

Teresa A. Meade

# “Civilizing” Rio

Reform and Resistance  
in a  
Brazilian City, 1889–1930

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# Contents

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# Introduction

In September 1893 “hundreds of agitators” marched down the main streets of Rio de Janeiro, the federal capital of Brazil’s nearly four-year-old Republic. Rallying in front of a government building, the crowd attempted to take inside a petition demanding that the officials revoke a recently imposed federal tax on “essential goods.” In the eyes of the demonstrators this tax was particularly unjust, not only because it added another burden to already skyrocketing prices on consumer items, but because it was one more cruel reminder of official Rio’s disregard for the well-being of the city’s residents. Prices were already high, the protesters complained, because speculators preyed on consumers during those times when the government was preoccupied with maintaining order in the distant reaches of the new Republic. In reference to a recent military expedition to the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, spokespersons for the crowd proclaimed that “when the government’s attention is devoted to matters pertaining to the military order, the speculators are most active.”<sup>1</sup>

The peaceful march turned ugly when the police prevented the crowd, including even the “respectable citizens” scattered among its ranks, from delivering a set of written complaints to the House of Deputies. What ensued was fairly typical of street demonstrations in those years: the police shoved the crowd; people fought back, hurling rocks at the rows of infantry and cavalry converging on them. In turn the mounted officers charged the gath-

1. *O Paiz*, September 12, 1893, 1, translated by the author, as are all further translations unless otherwise noted.

ering, their clubs swinging and horses' hooves tromping down on protester and bystander alike. Tempers flared, shots rang out, and the peaceful assembly of orderly petitioners turned to melee. Groups from the splintered gathering then rampaged through the downtown streets until nightfall, when exhaustion, hunger, frustration, and relatively indiscriminate incarceration brought an end to the disturbance. What was the outcome? By all accounts, the speculators went back to gouging the urban consumers, pushing food prices ever higher, and the federal tax stayed in place.

Although marches and protests occurred intermittently over the next decade, not until November 1904 did violence again envelop the metropolitan area and touch the lives of many of the city's residents. At that time Rio's residents took to the streets to protest a new law requiring universal vaccination against small pox. Beginning as sporadic rallies on the evening of November 10, the day before the law was to take effect, rioting disrupted the normal operations of the city for the next week, finally ending on November 18. In the course of the week, crowds comprising young and old, men and women, European immigrants and native Afro-Brazilians, hurled rocks from behind barricades and from the tops of buildings. The most militant protesters armed themselves with handguns and other weapons to defend their barricades against the police and army units that were attempting to restore order. Day and night, shouts of "Death to the police!" "Long live the working class!" "Down with forced vaccination!" and "Long live the Republic!" pierced the Rio air.<sup>2</sup>

Similar to the protest of 1893, the demonstration began as a peaceful assembly. On the night of November 10, 1904, as many as five thousand protesters gathered peacefully in the Largo de São Francisco da Paula, a traditional rallying point in downtown Rio de Janeiro. Although the organizers of the November 10 protest (a loose coalition of civilian and military positivists, socialist trade unionists, and opposition politicians) directed the crowd to disperse and to reassemble in the same location the next day, a few gangs of youths headed out to get a head start on stoning streetlights and overturning public transport vehicles. Most, however, simply paraded about the downtown shouting condemnations of the government and the vaccination law. On the morning of November 11, the first day of the government's mandatory vaccination effort and the day organizers had called for total noncompliance with the new law, protests erupted all over Rio de Janeiro.<sup>3</sup>

2. *Jornal do Brasil*, November 11–12, 14–19, 1904, 1–2.

3. *Ibid.*, November 11–12, 1904, 1–2.

When the riot finally ended more than a week later, the capital lay in shambles. The crowds had overturned and set ablaze streetcars, broken gas and electric streetlights, erected barricades to cut off access to the main arteries in the vital business districts near the docks and trading houses, invaded construction sites to tear apart newly erected walls and floors, and vandalized train stations on lines out to the rapidly expanding *subúrbios* on the outskirts of the downtown. Peculiar targets indeed for a protest against small pox vaccination! Logically, one assumes, in a riot against a health law, the offices of the public health department should have suffered the greatest damage, or the demonstrators should have sought out and tried to punish the doctors and medical personnel responsible for carrying out the vaccination. Instead, the crowds had destroyed the Republican capital's newly constructed downtown offices, government buildings, cultural landmarks, and transit system. Why, one asks, did a people opposed to a public health law set ablaze streetcars and newly renovated buildings? The answer seems to be that the riot had centered on more than vaccination and had unleashed well-grounded fears and hostilities from Rio's poor. Dying daily of malnutrition, dysentery, and tuberculosis, forced by an ambitious urban renewal project from their homes in the center city and out to the disease-infested suburbs, the poor, the working class, and even those struggling into the middle class simply did not believe that the vaccination law would bring them anything but more harm. In effect, the law was part of a general program that was increasingly marginalizing the city's poor geographically, to the distant outskirts of the city, and politically, far from the Republic's priorities.

In the years after the famous riot of 1904, popular protest, sometimes called "collective violence," less often affected the places of commerce and the centers of power in the eventually rebuilt center city of Rio de Janeiro, the heart of the newly proclaimed *cidade maravilhosa* (marvelous city). Nonetheless, protests continued, although in somewhat varied forms and in different places. Not uncommon were minor riots, such as that which erupted on May 4, 1916, on the Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil (known as the Central), the rail line that in the post-urban renewal years brought workers from their neighborhoods on Rio's outskirts to their workplaces in the center city and South Zone. On the morning of May 4 adults gathered in the stations, ready to push their children past railroad attendants who were to enforce a new policy of charging children who rode during the morning and evening rush hours. Carrying signs demanding that train officials retain the customary free passage for children, adults and youngsters pushed sta-

tion attendants out of the way and boarded the trains in defiance of the new regulation. Those who attempted to stop the stampede, to collect the fares, or to prevent children from boarding were knocked down and trampled. All along the line, station masters reported to the railroad officers that it was "impossible to enforce the ruling."<sup>4</sup>

These three riots, or incidents of collective violence, that erupted in Rio de Janeiro over a twenty-three-year period appear on the surface as quite distinct historical incidents. They were, moreover, only three cases among many during the First Republic, a period noted for near constant conflict and upheaval. In this book I analyze many of those conflicts and attempt to explain why different social classes, organized in neighborhood groups, labor unions, and affiliated societies, quarreled and fought with the city and federal government from 1890 to 1930. They sparred over the ways public services and housing were allocated, over the continually rising cost of living, over the perpetual lack of decent job opportunities, for a productive and healthy life, and, in some cases, for simple peace and quiet.

On the one hand, this book is a study of the reasons why masses of people sporadically took to the streets in protest. They most heatedly disagreed in the decades at the turn of the century over the massive urban renewal and public health plan that was intended to transform Rio de Janeiro from a disease-infested port city of narrow streets and uninteresting architecture to a thriving metropolis of Parisian-inspired avenues and buildings. When by 1910 the first phase of the urban renewal was largely completed and the poor were removed to working-class suburbs and to the outskirts of the city, the locus of tension shifted to complaints over working conditions and wages, adding to ongoing grievances against high prices, inadequate and unsanitary housing, and the general substandard living conditions that continued to plague the urban poor.

On the other hand, this is a study of the overall outcome of the struggle, not just of what happened after each riot, orderly petition, or militant protest. Since rioting and protest are ubiquitous in history—in both urban and rural areas—what distinguishes the events in Rio from those in other places and times? What do we learn from the Rio case about the form and outcome of collective violence and urban development in general? Did the protesters in 1893, 1904, or 1916 have anything in common? Separated by years, the activities took place in different parts of the city; they were sparked by different events; they often drew together people from separate social classes, of dif-

4. *Ibid.*, May 4, 1916, 1.

ferent ages, genders, and races; and they varied in their purpose (food prices and taxes, health reform and urban renewal, transit fares, living and working conditions). What effect, if any, did these protests have on the way the city developed? In this book I probe those commonalities.

In the first place, the protests took place in Rio de Janeiro, the capital and most important commercial city of Brazil during the Republican government that lasted from 1889 to 1930. To a large extent the social strife in the capital mirrored the broader tensions of Brazilian society. Rio stood at the head of a country in the midst of great social changes and political upheaval: the abolition of slavery in 1888, the massive influx of free immigrant laborers, the final demise of the Empire, and, on November 15, 1889, the declaration of the Republic.<sup>5</sup> But the capital also contained within it the forces that were pulling the country in different directions. It was the city the elite wanted to transform into a showplace of high culture, befitting the capital of an emerging great nation; and at the same time it was the place to which thousands of poor immigrants from Europe and former slaves from the plantations were fleeing in search of a better life. As a result, Rio de Janeiro was, during the First (or Old) Republic, more than a capital and more than an emerging commercial center; it was the site of tension between opposing social classes over the course of Brazil's future. At one pole stood the planter-dominated federal government, including a rapidly expanding government bureaucracy, the increasingly powerful urban manufacturing and commercial elite, and their allies among British financial and merchant groups. At the other pole were the popular classes, including the working class, the marginalized and unemployed urban poor, and a vast array of small shopkeepers, independent drivers, sellers, and street peddlers, a group sometimes called the middle class or, more precisely, the petty bourgeoisie.

Second, the riots and demonstrations in Rio involved more than an interclass struggle between opposing social classes. As social conflict, they represented a moment in the collective struggle of a people over who would live in the city, where they would live, and how well they would live. In Rio de Janeiro this fight, over what Manuel Castells calls the "built form of the city" or "allocation of urban space," assumed a configuration that pitted the majority of the laboring poor and the petty bourgeoisie against the smaller

5. Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Da senzala a colônia* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1966); Robert Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery, 1850–1888* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972); Octavio Ianni, *As metamorfoses do escravo* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1962); Thomas Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land: Coffee and Society in São Paulo, 1886–1934* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

group of Brazilian elites and their allies among the foreign merchants, investors, and bankers. The popular classes sought to make their grievances known in a number of forms: marches, street melees, often riots, and occasionally strikes. Although the poor and working people of Rio de Janeiro never managed to alter power relations in the city, to change the class structure, or to force a significant reordering in the government's social priorities, they persisted. In the end, their struggle was an attempt, if a mostly failed one, to intervene in the spatial molding of their city and to demand a better share of urban prosperity.

Stated another way, this was a conflict, not unusual in history, in which the popular classes threw at the ruling class all that they had: themselves.<sup>6</sup> In fact there were many similarities between the forms that protest assumed in turn-of-the-century Rio de Janeiro and the much analyzed riots that broke out in Europe and the United States during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Similar to what George Rude documented as the cause of riots in France, the Brazilian authorities' inattention to demands from the lower classes caused orderly petitions to escalate into riots and spread from isolated neighborhoods to districts throughout the city. Usually Rio's demonstrations began as reasonable petitions to municipal and federal authorities for redress of grievances: an end to exorbitantly high food prices or chronic shortages, a call for street lighting or improved sanitation, and, quite often, demands for resolutions to the ever-present housing crisis. When rioting did break out, crowds stoned streetlights, burned construction sites, and even tore up streetcar and railroad tracks, reminiscent of the "machine-breaking spree" Charles Tilly described in France.<sup>7</sup>

But different from the crowds of Europe or the United States, Brazilians who took to the streets to protest unpopular taxes, price hikes, fare increases, economic and political regulations, and destruction of their housing came up against companies owned by foreign monopolists, taxes imposed to

6. The work here is vast; therefore I refer to only a few of the main sources, including Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1966); idem, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (February 1971): 76-136; Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Random House, 1977); George Rude, *The Crowd in History, 1730-1848* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), esp. chaps. 14 and 15; Eric Hobsbawm and George Rude, *Captain Swing* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968); Charles Tilly, "The Changing Place of Collective Violence," in *Workers in the Industrial Revolution*, ed. Peter N. Stearns and Daniel J. Walkowitz (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1974), 117-37; idem, *The Contentious French* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986); Charles Tilly and Louise A. Tilly, eds., *Class Conflict and Collective Action* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981).

