changed the traditional pattern of crime in the city. In order to deal in cocaine, traffickers have substantial costs to keep their trade safe; cocaine is an expensive good and must be protected, to their way of thinking. The unstable war situation among gangs requires ever more sophisticated and destructive weapons. Therefore the traffic has generated crimes such as kidnapping and bank and

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in the *Financial Times*, 17 May 1995, p. vi. Caio Ferraz is a sociologist who was a resident of the Vigário Geral shanty town in Rio. He was the coordinator of 'House of Peace', a cultural centre in the same shanty town supported by the movement VIVA RIO. He suffered several threats from policemen at the end of last year which forced him to leave the country with his family. See, for example, *Povo do Rio*, 28 Nov. 1995.

cargo robbery which offer them more working capital.<sup>13</sup>

Kidnapping is perhaps the worst case. It seems that drug gangs are becoming more specialised in this kind of crime. They are now sharing activities such as the rent of 'soldiers' and arms, and maintaining the houses in which to hide victims (Fernandes & Piquet Carneiro, 1995, p. 22). Throughout 1995 the high number of kidnappings shocked Carioca (i.e. Rio) society, and the reaction against this kind of crime was shown in a peaceful demonstration organised by the VIVA RIO movement.

The problem that Rio faces has been contextualised above but still lacks specific policies and treatment. As Nilo Batista pointed out,<sup>14</sup> arms and drugs are not produced in the state. Their prevention requires tighter control of the state and national frontiers by the federal police and armed forces. However, these institutions are not up to the task; they have yet to be well trained to prevent arms and drug smuggling.

Another sensitive issue is the police force itself. Unfortunately, it seems that the police have changed their role in society. An institution which is supposed to maintain public security, it has become one of the main agents of violence. Both the military and the civil police have been corrupted and have involved themselves in drug trafficking. In the case of the civil police, an evaluation from its own chiefs recognised that only one fifth of its staff can be trusted. Therefore, within the civil police, reform plans mean cleaning out the 'rotten' part, as is commonly stated in Rio (*Jornal do Brasil*, 9 Nov. 1995). There are many challenges inherent in reforming the police. Among them are low salaries, lack of equipment such as ammunition and gasoline, deficient training, and the abuse of power by senior colleagues which keeps the corruption circle going. (Against this background, it may be noted, a reform plan based on a Japanese model, but adapted to Rio's condition, is being implemented).

Perhaps the worse case, however, is the military police, which during the authoritarian regime was subordinated to the army. They worked together adopting similar training methods to deal with political prisoners, including the main repressive method, torture. Under the democratic regime the only change made was the end of this direct control by the army (*Jornal do Brasil*, 31 Aug. 1993). In brief, the authoritarian model has persisted in the institution's activities. The military police was, however, confronted by the human rights

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with anthropologist Jaqueline Muniz who has been working on several research topics at the Centre for the Study of Violence at the Institute for Religious Studies, Rio de Janeiro, 8 Nov. 1995.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Nilo Batista, Rio de Janeiro, 22 Nov. 1995. Nilo Batista was vice governor and also state Secretary of Justice and Civil Police between 1991 and 1994. In 1994 he became governor of the state when Leonel Brizola, his predecessor in the post, stood for the presidential elections.



policy adopted by governor Leonel Brizola since 1982 when he first took power. He adopted a very controversial policy forbidding the police to engage in violent attacks in the poor areas and shanty towns; some of his opponents argue that this practice facilitated the advancement of drug traffic in the areas. Despite his measures, the police have dealt with the poor communities in a very violent manner. Indiscriminate shootings are common during investigations in the shanty towns – although this problem is not confined only to the shanty towns. Thus, paradoxically, the police inspire fear throughout society, rather than security (Fernandes & Piquet Carneiro, 1995, p. 25).

In 1993 a process of ‘cleaning out’ the rotten part of the police was begun by Nilo Batista who had come under extreme pressure. Expelling corrupt policemen and attempting to restrain the ‘extermination groups’ upset some powerful people within the police. At that time two massacres were carried out by the military police which shocked the public in Rio. The victims were murdered in cold blood, most of them as they slept. The first massacre was the killing of eight street children at the Candelária Church on 23 July 1993.<sup>15</sup> The second one was the killing of twenty-one people in the Vigário Geral shanty town on 30 August 1993. Dissatisfaction about changes in the police system on the part of some of its members showed that these tragedies also had a political meaning. The killers were attacking the state security policy and consequently pitching society against the state (Soares, 1996, p. 244). Both cases reflect the lack of citizenship. Poor people have been excluded from basic rights and placed on the margins of mainstream society, where they fall to the tyrannical influence of drug traffickers. Unemployment and low salaries compete with the easy money from trafficking and arms. In this vicious circle the poor youth generation has become at the same time the agents and the main victims of violence.

This is a very brief survey of the problem of violence in the city. Rio de Janeiro has suffered from an unhappy combination of circumstances which has given rise to the problem of violence. In the rest of the paper, the focus will turn to society’s mobilisation in the face of this challenge.

## **THE *VIVA RIO* SOCIAL MOVEMENT: A CASE STUDY**

### **Society’s Mobilisations**

The *VIVA RIO* movement belongs to a new civic culture of mobilisation in Brazil. The movement was created within a democratic regime that was still relatively young, and has a different ‘format’ or characteristics from the ones

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<sup>15</sup> The situation of street children in Rio will be discussed below.

which emerged during the authoritarian regime or during the transition to democracy.

The most important earlier movement was the 'Citizens Action against Misery and Hunger and for Life Campaign' known as the Campaign Against Hunger, which gave the impetus to other movements. Created in March 1993, the principal influence behind its establishment was Herbert de Souza (Betinho), a well known sociologist in Brazil.<sup>16</sup> This campaign created more than 3,500 committees spread throughout the country to combat the problem of misery and hunger. Maps of hunger were made and the first one revealed that 32 million Brazilians were living as indigents. This problem was discussed during a ministerial meeting with President Itamar Franco in March 1993. In response, the President declared combating hunger in the country to be an absolute priority.

This campaign has mobilised many state-owned and private companies and people from very diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds. It represents the revival (or for many the recognition) of citizenship rights in Brazilian society. Nevertheless, there are some criticisms of the campaign: for example, that the distribution of food to the poor would not alleviate their misery. However, it should be noted that the Campaign Against Hunger was an emergency response to a dire situation; the aim was not to address the structural problem of misery, but to avoid hunger-related deaths.