7. Tilly, *The Contentious French*.

pay for loans from British banks, and urban renewal projects designed to make Rio look more like London and Paris. Thus, Brazil's dependence on foreign investment and export markets abroad for the vitality of its economy had a profound effect on the particular function of its capital city and on the nature of social protest that erupted in it. During the First Republic coffee planters of the center-south region enjoyed a close alliance with British capitalists, who in turn catered to the needs of the powerful rural oligarchs, miners, and planters, who supplied the coffee, minerals, sugar, hides, beef, rice, and other items for export overseas.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, throughout the Old Republic, Brazil's urban elite failed to develop as an autonomous power. Urban manufacturers and commercial agents never forged a course at all antagonistic to the rural planters, as did their counterparts in Europe and the United States, nor did they oppose the domination of foreign capital.<sup>9</sup>

Politically, the work of managing the national government was an administrative task reliant on the economic power base among the planters and thus directly subservient to the export-oriented economy. Nine of the ten presidents who served during the Old Republic had direct planter backgrounds or were related by marriage to the oligarchy. Those politicians not related to the planters directly were chosen for political office because of their assurance that they would speak for the well-being of the planters. The result has been that Brazilian industrialization and commercial expansion have emerged alongside massive rural poverty, while agricultural labor relations have remained relatively untouched by the admittedly few democratic reforms affecting urban workers.<sup>10</sup>

This relationship between the city and country, as well as the particular political configuration it engendered, stretches back to the earliest days of Brazil's history as a plantation economy based on a slave labor force im-

8. Edgard Carone, *A República Velha: Evolução política* (São Paulo: DIFEL, 1964), 158-84; Florestan Fernandes, *A revolução burguesa no Brasil: Ensaio de interpretação sociológica* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores, 1976), chap. 3; Richard Graham, *Britain and the Onset of Modernization in Brazil, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Nelson Werneck Sodré, *História da burguesia brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1976), 210-43.

9. For a fuller discussion of the debates over the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Latin America, see Teresa Meade, "The Transition to Capitalism in Brazil: Notes on a Third Road," *Latin American Perspectives* 5 (Summer 1978): 7-26. The classic debate among Maurice Dobbs, Paul Sweezy, and others is in *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, with an introduction by Rodney Hilton (London: NLB, 1976).

10. Boris Fausto, *Trabalho urbano e conflito social* (São Paulo: DIFEL, 1976), 59-61; Thomas E. Skidmore, "Workers and Soldiers: Urban Labor Movements and Elite Responses in Twentieth-Century Latin America," in *Elites, Masses, and Modernization in Latin America, 1850-1930*, ed. Virginia Bernhardt (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 80.

ported from Africa. So long as slavery prevailed (and it did for the first four centuries after European colonization), urban development was stymied, since the availability of the slave, even during the seasonal layoffs from agricultural labor, led the master to use him or her for the production of consumer goods, thereby curbing the demand for urban-produced manufactured goods.<sup>11</sup> In addition, as Mary Karasch shows in her careful analysis of Rio de Janeiro in the early nineteenth century, slaves successfully performed skilled and unskilled tasks and thereby met the limited demand for domestic manufactures in the city itself. The planters were content to import many luxury items from abroad, a practice they maintained after abolition.<sup>12</sup>

The abolition of slavery in 1888 therefore removed an important obstacle to urbanization, and the nation entered a new stage of economic and political relations. Both commercial and artisanal activity increased in the cities as freed agricultural laborers and European immigrants sought work, as well as bought and sold goods there. However, as several studies of urbanization have shown, Brazil's cities grew not so much because of any increase in commerce, manufacturing, and artisanry as because of the sheer number of rural laborers who migrated after abolition. Their livelihood on the countryside no longer ensured, former slaves were forced to migrate to urban areas to find work.<sup>13</sup> The pattern of migration from rural to urban areas in late-nineteenth-century Brazil was not unusual in Latin America during this period, nor has

11. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "The City and Politics," in *Urbanization in Latin America*, ed. Jorge E. Hardoy (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), 172-73.

12. Mary C. Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

13. Douglas Butterworth and John K. Chance, *Latin American Urbanization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), and Martin T. Katzman, *Cities and Frontiers in Brazil: Regional Dimensions of Economic Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), provide good summaries of the urbanization process in Latin America and Brazil and discount the thesis that urbanization in underdeveloped countries is linked exclusively to industrial growth. Several essays in Hardoy's *Urbanization in Latin America* discuss the relation between urbanization and underdevelopment; see Jorge E. Hardoy, "Two Thousand Years of Latin American Urbanization," 3-55; Anibal Quijano, "The Urbanization of Latin American Society," 109-53; Victor L. Urquidí, "The Underdeveloped City," 339-66. For a discussion of city development that accounts for massive poverty among a migratory population, see Susan Eckstein, *The Poverty of Revolution: The State and the Urban Poor in Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Richard M. Morse, "São Paulo: Case Study of a Latin American Metropolis," in *Latin American Urban Research*, vol. 1, ed. Francine F. Rabinowitz and Felicity M. Trueblood (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1971), 151-86; Stanislaw Wellisz, "Economic Development and Urbanization," in *Urbanization and National Development*, vol. 1 (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1971), 39-40. For a review of several studies on Latin American urban history, see John K. Chance, "Recent Trends in Latin American Urban Studies," *Latin American Research Review* 15, no. 1 (1980), 183-88.

it been since: people moved because the land could not feed them, only to end up in cities where prospects were often little better.

While the elite looked abroad for their economic well-being, so too they looked to Europe, mainly France and England, for cultural inspiration in everything from fashion to literature to architecture to the arts. The rest of Brazil's populace—the rural and urban working classes, the tiny petty bourgeoisie and the poor—saw little of the vast wealth from the coffee trade and made a living instead producing, buying, selling, and processing goods for the narrow domestic market. Nor did this majority of Brazilians wait expectantly for the latest fashion from Paris, strain to interpret the opera, or worry about the decidedly non-European facades on Rio's downtown buildings.

Third, these relations between town and country and between Brazil and the world economy affected the types of social conflicts that erupted, and provided a common thread uniting their seemingly disparate causes. For the most part, the urban popular classes—the working class, the poor, and the small middle class—opposed the plans of the domestic and international bourgeoisie, but were never powerful enough to wrest the government away from programs that met mainly the priorities of foreign investors and rural planters. Brazil's precarious economic structure, unstable manufacturing base, and, most of all, want of land reform, which forced thousands of rural laborers to migrate to the city and to compete for the few jobs there, undermined the development of a politically powerful urban labor movement.

In fact, during the Old Republic only a fraction of the working class was even employed on a relatively regular basis. In addition to the small number of reasonably steadily employed workers, Rio's workforce was by and large composed of many casually employed, or "marginalized," workers. This layer of workers, referred to in this study as the "laboring poor" or the "urban poor" for want of a more precise term, made a living in the interstices of the economy (casual workers) and in the informal sector as a part of the "underworld" (gamblers, prostitutes, beggars, and so forth). In other words, the proletariat in Rio shaded into what is sometimes called the *lumpenproletariat*, with no clear line perceptible between these sectors.<sup>14</sup> A worker in a textile mill might be laid off half of the year, during which time he or she

14. Lucio Kowarick, *Capitalismo e marginalidade na America Latina* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Paz e Terra, 1975), 127-45; idem, "Capitalismo, dependencia e marginalidade urbana na America Latina: Uma contribuição teórica," *Estudos CEBRAP* 8 (April-June 1974), 77-96; Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, "Classes médias urbanas: Formação, natureza, intervenção na vida política," in *História geral da civilização brasileira*, vol. 9, *O Brasil repúblicano: Sociedade e instituições, 1889-1930*, ed. Boris Fausto (São Paulo: Difusão Editorial, 1977), 23; Decio Saes, *Classe média e política na Primeira República brasileira, 1889-1930* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1975), 69.

worked as a day laborer, maid, street vendor, numbers runner, or prostitute. Enterprises were so small—in 1889 Rio registered about six hundred factories with only a half dozen employees in each—that layoffs, shutdowns, and slowdowns were more the norm than the exception, forcing large numbers of workers to make their livelihood in creative, new ways.<sup>15</sup> Studies have shown that many of the Carioca<sup>16</sup> lower class fluctuated back and forth across a fine line between legitimate, stable employment and the less respectable world of the street.<sup>17</sup> Just as workers moved from employed to unemployed, from respectable to marginal, the entrepreneurs moved from small owners to street peddlers to the “underworld” figures.

Moreover, a considerable portion of the workforce was casually employed, even in those enterprises located at the hub of the city's economic activity. Virtually all of the labor on the docks was casual, even seasonal, given the importance of coffee exports. This economic instability among all laboring people produced a particular political culture that united small shopkeepers with workers and even the urban poor against the city's elite.

Given the casual and marginal nature of employment in Rio, it is not surprising that it was contention over issues of consumption (fare hikes, food costs, housing problems), rather than point-of-production struggles (wages, working conditions, union recognition), that pushed people into marches and rallies. Manuel Castells's theories on urban development provide an essential framework for understanding this relationship. Just as Diane Davis found in her study of Mexico City, Castells's notion of collective consumption stands as a crucial theoretical concept around which to build a framework for understanding the urban domain in Latin America.<sup>18</sup> Because Rio's development more closely paralleled Mexico City's than that of the cities of Europe or the United States, which have been the object of study for many urban sociologists and historians, Davis's book provides a valuable theoretical and empirical point of comparison for an analysis of Rio de Janeiro. As she remarks, Castells claims that the “provision and administration of collec-

15. Directoria Geral de Estatística, *Recenseamento Geral da República dos Estados Unidos do Brasil em 31 de Dezembro de 1890, Distrito Federal* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1895), lxxi.

16. “Carioca,” a term of Indian derivation, refers to people and things having to do with Rio de Janeiro.

17. Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chap. 5; June E. Hahner, *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850–1940* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), 94–96.

18. Diane E. Davis, *Urban Leviathan: Mexico City in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), esp. chap. 1.

tive consumption services, such as transport, housing, and other related infrastructure provided collectively to residents in large agglomerations, are the central axis around which the social and spatial development of cities occurs.”<sup>19</sup> Similar to what Davis elucidated in her study of Mexico City, in Rio de Janeiro the size, nature, and boundaries of the city, “the urban domain,” have been socially produced. Moreover, that social production has taken place within the struggle over collective consumption—over where and how well people live, eat, move about, and enjoy themselves in a city.

Manuel Castells's argument rests on a number of fundamentals. Primarily, Castells asserts that not only the economic and political characteristics of a city, but also its spatial form, are determined by its function. What cities look like—why their neighborhoods, business districts, slums, and suburbs grew where they did—depends in Castells's terms on whether the city serves primarily as a commercial or an industrial center and on how it functions in the broader world economy. Cities, “like all social reality, are historical products, not only in their physical materiality but in their cultural meaning, in the role they play in the social organization, and in peoples' lives.”<sup>20</sup>

Analyzing the “product”—the urban structure and built environment—provides a basic understanding of how some cities develop quite differently from others. Why is it that so many cities in the developing world have evolved as massive metropolises with millions of poor people concentrated on the outskirts, in shantytowns that lack transportation, water, electricity, and health facilities, while the business district and homes of the wealthy cluster in the downtown or in enclaves close to good city services? Castells argues that this “allocation of urban space” has not been accidental. Rather, in most cities of what we call the “developing world,” a separation of poverty from wealth and a concurrent isolation of the poor far from city services have been planned. Thus, in Rio, whereas wealth, education, certain cultural refinements, and access to power might have distinguished the rich from the poor, on a more fundamental level it was actually an individual's relationship to the system of imperialism that determined his or her place in the urban matrix. Rio de Janeiro was therefore more than simply a city reliant on foreign investment and markets for its survival or a city with many poor people crowded into substandard houses, forced into jobs that paid less than subsistence wages; rather, it was, and still is, a city in which the occupants have been driven to construct a space and organize a life as though temporary

19. *Ibid.*, 15.

20. Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 302.



builders of their master's estate.<sup>21</sup> In Rio the individual's place on the "estate" depended on his or her class and ability to wield economic and political power.

In addition, this study seeks to shed some light on the conditions under which collective violence erupts. What provokes urban riots? Are they more frequent in some societies than others? Under what conditions and for what reasons do some sectors of the popular classes take to the streets to air their grievances? On the surface, the riots in Brazil resembled in form, in composition of the crowds, and in the targets of the demonstrators the popular rebellions of Europe and the United States usually referred to as "preindustrial," "premodern," or "prepolitical" social movements.<sup>22</sup> Loosely defined, premodern protests are generally local in scope, motivated by a popular resistance to the demands of a central authority, and sometimes backward-looking. Associated with precapitalist stages of production, typical examples of premodern protests are food riots, tax rebellions, and machine-breaking spree. Modern protest, on the other hand, is "highly organized, more regularly based on associations, more in pursuit or defense of a political program," and correspondent with later stages of capitalist production relations.<sup>23</sup> The most common example is the strike.

Whether these are appropriate terms for the protests in Rio (or even for those in Europe and the United States) is, however, debatable. Outbreaks of violence are so common throughout history, bear similarities over vastly different historical epochs, and even vary widely within the same time period, that attempts strictly to separate premodern bread riots, for example, from modern strikes have raised as many questions as they have resolved. In Rio modern strikes have raised as many questions as they have resolved. In Rio de Janeiro food riots, tax rebellions, and street melees, commonly considered forms of premodern or preindustrial riot, did not diminish in the face of more orderly and modern strikes as capitalist relations expanded, nor have these forms of collective action receded from the political landscape today.<sup>24</sup> On the contrary, strikes and workplace violence accompanied the continually escalating popular protests against prices, shortages, taxes, and living

21. *Ibid.*, 212.

22. Hobsbawm makes the point that the term "prepolitical" is problematic, as is all of the terminology applied to these social movements, since politics certainly existed before the industrial transformation; however, the "structure, organizations, scope, objectives and perhaps above all the language of politics changed fundamentally during this transformation." Eric Hobsbawm, "Pre-political Movements in Peripheral Areas" (paper presented at the Conferencia sobre História e Ciências Sociais, Campinas, Brazil, May 26-30, 1975), 2.

23. Tilly, "The Changing Place of Collective Violence," 133.

24. José Alvaro Moisés and Verena Martínez-Alier Stolcke, "Urban Transport and Popular

conditions, especially in poorer communities during the Old Republic, and, I would argue, they have since become permanent features of popular resistance. If anything, the community-based urban protest movement and replaced it as the preferred form of discourse on more than one occasion.

This distinction, between premodern and modern forms of protest, needs to be abandoned, certainly to understand collective protest in Rio de Janeiro. Furthermore, the existence of distinctly different forms, or types, of protest is dubious in any society. Certainly in the wake of outbreaks of violence in major North and South American cities in the 1960s and more recently in Los Angeles in 1992, one would be hard-pressed to argue that crowds gathering in front of stores and appropriating the goods for themselves are operating in any way fundamentally different from that of bread rioters in eighteenth-century France or protesters in Rio de Janeiro at the turn of the century. Moreover, every form of social protest draws on the experiences, the grievances, the resolutions and failed resolutions of the hundreds of protests that have come before. As Eric Hobsbawm explains, "[S]ignificant 'pre-political' movements of the present are fusions of the old and new, so are all 'modern' movements, particularly in the peripheral countries."<sup>25</sup> According to Ira Katznelson, urban community protest has been the "major characteristic of political life" in most parts of the West in recent decades. These protests, centered at the place of residence, not at work, have concerned "the delivery of collective services by government and the impact of housing, transport, and social services on the built form of the city and on the quality of life."<sup>26</sup>

If ideologically every form of protest fuses the old and the new, then the single distinction between them rests with the "mechanisms" or the organization of the crowd—the strike and trade union versus the spontaneous street riot. Hobsbawm suggests "it is the discovery that modern organization is better suited to the struggle in a modern society, rather than the discovery of modern ideology," that accounts for the decline of premodern protest in the modern world.<sup>27</sup> Since in even the most advanced capitalist societies there exist pockets where these modern "mechanisms" have never taken root (south-central Los Angeles, for example), classic premodern riots have broken out precisely because there were few other ways of eliciting the response of the political establishment.

25. Hobsbawm, "Pre-political Movements in Peripheral Areas," 8.

26. Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 210.

Rio de Janeiro, on the other hand, poses the question of social protest even more acutely. What happens in Rio, or any similar society, where the "mechanisms" of modern resistance (trade unions and electoral politics) remain fragile and undeveloped long after capitalist reorganization of economic relations has triumphed? In Rio during the First Republic and for decades to come, there were few avenues through which the masses could exert political and economic influence. Not only were trade unions loosely organized in the first decades of the century, but the majority of casual workers and urban poor did not hold jobs long enough to consider the option of joining a union even if one existed. Rather than a few enclaves where the conditions of poverty and social alienation predominated, most of Rio de Janeiro was so poor, its growing population so crowded, and the "mechanisms" for redressing grievances so undeveloped that it was in near constant ferment.

In addition, as Michel Foucault has shown in his studies of sickness and health, civilization and madness, sanity and insanity, the realm of social policy has been integrally bound up with multiple institutions in a society.<sup>28</sup> No exception to the rule, the Brazilian Republican elite drew heavily on European notions of civilization, particularly science, to discredit the opposition to their plans for the city's future. Rio's city officials, the engineers and urban planners, never spoke of designing a city to serve exclusively the interests of foreign capitalists, investors, or tourists, nor is it clear that that was their conscious intent. No, in the case of Rio, as with similar projects in other parts of the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the urban renewal and public health plan and the subsequent transportation, communication, and distribution networks that connected the city were justified by a selective use of scientific law as a guide to sanitation and public health. This view of European science was contingent on the lofty assessment of Europe's culture, its society, its cities, the race and culture of its people, all of which the Brazilian elite slavishly emulated. As a result, any opposition to the government's plan to renovate and sanitize Rio de Janeiro in the early years of this century, and complaints against the gross inequalities in living standards and social services that persisted throughout the Old Republic, were dismissed as uncultured, unscientific, superstitious, and, most of all, uncivilized.

From 1890 through the 1920s the thousands of mostly poor occupants were in dispute with the better-off domestic and foreign elite over just how the city should grow, the location of poor and wealthy neighborhoods, and

28. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A. M.

the standard of living people could achieve. Visible in Rio's history, therefore, was a connection between the seemingly static notion of allocating space and the dynamic concept of societal conflict, or, said another way, a relationship between the way Rio de Janeiro was transformed and the role (or lack thereof) of the people in producing those structural transformations.<sup>29</sup> Castells's analysis of the relationship between the struggle over collective consumption and the resultant allocation of space serves as the key ingredient for understanding Rio de Janeiro as an urban realm. There was, and is, a tangible, visible outcome to the conflict between classes and groups in a society, as apparent and knowable as the redefined borders and redistributed spoils after a war between nations. The victors in the city struggle "won" access to the essentials of urban life, housing, transport, lighting, water, health, and safety, as well as to such amenities as parks, entertainment, aesthetics, and comfort.

As an analysis of the connection between the place of Rio de Janeiro within the world system and the role of imperialism in shaping the class struggle, a relationship Charles Bergquist calls a "creative fusion" between local history and global structure, this book draws on existing studies of Rio's development. I hope that it complements those works, which have explained the ideologies of the elite, the lives of the urban poor, the tension between the role of domestic servants and the wider city economy, the conflict between whites and people of color, the emergence of Rio's working class and factory system, the transformation of the city during the First Republic, and the importance of science in justifying the social changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>30</sup> While indebted to those works, this book, none-

29. Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977), 13–23.

30. Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 384. For Rio in the nineteenth century, see S. L. Graham, *House and Street*, and Thomas Holloway, *Policing Rio de Janeiro: Repression and Resistance in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); for Rio in the Old Republic, see Jeffrey D. Needell, *A Tropical Belle Époque: Elite Culture and Society in Turn-of-the-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); June E. Hahner, *Poverty and Politics: The Urban Poor in Brazil, 1870–1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986); Sam Adamo, "The Broken Promise: Race, Health, and Justice in Rio de Janeiro, 1890–1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1983); Eileen Keremitsis, "The Early Industrial Worker in Rio de Janeiro, 1870–1930" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1982); Jaime Lary Benchimol, "Pereira Passos, um Haussmann tropical: As transformações urbanas na cidade do Rio de Janeiro no início do século XX" (master's thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 1982); Nancy Stepan, *Beginnings of Brazilian Science: Oswaldo Cruz, Medical Research and Policy, 1890–1920* (New York: Science History Publications, 1976); Nancy Leys Stepan, "The Hour of Eugenics": *Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

theless, approaches the history of Rio de Janeiro from a slightly different angle in hopes of expanding yet further our understanding of both Rio and of the people who inhabit it. My intent is to sketch the intersection where, during the First Republic, the demands of the working people of Rio de Janeiro for a decent living and a reasonable share in the city's prosperity collided with the priorities Rio's elite had set for their capital.<sup>31</sup>

31. Labor history has emerged as an increasingly important field of Latin American historiography. For a summary of some of the important contributions to the field, see the excellent bibliographies edited by John D. French—*Latin American Labor Studies: An Interim Bibliography of Non-English Publications* and *Latin American Labor Studies: A Bibliography of English Publications Through 1989* (Miami: Center of Labor Research and Studies, Florida International University, 1989)—as well as the updates French and Guillermo J. Grenier publish in *Latin American Labor News*, from the Center of Labor Research and Studies.

# 1

## Civilization

To speak of a policed country is the same thing as to speak of a civilized country.

—O Faiz, editorial, August 16, 1895

Rio de Janeiro's reputation as one of the world's most stunning cities has been with it since its founding as a European settlement. Crowded between the Atlantic Ocean on one side and Guanabara Bay on the other, the city was at once an ideal port with a well-protected harbor and a tropical paradise of amazing geographic beauty. Its streets meandered in and out among clusters of high barren rocks, or *morros*, and at the base of mountains covered with tropical vegetation. In 1567 the Portuguese entered the bay at its mouth, between what is today Niterói on the east and Botafogo on the west. Thinking they had discovered the mouth to a gigantic river, they named the site Rio de Janeiro (January River) to mark the month of their conquest. Later exploration showed that it was not a river at all but a very wide bay, which subsequently proved to be an ideal harbor. According to some accounts, the Portuguese Crown reclaimed the site from a band of French Huguenots who established a trading post there in the early sixteenth century and lived peaceably with a scattering of Portuguese settlers. Alarmed at the prospect

Rio's urban development and disrupted the carefully demarcated system of class privilege through which the Republican government maintained order. The fact that members of all classes lived in close proximity, crowded in a few blocks near the downtown docks, meant that grievances overlapped, especially those pertaining to housing and sanitation. Health Inspector Souza Lima captured the prevailing sentiments of the elite when in 1891 he called for the destruction of the *cortiços* "in the interest of freeing the central city from vice and visible poverty" (emphasis mine).<sup>62</sup> Although he likewise justified tearing down the *cortiços* "in the interest of preventing the spread of disease," was it an accident that he placed this "interest" second? The inspector called for the construction of sanitary workers' housing in the *subúrbios* to replace the downtown tenements, thus explicitly detailing what was to happen to the center-city residents.

The inspector's remarks were a preview, conscious or not, of the plan that was eventually adopted for resolving Rio's housing and health crisis, with the notable exception of the construction of worker housing, which was never built in significant numbers to replace buildings demolished in the renewal. Beginning in 1902 Rio embarked on an urban renewal and public health plan that resulted in the relocation of the poor from the downtown to the suburban outskirts. In addition to making the capital a healthy and beautiful place, the renovation plan fit nicely with the civilization goals of the elite: it enhanced Rio's reputation abroad as a major Latin American port city; it resolved the question of social control; and it forced on the working poor the inconvenience and, notably, the expense of cleaning up the city.

62. Directoria Sanitária da Capital Federal, *Relatório apresentado ao Ministro dos Negócios Interiores de Agostinho José de Souza Lima*, 53.

### 3

## Sanitation and Renovation

When dawn broke there were no stones left standing.  
—Vivaldo Coaracy, *Memórias da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro*

The many improvements that were introduced as a part of the public health and urban renewal campaign in the first decade of the twentieth century were often revisions of projects that had been initiated decades earlier. Lacking in adequate venture capital to finance expensive public works, Rio's administrators had turned to British and North American firms during much of the nineteenth century for funds and expertise. Several foreign-owned or -financed companies played key roles in the three main aspects of the Rio de Janeiro renovations: sanitation, housing, and transportation.