Another important opportunity for social participation was provided by the town hall initiative, part of the Strategic Plan for the city of Rio de Janeiro. It started as an agreement for cooperation signed by the Mayor and the Presidents of the Rio de Janeiro Business Association and the Rio de Janeiro Industry Federation on 22 November 1993. About 300 civilians and businessmen constituted a 'City Council' proposing projects and setting priorities in order to approve a development plan for the city. In August 1994 the 'City Council' analysed the phase where working groups were defined and specialists in each area were invited to collaborate. The City Analysis was ratified by the Council on 20 January 1995.<sup>17</sup> One positive point in the diagnosis of violence and security was VIVA RIO's existence. On the negative side there was the lack of opportunities for youth, problems within the police, and drug trafficking effects. In March 1995 the analysis of solutions started – the third phase of the plan. The objective of the Plan concerning violence was to overhaul the security system so as to promote institutional reform, greater professionalism and the integration of

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<sup>16</sup> Herbert de Souza (Betinho), a noted sociologist and haemophiliac infected by the Aids virus during a blood transfusion, is the national coordinator of the movement. He was also one of the founders of VIVA RIO.

<sup>17</sup> 'Diagnóstico da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, síntese', Rio de Janeiro, May 1995. It may be noted that ISER researchers were members of the Council, working mainly in the group concerned with violence and security.

public security institutions ('Relatório Final, Plano Estratégico da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro', Rio de Janeiro, Sept 1995).

The Plan's implementation phase is under way and contributory groups are being formed drawing up the necessary strategies for the implementation of the projects. The Strategic Plan is a plan for the future of the city based on community participation – and as such is likely to outlast the life of the present government.

## The Movement's Immediate Origin

The movement was a response to a series of high profile murders. Some received special attention not only nationally but also internationally. Among them are the following:

- The killing of eight street children at the Candelária Church by the police on 23 July 1993;
- the massacre of 21 people in the shanty town Vigário Geral also carried out by the police on 30 August 1993;
- fighting among gangs of poor youths (funk groups) on Ipanema Beach which terrorised sunbathers in September 1993.<sup>18</sup>

These three violent episodes were considered by Soares as a violation of three mythical domains: the sacred, the domestic, and democratic co-existence (represented by the beach) (Ventura, 1994, p. 88).

The director of a popular newspaper in Rio (*O Dia*), distressed by this untenable situation, called Betinho in the search for some solution to the problem of violence in the city. As a consequence they decided to organise a special meeting inviting a very diverse group of people (intellectuals, businessmen, newspaper owners, religious people, grassroots shanty town leaders and elite philanthropists among others). They were invited mainly because of their respective roles within society. It was not enough for them to be a representative cross-section of society as a whole. Betinho thought that only with the support of the media and people from all sectors of society could this problem be tackled. Different opinions and backgrounds caused some tensions during the first meeting, which was held on 9 September 1993. Extreme measures such as the intervention of the army in the city were suggested, but most of the participants wanted a different and more peaceful approach.

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<sup>18</sup> These killings were reported in the international press and also by some Non-Governmental Organisations to Amnesty International which has been monitoring the Brazilian government in these and other human rights issues (Amnesty International Report, 1994).

Two points became clear at the end of the meeting:

1. The connection between violence and social inequality in the city. The popular expression *asfalto e morro* shows the differences between shanty towns, in general located on the hills (*morro*) and the flat, more urbanised area (*asfalto*). Another expression which is used to show this division is divided city (*cidade partida*).<sup>19</sup>
2. The realisation that amelioration of the problems with violence depended on economic recovery in Rio.

That was the beginning of the VIVA RIO movement. According to Sidney Tarrow, a specialist on social movements, such spontaneous assemblies (for example, mobs and riots) can indicate that a movement is in formation (Tarrow, 1994, p. 5). This was exactly the case with VIVA RIO. After this first meeting the diverse group of people continued meeting each other informally. The symbolic foundation of the movement happened later, with a peaceful demonstration called 'Two Minute Silence' (see below).

## General Characteristics of the Movement

VIVA RIO has some elements inherited from the Campaign Against Hunger as one of the movements belonging to the new civic wave of mobilisation. They share an alternative model of action which highlights a problem for society and asks what should be done in order to resolve it. As such, it is a pragmatic response to an immediate problem and not a search for a utopian solution (Fernandes & Rodrigues, 1995c, p. 4). Nevertheless, it has its own peculiar characteristics. Perhaps the most important characteristic is the pluralism of its membership, which has enriched and multiplied VIVA RIO's action and projects. The perception that the problem of violence is a collective one and that it is a common interest of the group, created the need for cooperation among the different social actors. Having members from all walks of life gives the movement great scope to manoeuvre within the various social networks. Consequently, it works as a catalyst promoting initiatives and partnerships.

VIVA RIO is based on three pillars: citizenship (with its rights and duties), solidarity (which highlights common interests and translates into collective action) and pragmatic rationality (when defining problems, finding their solutions).

The movement has promoted interaction between many sectors such as private and state-owned companies, trade unions, NGOs, charity institutions,

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<sup>19</sup> For more details, see the excellent book written by Zuenir Ventura about the beginning of the movement and its first action (Zuenir, 1994).

universities, public and private cultural institutions, other social movements, religious institutions, publicity agencies, media (TV, radio and newspaper), and federal, state and municipal governments. Acting as a mediator among institutions has made possible the development of several projects (Fernandes, 1995b).

With respect to the movement's leadership, Betinho was involved in its foundation along with anthropologist Rubem César Fernandes, the movement's coordinator from the very beginning. Fernandes does not consider himself a leader of the movement. While describing his function as a mediator – or according to him a '*shama*' – it seems that what he is actually describing is the movement itself, as if he had been incorporated by the movement. He has stated that the leadership exists in the Executive Coordination body which discusses all the subjects on the agenda until a common solution is found.<sup>20</sup> The movement has an horizontal approach where consensus among its members is essential. It is not based on a vertical hierarchy.

Fernandes was born in a Protestant family and was part of the Marxist student movement in the sixties. During the military dictatorship he lived in exile in Poland and in the USA. He received his Masters in Philosophy from Warsaw University and his PhD in Intellectual History at Columbia University. He has taught in some prestigious universities both in Brazil and the USA. Currently, he is also the director of the research institute ISER.