Since sanitation was the longest-standing problem, it attracted the most attention. As early as April 26, 1857, the Visconde do Bom-Retiro, minister of the Empire, signed a decree charging John F. Russell with the task of constructing a sewage disposal system. Operating through the English bank of Glenn and Mills and Co., in 1862 Russell contracted an English company incorporated as the Rio de Janeiro City Improvements Company, Limited, to

plan and build the system. The company, which everyone called simply the City, installed a system of sewers in the central business district and moved quickly to hook up all the downtown buildings to its lines. The 1872 census reported that thirty thousand of the downtown residences were connected to the City's system, or about 42 percent of the buildings in Rio. By 1890 the figure had grown to almost 60 percent of the dwellings in the downtown and in a number of neighboring suburbs.<sup>1</sup>

The City Improvements Company came under fire from the very beginning both for the shoddiness and expense of its work and for the way it used its connections with the local government to extend its reach into all aspects of the urban renovations. First, the sewage and drainage system was insufficient for Rio's growing needs and was poorly adapted to its climatic conditions. During the torrential rains, the canals designed to carry water runoff overflowed, and filthy water, human and animal excrement, garbage, and even animal carcasses gushed down city streets. Moreover, since the receptacles for collecting and distributing fresh water were too small or insufficient in number, drastic water shortages occurred during periods of light precipitation, which prevented the operation of the hydraulic pumps that were designed to drive the water-powered system. Consequently, once the rains stopped, sewer water stood in stagnant pools about town. Defenders of the English system pointed to its effectiveness in Europe; however, it apparently did not suit a wet tropical climate and mountainous terrain.<sup>2</sup>

In 1877 Candido Barata Ribeiro, on the faculty of the College of Medicine of Rio de Janeiro, pointed to the inadequate sewage disposal system as a principal cause of the frequent outbreaks of disease, especially yellow fever.<sup>3</sup> Another critic noted that the City was at fault, "not because it has badly carried out its duties, rather more simply because a project of this type cannot be definitively completed in a short period, and the scarcity of water has impeded the satisfactory operation of the plan."<sup>4</sup> Health officials reported

1. Antonio Martins de Azevedo Pimentel, *Quaes os melhoramentos higienicos que devem ser introduzidos no Rio de Janeiro para tornar esta cidade mais saudavel* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1895), 118-20; Sidney Sérgio F. Solis and Marcus Venício T. Ribeiro, "O Rio onde o sol não brilha: Acumulação e pobreza na transição para o capitalismo," *Revista Rio de Janeiro* 1, no. 1 (1985): 48.

2. Pimentel, *Quaes os melhoramentos higienicos*, 118-20.

3. Candido Barata Ribeiro, *Quaes as medidas sanitárias que devem ser aconselhadas para impedir o desenvolvimento e propagação da febre amarela na cidade do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1877), 69-74.

4. Pimentel, *Quaes os melhoramentos higienicos*, 189.

that during the summer months the air above the sewer along Rivoli Street was as contaminated as the air in the sewer itself. Since the sewers contained in undiluted and unprocessed form "human excrement, food wastes and cleaning water, bathing water from hospitals and water used to launder hospital patients' clothing, contents from the intestines of cadavers from the morgues, and water used to groom both sick and healthy animals," the danger to those in the street was reportedly high.<sup>5</sup>

Rio actually had a very long list of engineers, companies, proposals, and counterproposals respectively commissioned, contracted, tried, and rejected for dealing with the problem of collecting and distributing water. Indeed, the remedies were as old as the problems, and the international coterie of experts who had lent their services was equally impressive. In 1876 the government contracted an Italian engineer, Antonio Gabrielli, who designed a system based on reservoirs to be built on various high plateaus to collect rain water, which would then be flushed through pipes down the hillsides when the rains subsided. Gabrielli's plan, although identical to one he had installed in Vienna, was actually an extension of the work a Spanish engineer had begun in Rio a few years before. However, after Gabrielli's plan proved ineffective, a Brazilian engineer stepped in to propose that the original plan (the Spaniard's) should be preserved, leaving the water piped from the reservoirs but adding a system of fountains at various points in the city as the final distribution mechanism. Despite the internationalism of the expertise, almost none of these projects was completed, although a few of the fountains were. The reason nothing was finished was probably that either the funding or the will to see the project through was insufficient, especially in the waning days of the Empire.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Holloway's study of the changing patterns of policing in Rio during the nineteenth century illustrates the transitional nature of civil administration as political power shifted to the republicans. Gangs of street thugs expert at the deadly marshal art of *capoeira*, which had been imported from Africa and perfected by runaway slaves as needed protection, challenged the authority of the military and civilian police. In the transitional period demarcated by the abolition of slavery in May 1888 and the declaration of the Republic in November 1889, *capoeira* gangs broke up pro-Republican rallies

5. Directoria Geral de Saúde Pública, *Relatório apresentado ao Dr. Cruz pelo Delegado Alvaro Graça*, 9 Distrito Sanitário, vol. 5, app. 11 (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1907), 7-8.

6.IVALDO COARACY, *Memórias da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. 88 of *Coleção Documentos Brasileiros* (Rio de Janeiro: Libraria José Olympio Editora, 1955), 250-51.

and sought to intimidate oppositional forces, no doubt at the behest of powerful monarchical interests.<sup>7</sup> Although a criminal code had been in place since 1830, not until the establishment of a new penal code under the Republic in October 1890 did the police have the authority to repress systematically the *capoeiragem*. Despite the many differences between the way the state used police power to control public order and the way it implemented sanitation codes to control disease, it was apparent that as the government moved from one center of political power to another, the pendulum swung back and forth between laws and their enforcement. What Holloway shows existed in the case of the police can be extended to sanitation and other aspects of public administration. The national government might have been charged with overseeing policies throughout the country, but its impetus was to create the apparatuses to transform Rio “because of the city’s position as the national capital, major port, and obligatory point of entry for foreign businessmen, diplomats, and tourists.”<sup>8</sup>

Given the dire state of sanitation in most Brazilian cities, one of the first actions of the newly formed Republican government was passage of a comprehensive public health and sanitation bill on December 18, 1889. Although the 1889 law was only partially implemented, it marked a change in the previously chaotic methods of combating disease in Brazil. It centralized plans to change sanitation codes, prophylactic and medical care, and it took the first steps in implementing the controversial beautification and renovation campaign in the capital. The measure authorized the City Improvements Company to begin widening and paving streets, to excavate a dump, and to develop a system for the collection and incineration of garbage. Finally, the most significant aspect of the 1889 legislation was that it promoted the work of a number of private companies, in addition to the City, under government auspices, thereby allowing the powerful foreign-capitalized transportation firms a direct say in the way Rio de Janeiro was to allocate its space.<sup>9</sup>

The four main transit companies—Companhias Jardim Botânico, São Cristóvão, Vila Isabel, and Carris Urbanos—oversaw the extension of electric trolley lines (called *bondes* after the English word [“bonds”]) for that

7. Thomas H. Holloway, *Policing Rio de Janeiro: Repression and Resistance in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 269.

8. *Ibid.*, 274.

9. Pimentel, *Quaes os melhoramentos higienicos*, 188; Directoria Geral de Saúde Pública, Flácio Barbosa e Cassio Barbosa de Rezende, *Os serviços de saúde pública no Brasil especialmente na cidade do Rio de Janeiro de 1808 a 1907* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1909), 1:56.



Fig. 3. Aqueduct bringing water to the city from Corcovado Mountain in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Photograph by Marc Ferrez, Jennings Hoffenberg Collection.

which financed their construction) from the center city to the suburbs. The North American based Companhia São Cristóvão, successor to the Rio de Janeiro Street Railway Company, extended its mule-pulled *bonde* lines from downtown out to Tijuca, São Cristóvão, Saco do Alferes, Catumbí, Cajú, and other points in the northern industrial zones. By 1900 the Companhia Jardim Botânico, which began as the Botanical Garden Rail Road in 1868, had constructed lines linking the center city with the wealthy, beachfront zones in Jardim Botânico, Ipanema, and eventually Copacabana.<sup>10</sup>

Differences in the development of the wealthy Zona Sul (South Zone) and the working-class Zona Norte demonstrate the collusion of the various transportation companies with the City. The first and most obvious example involved the work of the Companhia Jardim Botânico. In 1901 it built a trolley line from the center city out to the Vila de Ipanema, a vacant property owned by the Baron of Ipanema, one of Brazil's wealthiest and most prominent citizens. Within the next five years, the City Improvements Company completed a sewage system, electrical power lines, and a network of streets in Ipanema, which, added to the efficient trolley connections with the center city, greatly enhanced the lovely beachfront area's value—all this, despite the fact that Ipanema's population was not significant enough to be listed in the federal census until 1920 and the municipal records show that it had only ninety-six buildings. Similarly, Copacabana was added to the Companhia Jardim Botânico route when the tunnels connecting the south beach area with Botafogo were opened in 1892 and 1906. And as with Ipanema, the trolley lines and accompanying lighting, sewage, and public services were added before the people. Copacabana registered no population on the censuses of 1872, 1890, and 1906 and then grew to 22,761 by 1920.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, by 1906 the City had made no improvements in the northern districts of Inhaúma, which had 67,478 people, or more than 3.5 percent of the population of the entire city; in Campo Grande, which had 31,248, more

10. Sylvia F. Padilha, "Da 'Cidade Velha' a periferia," *Revista Rio de Janeiro* 1, no. 1 (1985): 17-19; Solis and Ribeiro, "O Rio onde o sol não brilha," 49-50.

11. Directoria Geral de Estatística, *Recenseamento do Império do Brasil a que se Procedeu no Dia 1 de Agosto de 1872* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1873-76), 58; idem, *Recenseamento Geral da República dos Estados Unidos do Brasil em 31 de Dezembro de 1890, Distrito Federal* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1895), lxxiii; idem, *Recenseamento do Rio de Janeiro Realizado em 20 de Setembro de 1906* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1907), 180; idem, *Recenseamento do Brasil Realizado em 1 de Setembro de 1920, População do Rio de Janeiro (Distrito Federal)* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1923), 2:xxvi; Solis and Ribeiro, "O Rio onde o sol não brilha," 49.

than 3 percent; or in Santa Cruz, which had 15,380, about 2.5 percent of the city's population. The thousands of isolated residents of these areas had no sewage system, no lighting, no streets, and no transportation lines to connect them with the rest of Rio. By 1920 Inhaúma had a stop on the Central rail line but still no lighting and inadequate sanitation, but its population had reached 131,886; Copacabana, with less than one-sixth the population, had a full range of lighting, sewage, and transportation services. It is worth noting that during the opening decades of the century Ipanema and Copacabana were exclusive locales to which the wealthy retreated in their *bondes* or own private coaches. Therefore, the trolley lines to the South Zone were built primarily to bring in servants and guests, whereas the poor of the North Zone, with no means of transportation, were forced to walk long distances to await the train.<sup>12</sup>

Another example of the favoritism accorded the wealthier neighborhoods was the form of transportation the companies built. While *bonde* lines crisscrossed the downtown and stretched south, it was the railroad that extended to the distant northern *subúrbios*. Since the trains were already in existence to transport coffee from other parts of Brazil to the docks, in 1897 the Leopoldina Railway Company and in 1903 the Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil (the Central, or EFCB) both added passenger trains to meet the growing commuter needs. Rather than build comfortable passenger commuter trains or trolley lines to service riders from the Zona Norte, as they had for those from the South, the transit companies simply added seating cars to the coal-dust-laden freight trains on the existing lines, all of which were notoriously dirty, noisy, and slow.