VIVA RIO has been closely connected with this research Institute, an association which has sometimes lent the movement credibility when analysing the violence. In 1993 ISER's Centre for the Study of Violence conducted several research projects following the evolution of crime in Rio. The main purpose was to identify its problems and its process, in order to help find solutions and to collaborate with the state in its security policy. VIVA RIO has adopted the same policy elsewhere in dealing with the problem of violence. Statistics show that the crime rate in Rio between 1991 and 1993 was stable, but very serious (Soares, 1996, p. 256).

However, the new approach to violence met with criticism from some intellectuals. At that time both Luis Eduardo Soares and Rubem César Fernandes, because of their positions in the Institute, were under pressure within the Academy. Some intellectuals interpreted this approach as underestimating the seriousness of the issue in question.<sup>21</sup> The main fact here is the change in the debate on violence in Rio. Before, the subject of violence was treated within a very political approach. VIVA RIO represented a new way of tackling this

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Rubem César Fernandes, Rio de Janeiro, 9 Nov. 1995.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with J. Trajano, Rio de Janeiro, 30 Nov. 1995. He is a political scientist who worked as a researcher at the Centre for the Study of Violence during that time, under the coordination of Soares.

problem (Fernandes & Rodrigues, 1995c, p. 11).

In brief, the most important function of the movement is to act as an agent of communication, encouraging dialogue between different organisations around common aims. It allows different social sectors to meet under its umbrella. In certain cases, this has enabled the stereotypical views of certain groups to be overcome and has promoted cooperation between different social groups (Fernandes, 1995b).

VIVA RIO is a non-partisan organisation. Political parties do not have representation as such in the movement. Since the beginning, the problem of violence has received a moral, and not a political, focus. Thus no politicians have been invited to participate. The movement is based on partnership and local action where the main concerns are current problems. They seek short-term solutions and urge different sectors in society to assist and offer their help.

With regard to the movement's financial resources, it relied on contributions from members before it became a non-governmental organisation. As an NGO, VIVA RIO receives monthly and occasional donations. In December 1995 the movement opened a small shop where it sold craft items from the Factory of Hope and the House of Peace and goods marketed with VIVA RIO's logo. The same project is expected to be implemented in other locations in Rio. The shops provide not only financial support, but also a meeting point between the movement and people.<sup>22</sup>

Until July 1994 the movement was working without legal organisation. There was a Coordinating Commission with eleven members (most of them being VIVA RIO's founders). As an NGO this Commission has now been enlarged to fifteen members. They are representative of diverse sectors of society, but do not represent them as such. In addition, two other bodies were created: an Executive Coordination body and an Advisory Council. The Advisory Council has forty members. In fact, the Advisory Council is the 'Citizens' Commission' enlarged. This Commission was created for the debate on violence organised by the movement in December 1993. Currently they are consulted on complex issues which need a variety of opinions. Moreover, VIVA RIO has a team of ten professionals working in its planning and coordination activities besides the work of many volunteers.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Patricia Aguiá who is a marketing adviser of the movement, Rio de Janeiro, 26 Oct. 1995.

<sup>23</sup> These information on the VIVA RIO's organisation is derived from internal documents of the movement.

## VIVA RIO's Activities

The paper will now address some of the events, projects and statements the movement has organised. Through the analysis of these actions, I will seek to illustrate how the movement has been operating.

### The Citizens' Commission (Comissão de Cidadãos)

The Citizens' Commission officially commenced its activities in December 1993. In order to create a public agenda concerning security and the problem of violence, VIVA RIO organised a two-week seminar in Rio (from 6 to 16 December 1993). About forty people from various backgrounds, specialists on violence and officials from the state authorities responsible for public security, formed the Citizens' Commission (Soares, 1993c). This seminar was organised based on two questions: What can be done in the short term? What can civil society do? (Fernandes & Rodrigues, 1995c, p. 10). A variety of questions concerning violence in the city were discussed and analysed, and several proposals emerged during the debate. Subjects such as violence on the roads ('road rage'), the precarious situation in the prisons, problems in the police, the need for judicial reforms and the problem with 'funk groups' (youth gangs) were discussed at that time.<sup>24</sup> It was decided that there was a need to fight against the 'Culture of Fear' and that the temptation to generalise about the problem of violence should be avoided. The conclusion was reached that only through the delimiting of each problem would it be possible to fight against this fear and find solutions. It also required from the media better and more selective coverage on the social subjects.

Another difficult issue discussed was that of the discrimination and inefficiency of judicial institutions. Consequently, there is distrust of state institutions.<sup>25</sup> One of the main points elaborated within this section is the withdrawal of basic rights – such as protection from violence and access to the justice system – from the poor (mainly people living in the shanty towns). In this case, the Commission agreed that the most important state initiative was the creation of the Community Centres Defending Citizenship. They not only offer legal and police assistance, but also raise awareness about individual rights and the law. In this way, the state was re-integrated back into these areas.

Nevertheless, the centres' establishment constituted a challenge. First, the community does not trust the police because of their violent attitudes towards them. Secondly, drug traffickers have proved very resistant to such initiatives.

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<sup>24</sup> The funk balls in the city have been considered as an expression of violence by the poor youth generation. Several seminars dealing with this problem were organised later. For more details, see the chapter 'O Funk no Templo da Alta Cultura' in Ventura, 1994 (pp. 151-5).

<sup>25</sup> For more details, see Santos, 1992, pp. 77-115.

Thus, there are few centres established in the city's shanty towns. The Commission proposed that VIVA RIO help to consolidate these centres, regardless of the political party in power.

Undoubtedly the main problem to address was that of the situation of the poor youth generation. They represent both sides of violence, its principal victims and its protagonists. Within the perverse unequal society of Rio de Janeiro, there are very few opportunities for this generation; what opportunities there are to be found are often in drug trafficking.<sup>26</sup> Having once established that the main problem is the poor youth generation, both civil society and state were challenged to find solutions. The Commission suggested a system of job creation and alternative cultural projects that would fit in with these people's expectations. These suggestions have become one of the most important of VIVA RIO's tasks as represented for instance by the projects House of Peace and the Factory of Hope.<sup>27</sup>

The Citizens' Commission adopted a common-sense approach to the issues surrounding violence in the city. Although they found the problem to be serious, it was far from the situation of civil war often described (Ventura, 1994, p. 14). The Commission then attempted to delineate the problems and proposed strategic short, medium and long-term action. Crucial to the success of these actions was a change in public attitudes needed to pressurise current and future governments to follow the Commission's agenda (Fernandes & Rodrigues, 1995c, p. 10). Since the movement's agenda was established, VIVA RIO's members have entered into partnerships with different social actors so as to create several projects following the Commission's suggestions.

### **Two Minute Silence (Dois Minutos de Silêncio)**

The 'Two Minute Silence' event, a peaceful demonstration against violence in the city, was the symbolic foundation of VIVA RIO. The movement's appeal was in grouping new forces against violence. They invited everybody to participate, considering violence in the city a problem for all. It was a great challenge but very successful (if we think about achieving silence in such a noisy city)!

On 17 December 1993, at midday, the city of Rio de Janeiro stopped. Technically it did not stop, but there was a break in activity in some areas (such as schools, banks, companies, factories, and transport – trains, cars, subway,

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<sup>26</sup> For details about the relations between modernisation and violence, see Rupesinghe, 'Forms of violence and its transformation', in Rupesingue & Rubio, 1994, pp. 14-41.

<sup>27</sup> The subjects discussed during these seminars, mentioned in this paper, were taken from the study: 'Relatório Final da Comissão de Cidadãos do movimento VIVA RIO', by Luis Eduardo Soares.



buses) (Ventura, 1994, p. 149). VIVA RIO's members decided to 'embrace the Candelária Church' together with a very diverse group of people (businessmen, trade unions leaders, street kids, intellectuals among others). This demonstration was also supported by the state government and police (or rather certain sections). The governor Leonel Brizola, his deputy Nilo Batista and the Military Police Secretary, Colonel Nazareth Cerqueira, were among participants in another strategic place in the centre of the city (Ventura, 1994, p. 150). From this moment on the movement's actions have become more concrete and have been multiplied.

### Operation Rio (Operação Rio)

Several proposals were discussed with candidates before the gubernatorial elections in 1994 where all of them agreed with the movement's agenda for a new security policy.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, 1994 was a very polemical year for the movement because of the election campaign. Combating crime in the city became one of the main political issues during the campaign. Within this context extreme measures such as federal intervention and the decree of martial law entered the vocabulary of people and politicians as a solution for the violence in Rio (Caldeira, 1995, p. 1).

Of course, this situation was exaggerated by the media. What VIVA RIO wanted to propose was effective action on the part of the armed forces and Federal Police to control drugs and arms within the state frontiers. For the governor, the movement would consolidate his control over all the security institutions (army, navy, air force, federal police, military and civil (state) police and Inland Revenue). However, this development did not follow the movement's plans (Soares, 1996, p. 264). The combination of many internal and external disagreements put the movement in a difficult situation with the state government.<sup>29</sup>

This was aggravated by the governor's fragile position at that moment.<sup>30</sup> He

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<sup>28</sup> These proposals are in the movement's internal document called: 'Do VIVA RIO' aos Candidatos ao Governo do Estado', 20 July 1994.

<sup>29</sup> For Nilo Batista at that time VIVA RIO was doing everything to bring down Brizola's presidential candidacy. Nevertheless, Rubem Cesar Fernandes was facing a lot of pressure from the media, business and federal government authorities. José Augusto described the situation as 'a big air plane starting the movement of take off, cannot be stopped' (Interview with José Augusto de Souza Rodrigues, who is a sociologist doing his Ph.D at IUPERJ on the social movement VIVA RIO, 2 Nov. 1995).

<sup>30</sup> The governor, Nilo Batista, was under tremendous pressure. His name was found in the bribe list of the numbers lottery (*jogo do bicho*) (Ventura, 1994, p. 228). This is an illegal game and finally in 1993 a judge jailed fourteen 'dons' (*bicheiros*) (*The Economist*, 5 Nov. 1994). They are also under investigation for drug trafficking, bribery, tax evasion and murder. Nilo was also being attacked by certain sections of the police

would neither accept federal intervention, which would damage the state autonomy, nor an imposition of martial law because, according to him at least, the situation was under control (Caldeira, 1995, p. 13). In fact, at that time the crime rates, although still extremely high, were decreasing. Consequently, an agreement for cooperation between the Union and the State of Rio de Janeiro was signed by the President, Itamar Franco, and the governor Nilo Batista on 31 October 1994. This agreement was called 'Operação Rio' and aimed at the maintenance of law, public order and citizens' security, in particular by preventing and repressing arms smuggling and drug trafficking. Initially implemented until 30 December 1994, it was extended until March 1995.<sup>31</sup>

The military operation was not very well organised. There were command problems and disagreements over strategy. In addition, the army was not trained to fight against traffickers and perform such tasks as invading shanty towns. There were many cases of violations of human rights during the invasion of these areas.<sup>32</sup> Transferring the police command to the army at street level and in the shanty towns increased the murder rate at the end of 1994 (Soares, 1996, p.275). The disputes between gangs increased during the military action and many traffickers escaped to other cities in the state. The shanty towns' invasion were known about in advance by the traffickers.<sup>33</sup>

Soares criticised the movement's attitudes towards human rights violations during 'Operação Rio'. According to him VIVA RIO should have been more critical of the violations and the way this action was undertaken by the army. Unfortunately, VIVA RIO's diversity proves at the same time both its weakness and its strength. Moreover, the movement tends to avoid outright opposition to the media.

Thus VIVA RIO has had to manoeuvre politically in order to maintain its unity (Soares, 1996, p. 271). The most important of such manoeuvres was perhaps the conciliatory capacity in which Rubem César Fernandes, the movement's coordinator, has operated with a very diverse group of members. Sometimes it is like trying 'to please a Greek and a Trojan at the same time'. Obviously this places the movement in a vulnerable position, as was the case with 'Operação Rio'.

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because of his 'cleaning up' process within the institution.

<sup>31</sup> For more details on *Operação Rio*, see Caldeira, 'Operação Rio e Cidadania: as tensões entre o combate à criminalidade e a ordem jurídica', 1995.

<sup>32</sup> For more details concerning the military abuse of power and violence against the poor community in the shanty towns in Rio during *Operação Rio*, see Resende, 'Operação Rio, relatos de uma guerra brasileira', 1995.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with José Augusto de Souza Rodrigues, Rio de Janeiro, 2 Nov. 1995.