Finally, the rail lines connected certain northern zones but bypassed others, regardless of the number of residents in need of the service. For example, the rail lines extended to Inhaúma, Irajá, Vicente de Carvalho, Coelho Neto, and Pavuna, all areas with nuclei of small producers and shopkeepers who either provided foodstuffs for the city's markets or produced shoes and textiles they sold in other parts of the city. On the other hand, districts that produced nothing but were rapidly growing, such as Jacaré, Faria, Timbo, and Mangueinhos, districts with thousands of shanty dwellers, received no transportation lines at all. Moreover, since the railroads had a long-standing relationship with the coffee planters, and indeed existed to transport coffee from the interior to the coast, the use of the train lines to transport

12. See note 11 above.

people and some domestic goods served to subsume all of Rio's production, and even the mobility of its working population, to the coffee production system.<sup>13</sup>

In sum, the urban renewal plan affirmed the hegemony of both foreign investors and coffee exporters by inserting their control into the internal workings of Rio's settlement, as well as locked the fragile domestic economy into a position of subservience. No individual smallholder in Inhaúma, for example, could transport his goods to market without paying freight rates to the powerful Central railroad. Moreover, if the domestic producers objected to the rates, as they did, there was nothing to prevent the transit companies from shutting down the stop entirely or threatening to do so. As Sidney Solis and Marcus Ribeiro report in their discussion of capital investment and the role of the Rio de Janeiro City Improvements Company, "The City demonstrated that the 'exploitation of the city' could be an excellent source of wealth for other business transactions."<sup>14</sup>

The availability of affordable housing closely paralleled the status of the city's transit. On the one hand, the transportation companies had an interest in the urban renewal plan beyond just the establishment of new rail and *bonde* lines. Ultimately their profits depended on the daily movement of large numbers of people and goods from the outlying regions to the center city and back again, an enterprise that was only possible if the downtown no longer housed the working poor. Conveniently, on the other hand, the City Improvements Company, along with the Companhia Evoneas Fluminense and the public health department, under the auspices of the municipal council, were able to order the destruction of unsafe or unsanitary structures. Not surprisingly, the downtown *cortiços*, which housed the bulk of the city's poor, were first on the list.

Certainly the City, as well as any private or public agency, could make a strong case for condemning structures universally considered "dirty, ugly, and miserable."<sup>15</sup> However, the controversy centered on where the occupants would live once their houses were torn down. Indeed, the history of plans to replace the *cortiços* with better housing dated back to Law 719,

13. Solis and Ribeiro, "O Rio onde o sol não brilha," 49-50. For an explanation of the power coffee producers exerted in Brazil's economic life, see Thomas H. Holloway, *The Brazilian Coffee Valorization of 1906: Regional Politics and Economic Dependence* (Madison, Wis.: State Historical Society, 1975), 5-26.

14. Solis and Ribeiro, "O Rio onde o sol não brilha," 49.

15. Luiz Edmundo, *O Rio de Janeiro do meu tempo* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1938), 370.

passed in 1853, in which the imperial government had called for the construction of "hygienic housing" for the "poor classes." But nothing much was ever done. Some critics of the government's lethargy on this issue argued that contractors were actually more interested in building additional tenements than in replacing or upgrading existing ones, because the buildings were cheap to put up, hardly maintained at all, and extremely profitable. Although the government amended Law 719 in 1845 to penalize owners of unsanitary housing, there are no indications that tenement owners were ever fined or that the fine was of any consequence.<sup>16</sup>

Appended to the laws mandating new sanitary and affordable housing were the numerous concessions to companies authorized to build them, including one to Arthur Sauer in February 1888, another to the Companhia de Saneamento do Rio de Janeiro a few months before the end of the Empire, granted on June 4, 1889, and one to the Companhia Fluminense in 1890. Altogether the imperial government granted at least twelve concessions to various companies to build housing, but no more than a few dwellings in São Cristóvão were ever completed.<sup>17</sup>

In the first decade of the Republic, housing plans, along with all aspects of the renovations, had fared little better than they had under the Empire. Graft and incompetence among the licensed companies combined with dissension in political circles to hold back progress. Above all, the task of maintaining order in distant areas of the country and chronic financial crises during the 1890s diverted political energies and revenues away from the urban renewal project. In particular, the massive cost of the project appeared prohibitive. The picture changed in the early years of the twentieth century as greater interest, along with financial resources, focused on urban development.

After the election of Francisco de Paula Rodrigues Alves as president of the Republic in 1902, the renovation of the Brazilian capital became a top priority. During his tenure as the governor of the state of São Paulo,

16. Robert Moses Pechman and Luis César Queiroz Ribeiro, "A Companhia de Saneamento do Rio de Janeiro," *Revista Rio de Janeiro* 1, no. 1 (1985), 107.

17. *Estatutes da Companhia de Saneamento do Rio de Janeiro*, June 4, 1889, APHA-RJ, chaps. 1-2, 7. For documentation on various plans to build workers' housing, see Requerimento do coronel de engenheiros Paulo José Pereira a Presidente e Ministros da Câmara Municipal, October 23, 1881, APHA-RJ; Decreto Legislativo, N. 9511, October 17, 1885, APHA-RJ (conceding to Luiz Raphael Vieira Souto, a civil engineer, the right to draw up plans for workers' housing), Códice 46-4-56, 29; Decreto Legislativo, N. 8789, 1884-1892, APHA-RJ; Luiz Raphael Vieira Souto to Prefeitura of the Federal District, 1885, 1889, and 1892, APHA-RJ, 2-6; Luiz Barbosa Madureira Freire and Antonio Augusto Fuya to Prefeitura of the Federal District, January 21, 1891, APHA-RJ, 2-3.



Rodrigues Alves had directed the successful renovation of the state capital, including a lighting system and network of electric streetcars installed by the São Paulo Tramway, Light, and Power Company and a widespread sanitation and public health program under the auspices of the municipal government.<sup>18</sup> As a native of the main coffee-producing area of the country, Rodrigues Alves understood the pivotal role of Rio de Janeiro in promoting the import/export market and establishing Brazil's reputation abroad as an attractive center of commerce and capital expansion. Well situated as a conservative politician under both the Empire and the Republic, as well as a member of a prominent planter family in São Paulo, the president was likewise personally motivated for pushing the reforms. He had lost a child in one of Rio's yellow fever epidemics. Rodrigues Alves was, in sum, "representative of the old and new forces at play and self-consciously their instrument."<sup>19</sup>

The year after his inauguration the president authorized the beginning of the massive public works project, paid for by loans from English firms, the house of Rothschild, new taxes, and bonds. Most important, he drew together a team that regularized the existent but chaotic urban renovations, put forward a plan based on the famous urban renewals of Buenos Aires, Paris, and London, and joined into a single project the dual notions of sanitation and civilization. The team is by now well known, their accomplishments amply documented. Headed by the aged prefect Francisco Pereira Passos, Rodrigues Alves's personal appointee to oversee the renovation and beautification of Rio's central business district, joined by the engineer Lauro Müller, minister of transport and public works, Paulo de Frontin, and Francisco de Bicalho, the works proceeded at an astonishing pace.<sup>20</sup>

In a little over a year, from 1903 until 1905, 590 buildings in the center of Rio de Janeiro were demolished, including many of the *cortiços*. The Avenida Central (later renamed Avenida Rio Branco) became the centerpiece of the renovations, lined with institutions of cultural refinement sporting the best of Parisian beaux arts architecture: the Municipal Theater, the Monroe Palace, the National Library, the Academy of Fine Arts, the Grunle Hotel, the

18. Gerald Michael Greenfield, "Lighting the City: A Case Study of Public Service Problems in São Paulo, 1885-1913," in *Essays Concerning the Socioeconomic History of Brazil and Portuguese India*, ed. Dauril Alden and Warren Dean (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1977), 118-49; Joseph L. Love, *São Paulo in the Brazilian Federation, 1889-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980).

19. Jeffrey D. Needell, *A Tropical Belle Époque: Elite Culture and Society in Turn-of-the-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 33.

20. June E. Hahner, *Poverty and Politics: The Urban Poor in Brazil, 1870-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 162.

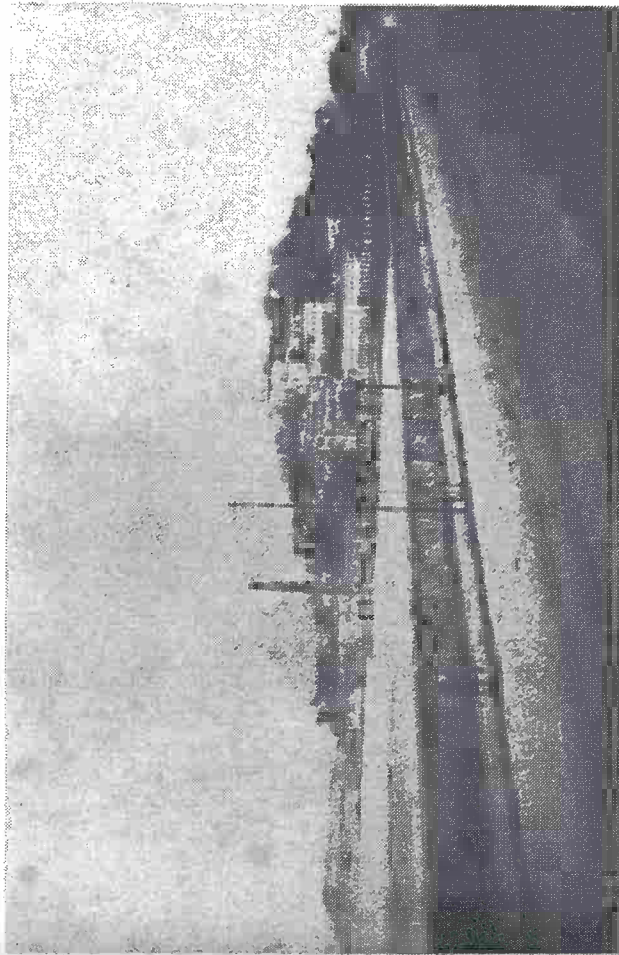


Fig. 4. The district of Glória as seen from the seawall promenade in Flamengo; mule-drawn trolley at right, c. 1890. Photograph by Marc Ferrez, Jennings Hoffenberg Collection.

military and naval clubs, and the new offices of the city's main daily newspapers, the *Jornal do Commercio*, *Jornal do Brasil*, and *O Paiz*.<sup>21</sup> The personal triumph of Paulo de Frontin, the new avenue was modeled on the main streets of Paris and displayed the Brazilian variant of French civilization down to the choice of institutions it showcased (fine arts, academia, journalism, the state, commerce, and tourism) and the precision of the facades. Copying Georges Eugene Haussmann, the famed baron of the Parisian Great Works, Frontin worked from a central plan, sought to achieve a unified style, submitted each architect's design to a jury selection process, and restricted each building to a stipulated height and width.<sup>22</sup>

The results were lauded as nothing short of astounding. European observers in particular extolled the downtown as "a comprehensive project boldly

21. Francisco Ferreira da Rosa, *Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Edição Oficial da Prefeitura, 1905), 16-20, 248-59.

22. Needell, *Tropical Belle Époque*, 40.

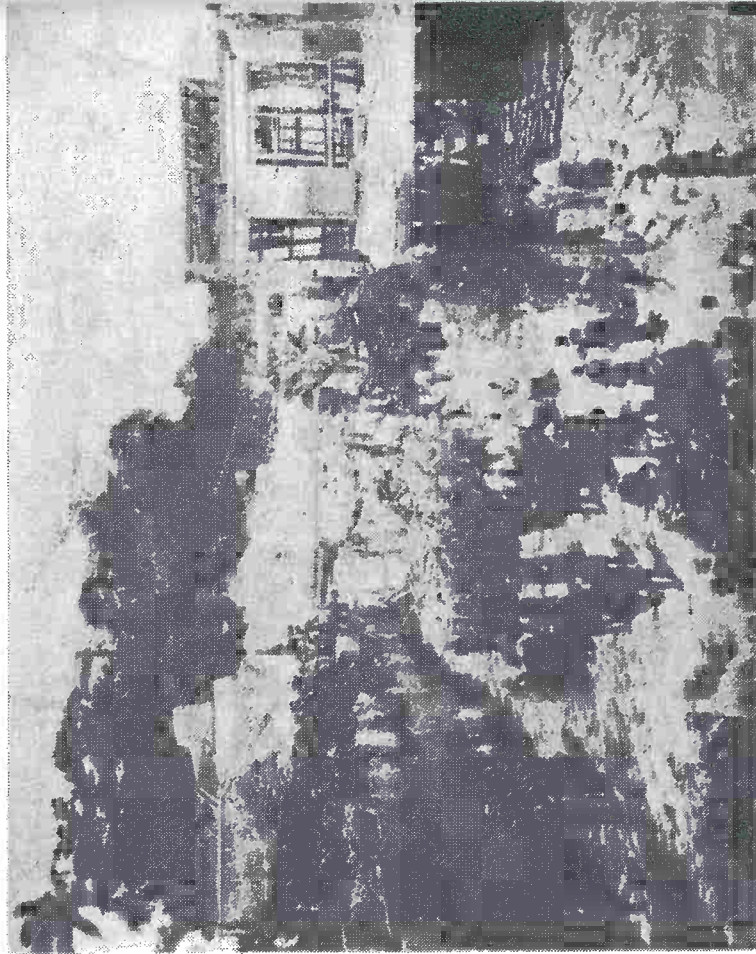


Fig. 5. Ceremony opening the demolition of São Bento Hill for the construction of Avenida Central (now Rio Branco), 1904. Photograph by Marc Ferrez, Jennings Hoffenberg Collection.

conceived and brilliantly executed." British traveler Alured Grey Bell exclaimed that "ugly specimens of architecture without art and habitations without hygiene" were torn down and replaced with "many elegant shops, several Picture palaces, and scores of business buildings, banks, shipping offices, import houses and others."<sup>23</sup> At the opening ceremonies for the Avenida Central, the Carioca elite boasted that their accomplishments even surpassed the recent reforms in Buenos Aires, that paragon of European civilization in Latin America. The precise model for the Rio works may be the subject of some dispute, simply because there were so many urban renewal projects in the late nineteenth century from which to draw; nonetheless,

23. Alured Grey Bell, *The Beautiful Rio de Janeiro* (London: William Heinemann, 1914), 21–23.

whether Buenos Aires, Paris, or London, Rio's engineers, government, and urban elite had firmly agreed on a European cultural and architectural foundation for their newly civilized downtown.<sup>24</sup>

Over the course of the more or less six-year span of the Rio renovation project, marshland was filled, water channeled, a boulevard and seaside promenade built, streets widened and opened to the sea breeze, and, possibly most important of all, the port facilities were modernized and connected by rail with the countryside. One of the most ambitious of the renovations was the construction of a higher retaining wall against the sea, topped by a promenade that started at the south end of the Avenida Rio Branco, just behind the Monroe Palace, and stretched to Praia Vermelha (Red Beach) at the northern edge of Copacabana. According to Bell, though the majority of the city's population made little use of the several-mile-long promenade, it was quite popular with British visitors and businessmen as a place to stroll, be seen, and greet friends. Probably steadfast in his belief that Brazilians would one day pattern their lives completely after the British, Bell explained that the Beira Mar promenade was not built for the Rio of the present anyway, but for "the Rio of the future."<sup>25</sup> Curiously, it was a future in which the poor were quite literally held in the dark. By 1905 the new promenades and avenues of the center city were electrically lighted, while most of the poor northern areas had yet to be connected even to the existing system of gas illumination.

Work on the construction of new docks began in late 1903 and was finally completed in 1911. The improvements included new warehouses, wider and deeper berths for ships, British-style cranes for unloading, new piers and landfills. The importance of the harbor and dock renovations should not be underestimated. Though surpassed by Santos in later years as the leading port for the export of coffee, 41 percent of Brazil's imports still entered the country through Rio as late as 1906. Finally, it was in Rio that foreign visitors and businessmen disembarked and formed their impressions of Brazil's investment potential. The modern port, it was felt, only enhanced the already breathtaking entrance to the city through the mouth of Guanabara Bay.<sup>26</sup>

The second aspect of the renovation/sanitation plan was the offensive against disease and the epidemics that periodically ravaged the city. Despite

24. June Hahner states that the renovators were most conscious of competing with Buenos Aires in designing the city, whereas Jeffrey Needell sees their inspiration as coming directly from the Parisian model. Hahner, *Poverty and Politics*, 161; Needell, *Tropical Belle Époque*, chap. 1.

25. Bell, *The Beautiful Rio de Janeiro*, 23.

26. Ferreira da Rosa, *Rio de Janeiro*, 259.

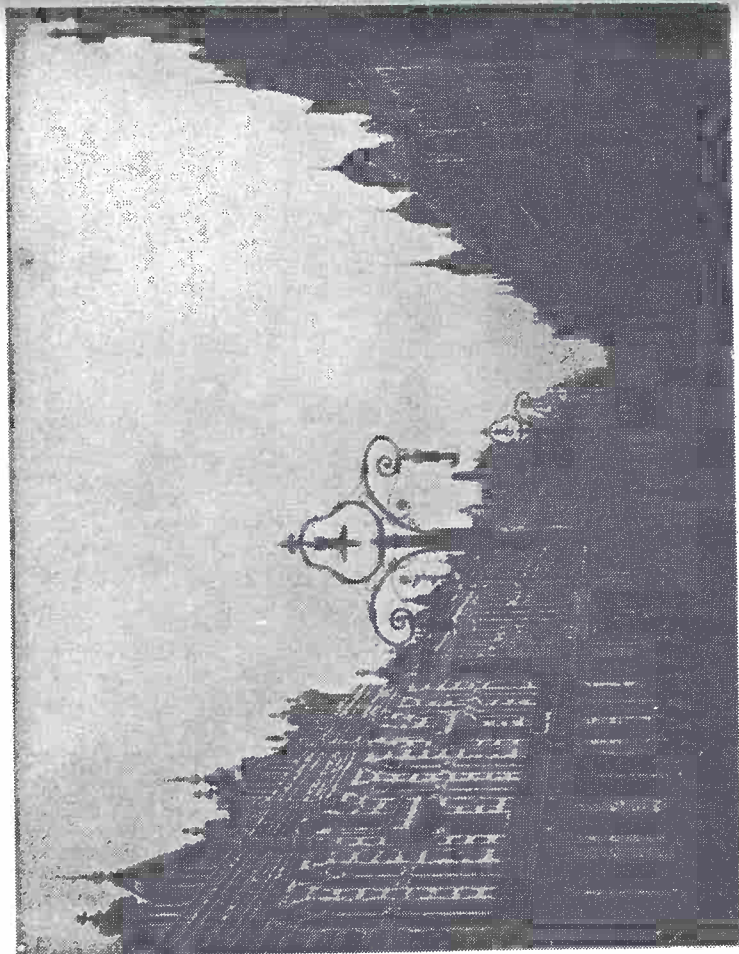


Fig. 6. Avenida Central, the main street of the renovated downtown, c. 1908. Photograph by Augusto Malta, Jennings Hoffenberg Collection.

the passage of health laws, opinion was divided over what caused the epidemics and, as a result, how to stop them. Insufficient prophylactic measures resulted from insufficient scientific knowledge and the concomitant haphazard approaches to disease control that continued during the late nineteenth century. Some medical authorities, such as Luis Pereira Barreto, a leading São Paulo physician and public health advocate, held that yellow fever was transmitted by germs in water. Others argued that it spread through bad air, "humors," or smells.<sup>27</sup> In a step toward systematizing the existing public health program and ending the controversies over what caused Rio's epidemics, Rodrigues Alves on July 12, 1902, annulled a September 1892 law that

27. Nancy Stepan, *Beginnings of Brazilian Science: Oswaldo Cruz, Medical Research and Policy, 1890-1920* (New York: Science History Publications, 1976), 56.

had placed responsibility for public health in the hands of the municipal administration. Instead, he consolidated all matters pertaining to the capital's public health in the hands of the federal government. In March of the following year he appointed Oswaldo Gonçalves Cruz director general of public health.<sup>28</sup>

Oswaldo Cruz was well qualified to head the public health program and to implement the most effective method to combat disease. Born in a small town in the state of São Paulo, Cruz received his medical degree from the Faculty of Medicine in Rio de Janeiro in 1892 at the remarkably young age of twenty. He studied microbiology and experimental pathology for two and a half years at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, the foremost center of microbiological research in the world. In addition to receiving specialized training in microbiology, however, Cruz's stay in Paris exposed him to the broader intersection between issues of disease control, sanitation, and urban planning, whose interconnection nineteenth-century modernizers were then hotly debating. On the one hand, working with scientists studying conditions in French colonies in Africa and Southeast Asia, Oswaldo Cruz was exposed to the most advanced theories on methods to control tropical diseases, and he became convinced that certain diseases were transmitted through parasites. On the other hand, while studying in Paris, Cruz observed the results of Haussmann's Great Works and witnessed firsthand the philosophical underpinnings for this nineteenth-century model of planning and architecture, for the allocation of urban space.

After his return to Brazil in 1899, Cruz headed a campaign to stop the spread of bubonic plague in the port city of Santos. The success of his efforts in Santos, his reputation as a modern, progressive scientist and advocate of public health, and his vocal concern that disease was harming Rio's reputation abroad brought Cruz's name to the attention of Rodrigues Alves's closest advisors. Impressed with the young doctor's expertise, the president gave to Cruz full authority to carry out the sanitation of the capital.<sup>29</sup>

Along with the sanitation of Havana, New Orleans, and other tropical and semitropical cities, the full-scale assault on yellow fever in Rio de Janeiro stands as a landmark in the record book of disease prevention and control. Basing his plan on the findings of Carlos Finlay and the successful program

28. O Paiz, July 13, 1902, 1; Stepan, *Beginnings of Brazilian Science*, 88.

29. Donald B. Cooper, "Oswaldo Cruz and the Impact of Yellow Fever on Brazilian History," *Bulletin of Tulane University Medical Faculty* 26 (February 1967): 49-52; Stepan, *Beginnings of Brazilian Science*, 87-88.

undertaken by Walter Reed's commission in Havana, Cruz outlined a proposal to eliminate yellow fever, smallpox, and plague from the city. The campaign against yellow fever involved destroying the breeding grounds for the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito and its larvae and ordering the drainage of pools of stagnant water. Plague was to be eliminated by killing rats and using vaccines and serums against the disease in victims. His public health crews, who earned the name "mosquito inspectors," moved throughout the city, spraying, killing rats, ordering the demolition of all unsanitary housing, and systematically implementing the various aspects of the code, including, for a while, the registration and isolation of fever victims. The final component of Cruz's plan was mandatory vaccination of all residents against smallpox. Although by this time rather common in other parts of the world, compulsory vaccination was considered so controversial in Brazil that the measure was not included with the original bill in 1903. Nonetheless, Cruz lobbied for it over the next year and, with Rodrigues Alves's backing, won the addition of an obligatory vaccination provision to the public health code in October 1904.<sup>30</sup>

The city exploded in riot on November 11, 1904, the day the vaccinations were to begin. While the vaccination was feared in and of itself, the intensity of the riot cannot be explained as opposition to vaccination alone; rather, it must be viewed within the broader context of the entire renovation plan. After all, vaccination was merely the most tangible aspect of a sanitation drive many different social groups had opposed for years, implemented through a health department that meted out different treatment for rich and poor; and finally, the compulsory law had come from a government many in Rio sorely distrusted.