## React Rio (Reage Rio)

The React Rio event is also known as the 'March for Peace'. React Rio's origins lie in the increasing number of kidnappings in the city. This situation was aggravated when in just one day (25 Oct. 1995) three victims were kidnapped in Rio. The victims shared some similarities such as social class and age. Their fathers were businessmen and the victims were young. One of the victims, for instance, was Eduardo Eugênio Gouvêa Vieira Filho whose father was President of the Rio de Janeiro Industry Federation (FIRJAN) and also a member of VIVA RIO's Coordinating Commission.<sup>34</sup>

This situation shocked the public, provoking much criticism of police action. Indeed, certain sections of the police have been accused of participating and in some cases leading the kidnappings (*Jornal do Brasil*, 12 Nov. 1995). As an institution, the police were general discredited. Moreover, police equipment is deficient and obsolete.<sup>35</sup>

The special department against kidnapping, under the control of the civil police, was shaken up following these investigations. There has been a kind of competition between the military and civil police to try and solve these cases – a competition which has highlighted their lack of organisation and the poor distribution of responsibilities.

During this time there was a feeling of solidarity within society. The association Rio Against Crime, was created on 9 October 1995. It had forty members (bodies) and its main objective was to mobilise people to combat violence. They set up a special fund to be used as reward money for information on crime (*O Dia*, 10 Oct. 1995). This association has a computerised system receiving calls where the person who is calling remains anonymous while giving information about suspicious happenings.

This system, called 'Disque-Denúncia' (Call and Denounce) has proved to be a useful method for police investigations. In addition, it has involved all layers of society. Regrettably, its success provoked reactions from traffickers in the shanty towns, where they cut the public telephone lines. The system has received strong support from the media which has publicised it widely. It has helped solve several cases of kidnapping and car robbery.

In the middle of this distressing situation, the idea of a demonstration

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<sup>34</sup> Curiously, these kidnapping happened just one day after the Security Secretary, general Nilton Cerqueira, announced a drop in the incidence of kidnapping (*O Globo*, 26 Oct. 1995).

<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the state government started investing in a computerisation project for the police and invested in new vehicles for the Military Police's fleet of vehicles (*Gazeta Mercantil*, 11 Oct. 1995).

emerged. Several isolated demonstrations had already occurred showing people's solidarity towards the victims kidnapped. Rubem Medina, the owner of Artplan (one of the biggest publicity agencies in Rio), who was kidnapped on 6 June 1990, suggested the idea of a big demonstration mobilising people against the violence (*O Globo*, 19 Nov. 1995). VIVA RIO supported the idea and the preparation for this ambitious project started. During this process, the idea of violence was broadened and the event became a symbol against all forms of violence. All sectors of society were invited to take part. In promoting such a huge event, the movement used an emotional appeal to invite a diverse group of participants from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. The media gave great support in publicising the event. Moreover, the movement received free assistance from publicity agencies and artists. The campaign strategy was based on the testimony of well known people.<sup>36</sup>

Of course, given the diversity of people behind the event, there were tensions. Special negotiations had to be conducted in order to secure the participation of some groups. In the case of grassroots shanty town leaders, they wanted three important meetings – with newspapers owners, with the Police Secretary, and with business associations – before they would participate. The first happened before the march, the other two were postponed.<sup>37</sup>

During the whole period of mobilisation there were tensions with the governor and the mayor. They took this mobilisation as a criticism of their security policy. By contrast, VIVA RIO has maintained good relations with the federal government. React Rio had received the President's support. Moreover, the President promised to give special funds to help improve the security system in Rio.<sup>38</sup>

A disturbing event occurred just a few days before the demonstration. The discovery of cocaine in the 'Factory of Hope', one of the VIVA RIO's main

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Patrícia Aguiá, Rio de Janeiro, 26 Oct. 1995.

<sup>37</sup> Renata Bernardes, who was VIVA RIO's press adviser during that time, described the meeting between the shanty town grassroots leaders association (FAFERJ) and the representatives of the main newspaper owners as an historic moment. Among many complaints the grassroots leaders asked the media representatives why the news about shanty towns only appeared in the police news. They argued that there were activities in the shanty towns other than crimes. Moreover, they emphasised that such an approach only helped increase the discrimination against them. The media representatives countered that it was very difficult to find other news stories. Although the media has not yet changed its approach to the subject of crime, this meeting was extremely important and perhaps would not have happened without VIVA RIO's mediation. Interview with Renata Bernardes, Rio de Janeiro, 29 Nov. 1995.

<sup>38</sup> Rubem César Fernandes visited Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the President, on 17 November 1995 and received his official support for React Rio. He gave a small white ribbon to the President as a symbol of peace representing the movements aims (*O Globo*, 17 Nov. 1995).

projects, was a setback and very distressing for VIVA RIO's members. This situation was used by the movement's opponents to damage the march. The Factory of Hope is run by a Protestant clergyman called Cão Fábio who is an important member of the movement. The factory is located near the shanty town Acari which has been dominated by drug trafficking for a long time. In this context, the coincidence of finding drugs there, just some days before the demonstration, was considered very suspicious by VIVA RIO members. During that period, an intense dispute occurred between members of VIVA RIO and state and municipal authorities (*O Dia*, 24 Nov. 1995).

Both Marcello Alencar and César Maia (governor and mayor respectively), had broadened the accusations mentioning even their suspicions of the NGO's work. Under such attacks some members of the movement reacted very emotionally against them. What seems to have been forgotten by the governor is that the state has a community centre defending citizenship in the Factory of Hope. Thus, the state is one of the partners in this project. It is difficult to ascertain whether this limited the number of participants at the movement's demonstration. Nevertheless, the media extensively covered this story, making the demonstration even better known by the public.

The demonstration was organised as a samba school parade, each row having common groups of participants. Maps indicating where each group would be found were sketched in the newspapers. According to Fernandes, everybody was free to join whichever group they preferred.<sup>39</sup> This planned structure was not completely followed during the event. The organisational failure was due to unexpected incidents such as the heavy rain that fell before and during the event. Nevertheless, there was great variety among the participants.

The main slogan for this campaign was: 'One million people on the street for one billion reais' (Brazilian currency similar in value to the US dollar). The money would be used in projects for shanty town urbanisation and for reform of the police. Far fewer than a million people were present at the demonstration. VIVA RIO estimated there were around 150 - 200,000 participants, while the police put the number at around 60,000; the mayor suggested not even 40,000

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<sup>39</sup> The demonstration schedule was as follows. In front: VIVA RIO's members and representatives of all sectors of society; followed by babies from the Pavão and Pavãozinho shanty town nurseries, mothers and victims of the violence; Row 1: youth (student associations, universities, funk groups, youth movements); Row 2: elderly (retired people, elderly movements); Row 3: cultural (cultural movements and groups, artists, schools of samba); Row 4: communities (movements, grassroots slums associations, religious movements); Row 5: workers (trade unions, representatives of companies, etc.); Row 6: sport (clubs, associations); Row 7: social representatives (NGOs, institution, etc.); Row 8: groups from outside the city (groups from other cities, movements: VIVA FRIBURGO, VIVA RESENDE, VIVA VOLTA REDONDA, VIVA MACAE). Taken from *O Globo*, 26 Nov. 1995.

people (*ISTOE*, 6 Dec. 1995). VIVA RIO's coordinator, just after React Rio, stated that the most important point was the meaning of this demonstration and not the number of its participants.