Who then opposed the public health plan, and why did that opposition ultimately center on the vaccination law? Some residents of the Zona Norte and *subúrbios* were early opponents of the plan because, as they had argued for years, few of the highly publicized services that were improving life for residents of the Zona Sul and the center city were reaching the populous industrial districts. Why should they believe that vaccination, a painful, inconvenient, and frightening measure, was necessary for public health, when the health authorities seemed little interested in the general sanitation of the city's most populous and poorest neighborhoods? During the heavy rains of

30. Tratamento de varíolosos, Decreto do Instituto Vaccinogenico, 1888-1906, APHA-RJ, Art. 1-14, 17; Directoria Geral de Saúde Pública, "Reorganização dos serviços de hygiene administrativa da União," Decreto N. 1, *Os serviços de saúde pública no Brasil*, (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1904), 2:895-97.

the summer months, children, animals, and even adults were drowned or swept away in the rushing water of the rivers that formed along the dirt roads that connected these makeshift villages with the rest of the city.<sup>31</sup> While supposedly spraying mosquitoes and larvae was a key component of Cruz's plan, a physician pointed out in an article in the widely read *Jornal do Brasil* newspaper that the mosquito inspectors never ventured into Cascadura, Madureira, Rio das Pedras, and Jacarepaguá. "Is it possible," he asked, "that the pernicious mosquitoes that transmit disease are only those of the city and that those of the *subúrbios* are inoffensive!"<sup>32</sup>

Likewise the poor in the center city, far from the dangerous *subúrbios*, feared vaccination just as they had opposed many aspects of the health code to date. After all, it was their houses that were miserably unsanitary; it was their water that was the most contaminated; it was their streets that were the darkest, most dangerous, and most polluted. When the epidemics struck, it was mostly the poor who contracted the diseases and, as a consequence, were ordered to the isolation centers, where a most certain death awaited, while their tenement houses fell to the ax of the sanitation engineers. In short, the public health measures did not seem to improve the health of the poor; rather, they appeared to make matters worse. Long before the passage of the 1903 law, Rio's health department already had a history of disregarding the feelings, if not the lives and property, of the *cortiço* residents and of incurring their wrath. In July 1901 health officials had forcibly entered an apartment and ordered sent to an isolation center a child suspected of having smallpox. When the inspection teams failed to heed the protests of the child's parents, the entire tenement met and resolved never again to allow the health officials access to their homes.<sup>33</sup> Notably, even the fear of smallpox in the tenement did not justify, in the eyes of the family and their neighbors, the callous disregard of the health officials.

The practice of isolating fever and smallpox victims, which Cruz considered essential, was in fact one of the most disputed aspects of the 1903 Sanitary Code. Since the isolation facilities were notoriously unsanitary and primitive and since isolation often meant death except for the unusually lucky victim, most people preferred to take their chances at home. During the legislature's debate on the passage of the 1903 code, the isolation section was finally defeated, owing largely to the impassioned plea from Delegate

31. *O Paiz*, November 10, 1901, 2, and August 7-12, 1902, 2; *Jornal do Brasil*, October 2, 1903, 1, and January 10, 1904, 1.

32. *Jornal do Brasil*, August 24, 1904, 3.

33. *O Paiz*, July 4, 1901, 2.

Germano Hasslocher. Hasslocher argued that forced isolation discriminated against the poor, since the wealthy were treated at home or sent to country retreats near Petropolis when they contracted a disease and since only the poor were forced into the terrible isolation centers.<sup>34</sup>

Another major provision of the health law allowed mosquito inspectors and public health officials to enter, condemn, and oversee the demolition of any building they deemed unsanitary. Nevertheless, it was easier to pass such a law than to carry it out. In 1903 health officials forced their way into an apartment and sprayed furniture, clothing, and eating utensils with a foul smelling disinfectant because a case of plague had been reported nearby. Outraged, practically everyone on the Rua da Ajuda turned out to shower the health officials with taunts, rocks, and "assorted debris" as the latter attempted to retreat.<sup>35</sup> Actually, since most residents of the downtown *cortiços* were aware that demolition teams followed closely on the heels of the health inspectors, there was nothing to be gained by letting Cruz's men enter the collective housing units. With no place to go except the notoriously unhealthy Zona Norte or the *favelas*, and with no confidence that the government would ever build low-cost housing to replace the condemned *cortiços*, tenants began to fear the health officials as much as the epidemics.<sup>36</sup>

Proprietors of stores who sold a wide variety of household goods and foodstuffs to inner-city residents also opposed the sanitation measures. Even if they could hold on in the face of rising property values, they stood to lose their customers when the *cortiços* were demolished in the urban renewal. Though consumers often complained that the prices for goods in these stores were high, and had targeted a number of them in some earlier demonstrations, the stores were convenient, the shopkeepers advanced consumers credit, and the owners were themselves usually from the neighborhood. In fact, the *cortiços* and the corner bar, an important social gathering place, were usually under the same ownership. Thus, the destruction of the *cortiços* and the relocation of their tenants to the northern *subúrbios* would drive a large number of downtown small shopkeepers out of business, with little chance of recouping what was owed to them. Moreover, the master plan for the "civilized" downtown sought to replace the open-air shops that sold dried beef, soap, pots and pans, and other housekeeping essentials with stores that stocked finer, imported, and more expensive goods for an elite clientele. While some of the established general stores would remain, especially on

Alfandega Street, the stores directly dependent on the *cortiços* for their customers would not.<sup>37</sup>

The health codes likewise changed the way goods were sold in the city. Pereira Passos prohibited the selling of milk directly from cows that were lead from door to door, banished hogs and stray animals from the city streets, refused to allow butchers to sell meat off of hooks hung in the entrance to markets, and monitored the hygiene and maintenance of food stores and markets.<sup>38</sup> No matter how obviously necessary, these additions to the health code met tremendous hostility from small-scale proprietors. On the one hand, most of the small owners operated on a very restricted budget, were at the mercy of larger distributors from whom they bought their goods, and suffered during the periods of wild speculation and high inflation that characterized market relations in the late Empire and early Republic. Most simply could not afford to make the kind of improvements the government required. On the other hand, better-capitalized Portuguese stores, and domestic enterprises that had obtained loans from British and American investors, already had begun to edge out the smaller shops by the turn of the century. The added expense of the health regulations, combined with rising rents on downtown properties, eventually would drive the less financially stable enterprises out of business.

"Foreign interests," the shopkeepers protested, were taking over the downtown. Historically, antiforeign agitation in Rio had been directed against Portuguese shop owners and merchants, a group stereotyped as hardworking, tightfisted, cunning, and even marginally dishonest. Aluizio Azevedo's chronicle of tenement life captured the truth and the exaggerations of anti-Portuguese prejudice especially in the characters of João Romão and Miranda.<sup>39</sup> However, in the early stages of the sanitation campaign, shopkeepers began to shift their animus toward the tremendously powerful Rio de Janeiro City Improvements Company. In 1901, during an earlier phase of the renovation, the City insisted, and the municipal council agreed, that small grocery stores, coal yards, and collective housing units install a specific hookup to the sewer line then under construction. Also, each downtown structure was required to erect a particular type of chimney, with materials that could only be purchased from the City Improvements Company. At a meeting on October 11, 1901, proprietors denounced the regulations, pro-

37. Pimentel, *Quaes os melhoramentos higienicos*, 105-6.

38. Needell, *Tropical Belle Époque*, 35.

39. Aluizio Azevedo, *A Brazilian Tenement*, trans. Harry W. Brown (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1928), chap. 2.

34. *Jornal do Brasil*, November 26, 1903, 1.

35. *Ibid.*, November 2, 1903, 1.

36. For other instances, see *O Paiz*, May 9, 1901, 1.

tested the exorbitant cost of the materials, and the City's strong-arm tactics in forcing the shops to buy the required construction material. Outraged at the collusion between government authorities and the private City Improvements Company, the meeting's participants resolved to oppose all aspects of the urban renewal plan and to agitate against any further implementation of the City's "beautification" project.<sup>40</sup>

It was not just the downtown shopkeeper who stood to lose his business in the urban renewal; likewise the owners of the many places of entertainment in the Largo do Rossio watched as their raucous enterprises began to fall under the ax of Pereira Passos's reforms. Health inspectors attacked the dance halls, bars, beer gardens, and nightspots with near evangelical zeal, brandishing the same authority against immorality as they did against disease. Pereira Passos took a personal interest in leveling the popular and bawdy amusements of the Largo do Rossio, bringing the *Maison Moderne* to court for numerous structural and hygiene code violations. Working through his own lawyers, its owner, Pascoal, obtained a court order provisionally ensuring that the amusement park could continue and granting him a specified period of time to make necessary repairs. Nonetheless, at the stroke of midnight on the day the court order expired, and without bothering to reinspect the premises, two hundred men armed with picks and shovels under the direction of the prefect himself leveled this so-called *escarro* (eyesore) in the center of the city. "When dawn broke there were no stones left standing," Vivaldo Coaracy recalled. Within a few months passersby could barely remember the park's location, except that it used to be someplace under the newly widened Rua Espírito Santo.<sup>41</sup>

The sanitation drive was, in the words of Coaracy, both "material and moral."<sup>42</sup> However, since not everyone could afford the "material" renovations or relished the "moral" outcome, a sense of inequality began to saturate the atmosphere. Day by day Rio's citizens watched as the allocation of the capital's space reflected the divisions that had always separated the population by class, by privilege, by race, and, now more than ever, by culture.

The renovation actually was helping to unify some of the hostility toward the government. In spite of the many years when customers had demonstrated against shopkeepers, or tenants against local landlords, these previously antagonistic groups found themselves in alliance against the public

40. Early grievances against the City Improvements Company are noted in *Jornal do Brasil*, May 13, 1892, 1. See also *O Paiz*, October 11, 1901, 2.

41. Coaracy, *Memórias da cidade*, 129.

42. *Ibid.*

health campaign and its attendant vaccination drive. This opposition developed from the early stages of Rio's urban renovation, intensified with each new step of the project, and eventually exploded into a violent reaction against just about everything the health department, the urban renewal contractors, the transit companies, and even the Republican government itself proposed to do in the Brazilian capital. Moreover, the popular outcry was not confined to complaints over who was to benefit from the sanitation and renewal or even who was most inconvenienced by it, but included complaints over who was to pay for it. While this issue concerned everyone in the city, it was particularly important to people whose incomes already placed them at or below the subsistence level.

During the year between November 1903 and October 1904 the debate over the many facets of the sanitation drive and the compulsory vaccination bill relegated most other issues in Rio de Janeiro to the background. Petitions, marches in the street, congressional shouting matches, vitriolic attacks on the plan in the opposition press, trade union agitation, and attacks from the Rio de Janeiro Positivists dominated the city such that, by the time the vaccination code was scheduled to take effect on November 11, everyone in the city had an opinion on the bill.

By late 1904 the sporadic resistance against what came to be known as the Yellow Fever Campaign had transformed into a more regularized and organized opposition. As Oswaldo Cruz pushed ahead with the public health plan, Rio de Janeiro's Positivists and the socialist-oriented Centro das Classes Operárias (Working Class Center), which itself was loosely affiliated with the Positivists, emerged as outspoken critics of the government. They formed the League Against Obligatory Vaccination, essentially an umbrella under which widely divergent forces clustered, and attempted initially to channel the spontaneous outburst of hatred toward the government into mass rallies and marches. Along with the well-known Positivists Senator Lauro Sodré, Barbosa Lima, and Alfredo Varela, on November 14 General Sylvestre Travassos led the cadets of the military academy in an abortive uprising against the government.

Although the political alignments and realignments, political intrigues, and petty antagonisms among the elite rarely affected the lives of the masses, sectors of the ruling strata did not hesitate to call on the laboring classes for support when the opportunity arose. In that regard, the role of the Positivists in the 1904 uprising cannot be ignored, if only because their actions, like the interminable political maneuverings during the First Republic, show the extent to which the elite engaged in power struggles over obscure ideological

differences. As Robert Nachman metaphorically comments, compulsory vaccination "provided a smoke screen for more burning issues."<sup>43</sup>

Broadly speaking, the Positivists were a part of the radical antimonarchical Republicans who replaced the Empire and, under the leadership of Marechal Deodoro da Fonseca and especially Marechal Floriano Peixoto, fought to establish a political role for the urban protectionist domestic elite and middle sectors. Like other Republicans, the Positivists were a part of the group that opposed the traditional, rural planters, who had supported the monarchy to the last hour and remained uncomfortable with the more Republican impulses of the new government. The electoral defeat of the Florianistas, many of whom were Positivists, and their subsequent decline during the governments of Prudente de Morais (1894-98) and Campos Sales (1898-1902) have usually been considered the political demise of the most economically nationalist, urban-centered, and protectionist wing of Republicanism and the triumph of the old-guard planter aristocracy clustered around the São Paulo planters. Concerned primarily with protecting coffee exports, the Paulistas' triumph galvanized foreign investors against the few domestic competitors and paved the way for Brazil's greater reliance on foreign capital to finance national development. As concerns Rio in 1904, the Paulista Rodrigues Alves, a former minister in the last monarchical government, represented the interests of the traditional sectors, in opposition to Lauro Sodré and the other Positivists who sought to regain the presidency. The positions of each side, however, are rent with contradictions, except that they each wanted power.