VIVA RIO has used big events to generate new projects. The movement's actions are mainly based on local partnership, but such big events (for example the Two Minute Silence and React Rio) help to encourage new initiatives, so renewing the movement itself and highlighting its continued presence (Fernandes & Rodrigues, 1995c, p.7).

The movement's intentions through the demonstration React Rio were to mobilise people and government to invest in shanty town urbanisation and reform of the police. VIVA RIO was already involved in these projects even before this event. The movement was supporting the project 'Favela-Bairro' (shanty town-district) of the municipal government that aims to transform sixty shanty towns into districts. This project has received assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Along with the state government, VIVA RIO wanted to expand the Baixada Viva project to provide better urban conditions to the Baixada Fluminense area. The movement has also encouraged expansion of the community centre defending citizenship (*Jornal do Brasil*, 28 Nov. 1995).

The reform of the police has already been started by the state government, although there were many problems to be overcome, as mentioned above. Nevertheless, both the military and the civil police have already received new equipment such as arms, vehicles and a new computer system.<sup>40</sup>

After the demonstration, VIVA RIO's Coordinating Commission met in order to evaluate the event. Among the points discussed, they decided to put a plan to the President showing areas where federal funds could be used. This plan was to be discussed and approved by the vice-governor. They also discussed the absence of managerial capacity in the organisation. In addition, Betinho proposed the creation of solidarity centres in each district (*Jornal do Brasil*, 30 Nov. 1995).

Nevertheless, it seems that the most important task the movement decided on as an immediate result of this demonstration was the elaboration of a plan to re-direct the new federal government public safety policy. This task was announced by the Justice Minister's Chief of Staff, José Gregory, during an international

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<sup>40</sup> *Jornal do Brasil*, 28 Nov. 1995. Among VIVA RIO's proposals the priorities are: better salaries and training for policemen, improvement in police-community relations (community policing), and better policing of tourist areas (*Jornal do Brasil*, 28 Nov. 1995).

seminar about community policing.<sup>41</sup>

VIVA RIO has enjoyed a good relationship with the federal authorities. The former President, Itamar Franco, had given his support to the movement and discussed the problem of violence in Rio. Such talks ended up with the controversial 'Operação Rio'. Contact between the current President, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and VIVA RIO's members has been extensive since the President was elected. He promised Rubem César Fernandes in November 1994 that he would meet the governor's staff responsible for security in order to discuss the implementation of VIVA RIO's plan combating violence in Rio. At that time VIVA RIO's coordinator was impressed by the President's enthusiasm about the movement's proposals. Moreover, the President considered curbing violence to be a national problem (*Jornal do Brasil*, 7 Oct. 1994).

### **Main Projects**

In this section VIVA RIO's main projects will be discussed. The projects omitted here are not necessarily less important for the movement but space considerations make it impossible to list them all. The focus will be on certain projects within specific areas in which the movement is working.

#### ***Community Policing***

In the case of violence and public security, VIVA RIO has supported the military police in a community policing project in Copacabana (a densely populated, famous tourist area, which is something of a cross-section of Rio in that it has all social classes, and many shanty towns). This idea belonged to Colonel Carlos Magno Nazareth Cerqueira, at that time military police General Commander on the VIVA RIO Citizens' Commission seminars, and it was decided to implement this project not only in Copacabana, but also in its shanty towns. Nevertheless, this project is still not working in the shanty towns (Musumeci, 1995, p. 5).

Its focus is on prevention; policemen work closely with the community in trying to resolve problems. This project started in the last months of 1994. In February 1995 ISER published qualitative research that evaluated this project positively. The research has also shown how difficult it has been to build ties between the police and community given the widespread distrust of the former. It will need time and effort from both sides to change this situation. VIVA RIO has been considered a mediator in this regard. Moreover, the movement is seen by the community as a powerful bargaining chip over some issues. For example

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<sup>41</sup> This seminar was organised by the Justice Ministry, VIVA RIO, and the Police Foundation (a US institution) on 7 December 1995, in Rio de Janeiro (*O Globo*, 8 Dec. 1995). In fact VIVA RIO and the Justice Ministry reached a common agreement which would allow the movement to organise regional seminars seeking new initiatives among state public security offices and civil society. Interview with Ruben César Fernandes, Rio de Janeiro, 28 August 1996.

the Community Council meetings would not be held without the participation of a VIVA RIO member.

Another problem is that drug trafficking in the Copacabana shanty towns is impeding the development of this project in these areas. In addition, the community in these places is resistant to a close relationship with the police, given the many violent incidents with the police over the years (*O Globo*, 8 Dec. 1995).<sup>42</sup>

### *Come Home Child (Vem p'rá casa criança)*

For the street children a special project was created by VIVA RIO which brought in partners: the Municipal Secretary for Social Development, the movement SORRIO, the Inter-Religious Fund, Defending Council and several NGOs working with children.

Come Home Child is an attempt to reintegrate the street child to his or her biological family or a substitute one. VIVA RIO has integrated organisations already working with street children into its initiative so as to maximise their action. By November 1995 there were 123 children already reintegrated, of which four cases were substitute families and the rest biological ones.<sup>43</sup>

The scheme works in the following way: members of some NGOs which are already developing work with children at street level start to talk to them about the idea of returning home. They then select the children to participate in the project, because not all can take part. The children who are selected are sent to a specialised institution in order to go through an adaptation process to be reunited to their family. Another organisation works on the adaptation of the family.

There is a system of godfather sponsorship (the godfathers are found by the movement SORRIO among businessmen and well-off people). The godfather will sponsor a child for a year or longer. He will provide a monthly minimum wage for the child's expenses. Thus, VIVA RIO acts as a coordinator in this project, creating partnerships among sectors that can help and enlarge the project's activities (for instance, in teenage job creation through dialogue with business creating a snowball effect).