Publicly the Brazilian Positivists opposed the Yellow Fever Campaign, especially the compulsory vaccination against smallpox, on the grounds that it infringed on the privacy of the individual citizen. But there was no consistency to their stance either in theory or in practice, since Positivists had called for government intervention to achieve economic progress and *social order*, what Auguste Comte saw as the last, most positive stage of human evolution. In fact, when he was governor of Pará, from 1891 to 1897, Lauro Sodré had launched a number of reforms, including improving the port, constructing new roads, overseeing state monopolies, and improving public services, all very similar to the reforms Rodrigues Alves was enacting in Rio a

43. Robert G. Nachman, "Positivism and Revolution in Brazil's First Republic: The 1904 Revolt," *The Americas* 24, no. 1 (1977): 21. Jeffrey Needell likewise argues that the Positivist officers launched the coup to remake the Republic and to win power, while the poor joined to redress their own grievances, "The *Revolta Contra Vacina* of 1904: The Revolt Against Modernization in *Belle-Epoque* Rio de Janeiro," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 67, no. 2 (1987): 233-69.

decade later. Despite his condemnation of the mandatory vaccination law in 1904, Lauro Sodré had his children vaccinated against smallpox.

Barbosa Lima, another opponent of the vaccination code, as governor of Pernambuco from 1892 to 1896, distributed Jenner's vaccine to combat an outbreak of smallpox and even sent a doctor to Paris to study at the Pasteur Institute to learn the latest in microbiological disease prevention. If it was foreign involvement in Rio's sanitation drive or even the compulsory nature of the vaccination law that he opposed, those too seem hollow objections. Barbosa Lima had as governor negotiated a plan with foreign enterprises to invest in reviving the state's lagging sugar industry, and he enforced various laws already on the books that obliged public workers to pay into pension funds. As Nachman comments, it is difficult to believe that Barbosa Lima opposed compulsory vaccination with any degree of sincerity. On the surface, it is hard to see any difference between what Rodrigues Alves was doing in Rio and what the Positivists themselves had done in their respective states. Furthermore, several of the engineers and urban planners on Pereira Passos's staff were themselves Positivists, such as Lauro Müller, the genius behind Rio's new port facilities.<sup>44</sup>

If the Positivists were hypocritical in their agitation against the compulsory vaccination laws and the 1903 Sanitary Code, they were nonetheless bold. Lauro Sodré, himself a former military officer, urged the army cadets of Rio's military academy to participate in a military coup against the government on November 14. As mentioned earlier, the coup failed, despite the considerable support the conspirators enjoyed among the ranks of the cadets. Schooled in Positivist doctrine, the military cadets might well have sincerely opposed the Yellow Fever Campaign because it conflicted with their understanding of the principles of individual freedom.

As is so often the case, however, the military cadets' devotion to principle was bound closely to their quest for greater autonomy and power. Here lay the essence of the Positivist opposition to the vaccination law and health campaign. First, the military Positivists opposed the conservative government of Rodrigues Alves and the foreign investors with which the government had aligned. The cadets' political future lay with the old Florianista faction, now largely marginalized since the conservatives had reclaimed the government and had established a system more heavily reliant on business and planter

44. Robert G. Nachman, "Positivism, Modernization, and the Middle Class in Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 57, no. 1 (1977): 1-23; idem, "Positivism and Revolution in Brazil," 33.

interests. Second, many in the military were drawn from the petty bourgeoisie or from recently impoverished planters of the postabolition period, who found Positivism's doctrine of social selection an attractive alternative to the excesses of the elite and the "rabble" of the poor. Individualism fit nicely with the upward mobility of the military cadets, while any curbs on that upward "progress," such as Rodrigues Alves's restrictions on the participation of the military in national political affairs, conflicted with both Positivist doctrine and with the political aspirations of the armed forces.<sup>45</sup>

In conclusion, Rio's Positivists agitated against the health code, denounced Rodrigues Alves's reforms, and conspired to overthrow the government for a number of contradictory and self-serving reasons. If anything, the events of 1904 bring into sharper focus the absolute absence of any ideological cohesion in Positivist doctrine. When in 1904 a wing of the Positivist movement attempted to use their philosophy as a guide to social action, they floundered, lacking as they were in any cohesive vision of class or ideological unity. One faction of the Positivist elite could as easily join the conservative government and its civilizing venture, under the Positivist slogans of Order and Progress, as another faction could holler in opposition. The contradiction that was shaking down during the First Republic and was represented in the capital city was between classes. Certainly it would have taken a philosophy far more sophisticated than Positivism to hold together these developing class antagonisms. By the end of 1904 it became clear that the Positivist bywords of "Order," "Progress," and even "Civilization" were class-linked concepts. Thus the military and civilian Positivists who participated in the events of 1904 did so in search of their own power and only begrudgingly aligned with the working class in an attempt to stop the Yellow Fever Campaign.

It was the socialist Centro das Classes Operarias that played an important role in galvanizing the trade unions against the vaccination law. Organized along loose syndicalist lines and linked, albeit remotely, to some Positivist circles, the Centro united some of the more powerful labor unions in the city, including the railroad workers, dockworkers, painters, machinists, carpenters, stonemasons, plasterers, and members of the maritime union. Since many of their members lived in the downtown *cortiços* easily accessible to the docks, quarries, and construction sites, the Centro objected to a renovation project that would turn large numbers of workers out on the streets. Its

opposition to the vaccination law, therefore, stemmed from the same premise upon which it opposed the larger Sanitary Code: all the sanitation laws, as designed by the city elite, would only worsen the existing housing crisis for the working class.

The Centro began in July and August of 1904 to agitate among its affiliated unions against the Yellow Fever Campaign. At a rally in front of the House of Deputies the Centro presented a petition, bearing ten thousand signatures from union members, calling on the government to rescind the obligatory vaccination code and to better the miserable living conditions in the city's poor and working-class neighborhoods. While chiding the government for failing to ensure decent living conditions for the thousands of Rio's residents concentrated in the Zona Norte, the rally organizers asked what had happened to the long-standing promise to construct low-cost workers housing for the "thousands left homeless by the so-called 'beautification.'"<sup>46</sup>

On November 5 over two thousand opponents of the campaign packed the meeting hall of the Centro das Classes Operarias. Present were groups representative of the alliance formed to oppose the campaign. There were workers from the Central rail line, members of the maritime union, workers from the various building trade unions, machinists, and "laborers." Middle-class support came from the association of dramatic actors, possibly because the demolition of the Largo de Rossio district was leaving them homeless as well, from law students, academic clubs, students from the *polytechnica* and the law and medical faculties, members of the Brazilian Academy, students from the National Gymnásio, representatives of the navy and army academies, in addition to hundreds of individuals who simply came on their own.

The two main speakers at this event were the Positivist Lauro Sodré and Vicente de Souza, the president of the Centro. Sodré spoke first, denouncing the obligatory vaccination law for its violation of basic, individual rights guaranteed by the constitution. Sodré's prestige was well recognized because he had been secretary to Benjamin Constant, Brazil's foremost Positivist. He was a military engineer and brigade commander and, along with Barbosa Lima, was considered one of the leading Positivists of the Republic. Vicente de Souza had been influenced by Positivism years earlier, while in medical school. Moving on from medicine to journalism and eventually to the leadership of the socialist Centro, Vicente de Souza was a key link between the working class and the Positivist opponents of the vaccination law. Whether Vicente remained an adamant Positivist after his election to the presidency of the

45. Edgard Carone, *A República Velha: Instituições e classes sociais* (São Paulo: DIFEL, 1975), 166-81; idem, *A República Velha: Evolução política* (São Paulo: DIFEL, 1964), 205-6.

46. *Jornal do Brasil*, July 14, 1. See also *ibid.*, July 28, 1904, 2.



Centro is unclear, but he did grant Lauro Sodré and his comrades a podium from which to denounce the government and to promote their views.<sup>47</sup>

Although Lauro Sodré chaired the meeting, Vicente de Souza's speech was, and is, the evening's most instructive. Souza opened his comments with the specter of a "young virgin, or wife away from her husband," forced to bare her arms in front of an unfamiliar public health official in order to be inoculated with the smallpox virus. The same government that required this unthinkable action had ignored the petition of the ten thousand Centro workers, had never sided with the poor and workers in any labor dispute, and had reneged on its twelve-year-old promise to construct low-cost housing. Now, Souza maintained, this "government of the rich and the coffee barons" was asking the poor and destitute to accept a law that would have them injected with "a foreign virus." Vaccination, he continued, was only one part of the larger renovation plan that was destroying the houses belonging to the city's "poor and working class" and that, as he passionately concluded, the masses had the "legitimate" right to resist.<sup>48</sup>

That Souza's appeal met with deafening applause broken only by frequent denunciations of the government should come as no surprise to anyone who has noted the years of agitation against the many parts of the sanitation laws. Maybe as a mulatto and working-class leader Souza received more trust from the masses; regardless, he touched a nerve. How could health officials who stormed into houses spraying everything in sight with disinfectant or who demolished a place of business in the middle of the night with picks and axes be trusted with the supposedly delicate arms of wives and virgin daughters? This government of the rich and the coffee barons, which had let foreign railroads, trolley companies, and contractors carve up the city for their own profits, now wanted to carve up the people, it seemed, with injections of foreign viruses. Before closing, the group formed itself into the League Against Obligatory Vaccination and elected officers: copresidents, Lauro Sodré and Vicente de Souza; vice-president, Barbosa Lima; secretaries, A. Suzano and Paulino Van Ewen (one from the Positivists, one from the Centro); and treasurer, Marcos Martins de Almeida (treasurer of the Centro). The meeting

47. Nachman, "Positivism and Revolution," 24.

48. *Jornal do Brasil*, November 6, 1904, 1. Whether Souza understood and distrusted the medical rationale for injecting the virus into a person's arm—to stimulate the formation of antibodies against smallpox—is unclear. The basis of the vaccination process was known widely, and, he knew, it was feared. He chose to say "inoculated with," not inoculated against, the smallpox virus. Other information on Vicente de Souza is in Sheldon Maram, "Anarchists, Immigrants, and the Brazilian Labor Movement, 1890–1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1972), 141.

concluded with proclamations to continue the struggle against the vaccination plan and to uphold the rights of the working class, and with vigorous "vivas" to "students, the working class, and the proletariat in general."<sup>49</sup>

Several aspects of the evening are striking. Sodré's role in the meeting was not as prominent as that of Vicente de Souza. Quite possibly the Positivists opted for a lower public profile and preferred for the working-class leader, Vicente de Souza, to serve as the rally's lightning rod. This added greater mass appeal to their cause, but it likewise served as a good cover for the conspiracy that was brewing against the government. Moreover, everyone who participated in the rally had a grievance larger and of longer duration than just that against vaccination. Those who argue that the November 11 riot was an "excuse by many different groups opposing President Rodrigues Alves to discredit the government" or "an exploitable issue" that subversives used to overturn the government account for the motives of the Positivists;<sup>50</sup> the urban poor joined the opposition for more justifiable reasons, since there was real reason to fear the vaccine, or so it was thought. During July of the year before, at the height of the legislative debate over the Sanitary Code of 1903, the *Jornal do Brasil* had carried a story with banner headlines proclaiming, "Deaths from the Vaccine!" Actually, on closer reading, only one woman had died because of complications from the vaccine, but the headline probably scared a lot of people anyway.<sup>51</sup>

Vicente de Souza's words resonated with the crowd because he pitted the "poor and the working class" against the "rich and the coffee barons," drawing the lines that everyone in Rio knew were at the core of the whole urban renewal and vaccination plan. In essence Souza spoke the "hidden transcript" of working-class resentment that had churned away—as James Scott notes, speaking of another place and time but similar circumstances—in the "thousands of bitter jokes, resentments, and outrage accumulated around kitchen tables, in small groups of workers, in beer halls, and among close companions."<sup>52</sup> The grievances of Rio's working poor against the government, the health department, and the urban renewal itself were not new. They had been raised in one form or another since the first days of the Republic.

49. *Jornal do Brasil*, November 6, 1904, 1.

50. Stepan, *Beginnings of Brazilian Science*, 89; Cooper, "Oswaldo Cruz and the Impact of Yellow Fever," 52.

51. *Jornal do Brasil*, July 10, 1903, 1.

52. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 226.