This project faces several challenges. In most cases the majority of children who had already participated in projects to rehabilitate them could not find a job, house, etc. Moreover the institutions which took care of them are very selective

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<sup>42</sup> Gradually this project was extinguished mainly because of changes in the state security policy. It finished in September 1995 having run for less than one year. Interview with Jaqueline Muniz, Rio de Janeiro, 21 August 1996.

<sup>43</sup> In an interview with Nelma de Azeredo, who was VIVA RIO's coordinator for street communities, Rio de Janeiro, 23 Oct. 1995.



(some of them do not accept the child if he or she uses drugs or steals) (Milito & Silva, 1995, p. 52). Another difficult issue is housing for these children. The neighbourhood in these areas is very resistant to having these institutions close to them.<sup>44</sup>

VIVA RIO has tried to delineate the problems of violence in Rio in order to tackle it. In the case of street children, Milito and Silva under the coordination of Soares conducted research analysing the murder rates between 1991 and July 1993 in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Classifying the victims according to their age, they found that in almost all the cases investigated the majority of them were teenagers. The main problem did not affect children under 11 years old, although it is still serious in this group, but it concerned the killing of teenagers and youths (Fernandes & Piquet Carneiro, 1995, p. 20). In the teenagers' cases, around 80% of the deaths are drug or police related. They have also been the victims of death squads, which in many cases are made up of policemen.<sup>45</sup>

Drug trafficking in Rio is co-opting and victimising Carioca's poor young generation. Consequently, as Soares has emphasised, the most serious problem is youth alienation. He suggested that state and civil society work together to reintegrate these youths. In addition, he thought it essential the arms trade be curtailed (Soares, 1996, p. 258). The following projects are attempts by VIVA RIO to start working on the reintegration process for those alienated poor youths.

### ***House of Peace (Casa da Paz)***

VIVA RIO has supported the House of Peace since its creation. Originally, the house was bought by Cáo Fábio for transformation into a cultural centre. This house has a very symbolic meaning. In it a whole family was killed during the massacre in the shanty town Vigário Geral which took place in August 1993. The centre runs activities for the poor youth of the shanty town who are the main victims of drug trafficking. The centre faces problems caused by traffickers and sometimes by police. As mentioned earlier, its former coordinator, Cáo Ferraz left the country because of several anonymous threats (which he thinks were made by the police). He was very important to the creation of this centre and had been fighting against violence in Vigário Geral, the shanty town.

### ***Factory of Hope (Fábrica da Esperança)***

The Factory is one of the largest social projects in Latin America. It is run by a Protestant clergyman who has been campaigning against drugs and arms. The Protestant Church has expanded rapidly in Brazil although there are many different kinds. Some Protestant Churches are doing an important work of

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<sup>44</sup> This was the case in Laranjeiras when the residents did not want the establishment of a house for these children. See Milito & Silva, 1995, p. 64.

<sup>45</sup> For more details about the killing of street children in Dimenstein, see 'BRAZIL: War on children', 1991; also MMNMR/ IBASE/ NEV, 'VIDAS em RISCO: Assassinos de crianças e adolescentes no Brasil', 1992.

converting traffickers. Cáo Fábio and his Church adopted this new approach.<sup>46</sup>

The Factory of Hope performs three basic functions. First, it offers poor young people education and health services, as well as professional training; secondly it gives these young people the opportunity to learn how to use computers and how to repair them, in partnership with the computer company Xerox do Brasil; and, lastly, it provides economic opportunities for low income people. As was referred to earlier, this project is located near the shanty town Acari which has been dominated by drug trafficking for a long time. The factory has suffered several problems with the traffickers. The latest one occurred when the police found cocaine in its interior. The investigation of this case is still in process.

In January 1995 President Cardoso visited the factory and met VIVA RIO's members. He promised the creation of a fund for developing social projects, whose management is currently conducted by VIVA RIO and the Solidarity Community, a federal government programme. The money has been raised by the auction of buildings by the federal government. The first auction was held on 16 August 1995 at which three federal properties were sold.

## CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this paper has been to show how civil society has mobilised itself in response to the problem of street violence in the city of Rio de Janeiro. In order to perform this task, a case study on the social movement VIVA RIO formed the main focus. VIVA RIO was chosen because it most vividly illustrates civil society's mobilisation in contemporary Brazilian democracy. In this way, the movement belongs to a trend which started with the Campaign Against Hunger. This Campaign can be seen as one of the most important social movements which has emerged in the current political climate. The principal characteristic shared by the Campaign Against Hunger and VIVA RIO is that neither was prepared to wait for others initiatives – especially in areas where the problem had reached an untenable level – before pushing for community participation. On the contrary, community involvement has proved crucial in accelerating the desired changes. Given the serious problems of hunger and violence and the lack of structural remedies on the part of the governmental authorities, the civic dynamism that these movements have generated cannot be under-estimated.

The other reason for choosing the VIVA RIO movement lies in the possibility

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<sup>46</sup> See Ventura, 1994, p. 127. Fábio became famous when he converted an ex-leader of the 'Comando Vermelho' organised crime faction. In VINDE, Nov. 1995.

it offered of showing how society is reacting to the problem of street violence in the city. This problem, common to almost all big cities in the world, sometimes appears so serious as to conceal society's reaction towards it. To the extent that this is the case, society can be perceived wrongly as tolerant to the problem. The case of VIVA RIO gives marked visibility to societal reaction to the problem of street violence in the city.

Of course, there were specific conditions which favoured the emergence of the movement. Rio de Janeiro has suffered from an unhappy combination of circumstances which have aggravated latent tensions. As referred to above, Rio has had to face a series of political, economic and social problems. Moreover, the situation became worse with the establishment of drug trafficking in the city. Against this difficult background, three violent events in the city set the movement in motion and a diverse group of people decided they had to do something about the situation. The birth of VIVA RIO represents the new tendency of civil society's mobilisation. It was no longer tolerable simply to wait for changes, given the dramatic escalation of violence in Rio. With various projects, as reviewed in the case study, the people moved to remedy the situation. In so doing, civic participation has contributed to accelerate necessary changes.<sup>47</sup>

This does not mean that the people have direct responsibility for finding solutions to the problems, but rather that society as a whole should have a say in the process. In this sense, the civic role may lie in pushing the public authorities to become more responsive and accountable (Fernandes, 1994, p.x). And yet, this question has proved a very sensitive issue for the movement, particularly when dealing with some governmental authorities. In certain cases, the state and municipal authorities appear to have taken the movement's action as a criticism of their own policies. This was illustrated during the preparation of VIVA RIO's demonstration, React Rio. Both the mayor and the governor were critical of the event. An argument flared over the accusation that the movement could not represent society because its coordinator was not elected by the people.<sup>48</sup>

The VIVA RIO coordinator and its members explained that the movement did not want to represent society *per se*. The movement can only represent the

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<sup>47</sup> According to Fernandes, civic participation is essential to promote changes, especially under difficult circumstances. VIVA RIO's coordinator illustrated this aspect of the social movement by stating that the Chief of Civil Police, H. Luz, had no time to elaborate a reform plan for the institution because so much of his time was spent investigating kidnapping cases. It was in this context that VIVA RIO decided to draw up a plan, rather than to wait for the situation to further deteriorate. Interview with Rubem César Fernandes, Rio de Janeiro, 9 Nov. 1995.

<sup>48</sup> The former vice-governor who later became governor, Nilo Batista, criticised the movement along similar lines. Interview with Batista, Rio de Janeiro, 22 Nov. 1995.

people which support it and its ideas; others have the right to suggest alternative proposals (*Jornal do Brasil*, 5 Dec. 1995). The same approach is applied to the institutions with which the movement interacts. Unelected, the leadership of the movement does not seek to direct the public organisations. Its main function is to open and retain communication channels through which to cooperate – not necessarily to compete – with those institutions with common objectives.

After the demonstration, tensions over this point subsided. The movement, as the coordinator made clear, did not wish to be in opposition to the government, a stance which lessened the tensions between the local authorities and the movement (*Jornal do Brasil*, 7 Dec. 1995). Moreover, the movement has enjoyed a good relationship with the federal government. Thanks to the movement the situation of violence in Rio became a national issue. President Cardoso's first official appointment, after being elected, was at a Factory of Hope meeting with VIVA RIO members and governmental authorities. This underlines the public dimension achieved by the movement (Fernandes & Rodrigues, 1995, p. 15).

In important projects, in fact, the public authorities forge a partnership with the movement. VIVA RIO cooperates with the municipal administration in the project Come Home Children for the reintegration of street children into families. With the state government, moreover, VIVA RIO is engaged in the community policing project, promoting better relations between the community and police. Likewise, the Factory of Hope, which provides opportunities for the poor youth generation, is run in cooperation with the state government. Furthermore, the movement has entered into partnership with the federal government programme – Community Solidarity – generating funds for developing social projects.

The innovation of the VIVA RIO movement may lie not only in its partnership, if sometimes difficult, with the public administration. It may also be found in the diversity in its membership, which gives the movement at once strength and weakness. On the one hand, it is difficult to find a consensus amongst the members; it often requires great political ability on the part of its coordinator to find a compromise on various issues. On the other hand, having members from all walks of life gives the movement great scope to manoeuvre within the various social networks. This has helped the movement to work as a catalyst promoting initiatives and partnerships amongst various actors.

One of the biggest innovations of VIVA RIO can however be found in the way in which the movement deals with the problem of violence in the city. Its approach is based first on a detailed analysis of the origins and evolution of the problem; and second on the containment of the problem. This helps find

solutions and offer alternatives to existing government policy.<sup>49</sup>

Soares, one of the movement's principal figures, and his research team also contributed to change the discourse of urban violence in Rio. They found that crime rates between 1991 and 1993 were stable, albeit high, contrary to the general trend (Soares, 1996, p. 256). This finding changed the previously dominant view that little can be done to remedy the hopeless situation. The stable, not worsening, situation would leave ample room for the civic activists to tackle, step by step, the problem of street violence. In the author's view, this change of discourse on violence represents one of the most important achievements of the VIVA RIO movement, encouraging various social projects to be launched.

Another breakthrough of VIVA RIO is in its new method of using the media. First, the movement has successfully made the city of Rio de Janeiro an object of study for the media. Second, the media has given VIVA RIO commercial space – in particular, help in publicising the movement's events. With the representatives of the main newspapers as members of its Coordinating Commission, the VIVA RIO movement has attempted with some success to obtain from the media a better and less sensational coverage of violence – in other words, at least as good a coverage as economic and political news should be given. The media has thus been one of the most important resources for the movement.

The main problem that the movement has stressed should be tackled is the social exclusion of poor youth. As a strategic choice, VIVA RIO has associated the campaign for peace with the integration of citizenship rights, taking the young generation into special consideration (Soares, 1996, p.296). The poor young have been co-opted by drug traffickers. Consequently, they are both the main victims and the agents of violence. For this reason, the movement has focused on the creation of jobs and investment in alternative cultural projects which appeal more to their expectations. However, this remains a difficult task because of the strong attraction that drug trafficking exerts on these youths. Although VIVA RIO is supporting projects such as House of Peace and Factory of Hope, which are directly involved with this issue, there are still many obstacles to be overcome in order to realise fully the movement's objectives.

The movement's members have also agreed that solving Rio's problem of street violence would depend on economic recovery. To help improve the economic situation, VIVA RIO has worked in partnership with trade unions and business in various economic sectors such as the shipping and textile industries. It is also supporting the creation of domestic companies in the shanty towns. Rio's economic recovery has already begun, in fact. The Rio de Janeiro Industry

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<sup>49</sup> The approach of the movement is modelled on the one adopted by ISER.

Federation is predicting investments of around US\$ 4.11 billions between 1995 and 1999 in the industrial sector (*Gazeta Mercantil*, 27 Nov. 1995). New companies and factories are being established in the city and in the state as a whole.<sup>50</sup>

The movement has broadened its scope of action. It has gone beyond its focus on the specific problem of violence and is also participating in campaigns such as traffic security, rubbish collection in order to clean the city, reforestation, among others. We have seen, therefore that the VIVA RIO social movement has made important contributions to improving the city's situation, despite a number of difficulties in putting forward and implementing its proposals. Moreover, the movement as well as the Campaign Against Hunger has changed civil society's participation in the life of the city and the country. Perhaps its impact and meaning are best described in the words of Ruben César Fernandes, VIVA RIO's coordinator, who summarises the movement: 'VIVA RIO is an action of love for Rio' (Fernandes, 4 July 1995).

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<sup>50</sup> The state's main economic success was the choice of the city Resende as the site for the establishment of a new Volkswagen factory (*Exame*, 16 Aug. 1995).

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**INSTITUTE OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES**  
31, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HA

