

THE HILLS, THE SWAMPLANDS AND THE IN BETWEEN

"That was after the eclipse," he said. "Didn't you have an eclipse in your country?" I said I must have been too young to remember. "Everything went dark at mid-day...animals went to sleep. After that, people started having more children and that is how these hills became so crowded." A seventy-year-old man, he lives in the neighborhood of *Nova Descoberta* on the northwestern outskirts of the municipality of Recife. We are talking about the old days, when you could still take the *maxa-bomba*, the small suburban train, without having to worry about pickpockets. He was not very specific about the year of the eclipse. "Sometime in the 1940s," he said and when I asked him, he agreed that it must have been about the time when Agamemnon Magalhães governed Pernambuco. When I later checked on eclipses visible in Recife, I was informed that in the period we had been talking about, there were two of them. Eclipses are more frequent in the tropics than in "my country." It must either have been the eclipse of October 1st, 1940 or of January 25th, 1944.

Whatever the role of eclipses, the man had pinpointed the moment when Recife underwent the restructuration that gave it its new spatial dimensions. In the 19th century the *sobrados* and *mocambos*, the mansions and the shanties, weren't far away from each other (Freyre, 1986:140). Segregation followed vertical rather than horizontal lines. The "lower strata" tended to live at the sites of flooding when the rivers would suddenly swell due to inland rains (Bezerra, 1965). In the course of the 20th century, new vertical and horizontal dimensions of segregation were added, particularly after the 1940s, the starting point of the "decades of explosive growth." The population had increased by 46% between 1920 and 1940 and over the next two decades it was to do so by 129%. As a result of migration from the surrounding countryside, the natural population growth and the tendency toward the expulsion of the "lower strata" from the city center, the town sort of crept up the hills to the West. This tendency was to be reinforced by the first policies of eradicating "sub-normal" settlements in the 1940s. Until then, the people who had settled in the hilly parts had remained in the *córregos*, the narrow valleys between the *morros*, but now they increasingly constructed dwellings higher up the hills,

with altitudes up to 110 meters and slopes of over 30%. The heavy winter rains were apt to produce landslides, washing houses and their inhabitants downhill.

It was in the intermediate zone between sea level and the hills further inland, that the town of Recife -the "amphibious city" or "tropical Venice" to the poetically inclined- originally grew. With the growth of its population, "lower strata" were either pushed toward the swampy areas, as basically occurred in the 19th century, or up the hills, as occurred in the 20th, when the gradually consolidated swamp areas of the city center were claimed by the better off. The latter could live in relative security, but the poorer folks were exposed to floods and rain-provoked landslides.

3.1. Recife in a century of accentuated growth

The regency of Francisco do Rêgo Barros, the *Conde de Boa Vista* from 1837 to 1865, is cited as one of urban improvement. The harbor was improved, a Government Palace was constructed as well as the Santa Isabel theater and the Faculty of Law -which was now transferred from Olinda-, and various new bridges were built. A water supply system was installed and a sewerage system was constructed in the 1870s and reached its capacity in 1903, when gutters were flooded with fecal wastes (Levine, 1978:59).¹ The penitentiary and the public cemetery of *Santo Amaro*, which was opened when a yellow fever epidemic hit the town in 1851, were also new. At the time the cemetery was located outside the urbanized area. As Melo (1978:67) observes, the Faculty of Law and the neighboring *Parque 13 de Maio* in Boa Vista were built in areas recently recovered from the *mangues* (mangrove swamps), indicating some of the borders of the urbanized nucleus in the early 20th century.

The core area of the town was known for its *sobrados magros*, three to five story buildings. Some have attributed the architecture of these buildings, their narrow fronts, to Dutch cultural influences, whereas others have forwarded the more prosaic explanation of high land prices in the areas of *terra firme*, coupled to the distances between the various solid areas and the consequent inconvenience, if not expense, of transport. A contrast to this verticalization was the gradual horizontal occupation of the intermittently flooded areas, particularly from the latter part of the 19th century onward. These were the areas where *mocambos* were

¹ Until 1908, the sewerage system was the responsibility of the British-owned Recife Drainage Company. In that year, the contract was rescinded and a contract for a new sewerage system was signed. This system, with a capacity for serving an urban nucleus of 200,000 inhabitants, was inaugurated in 1915. In spite of the expansion of the city it was not until the 1960s that new initiatives in the area of public sanitation were taken (Andrade, 1979; *Diário de Pernambuco*, 20-10-1985; Melo, 1985a:48; FIDEM, 1982:191-196).

built: "Not far from them (the *sobrados*), or even adjacent to them, were the areas of *manguezais* which were not only abundant but also without price, without owner and improper for the construction of houses other than those of poor people" (Melo, 1978:68; cf. Andrade, 1979; Freyre, 1986). The *mocambos* they constructed were often of the *palafita* type, i.e. shacks on stakes. Josué de Castro, famous for his *Geography of Hunger* (Castro, 1957), coined the term *ciclo do caranguejo*, the cycle of the crab, for the symbiosis of the inhabitants of these shacks with their swampy surroundings. *Palafita*-dwellers eat the crabs they fish out of the mud under their huts, and the crabs in turn, live off the excrement of the *palafita*-dwellers.

Another 19th century development was the gradual incorporation of hitherto peripheral areas into the urban fabric, facilitated by the improvement of transportation. In the first part of the century, the use of carriages increased, replacing the palanquin or the hammock carried by slaves. By the middle of the century, regular *diligência* services started to connect various parts of the city. In 1871, the first *bonde de burro* (mule tram) headed for Madalena. More rapid *maxabombas* (steam trams) started to transport passengers to Apipucos, Caxangá, Casa Amarela and Olinda (Andrade, 1979). The strengthening of the ties with these areas contributed to a transformation of the sugar plantations which had been there since colonial times and now became the core of future neighborhoods. This process of suburbanization has been outlined by Melo (1978:64) as consisting of three phases. To start with, plantations were divided into smaller properties called *sítios*, producing fruit and vegetables and serving for residential purposes. In the course of the 20th century the *sítios* were subdivided into *loteamentos* for residential purposes and were eventually consolidated in urban areas (cf. Andrade, 1979; Ribas Neto, Lubambo & Souza, 1984).

By the early 20th century the gradual occupation of the suburban areas had started, but two of today's important neighborhoods were still non-existent. Casa Amarela, which largely consists of *morros*, was hardly populated (cf. Mendonça, 1986) and Pina and Boa Viagem, the latter now a highly valued upper middle class area, were not yet connected to the town. Changes were underway, however, which were to transform the old city with its *sobrados magros* beyond recognition. In the first decade of the 20th century the old neighborhood of Recife was partly demolished to make way for new access roads to the port area. The port itself was modernized and adapted for the new, larger ships, although this did not save it from a decline in importance. Eventually a French company, the *Société de Construction du Port de Pernambouc*, was contracted to carry out the work, but it went bankrupt during the First World War. In the 1920s, construction was taken up again. Simultaneously, the central neighborhoods of the city underwent a thorough metamorphosis (Andrade, 1979; Levine, 1978:43). Gradually, with the consolidation of the swamp areas, the *mocambeiros* were expelled from the central parts of the

city and from the 1940s onward Casa Amarela, or more precisely the *morros* between the Capibaribe and Beberibe Rivers to the northwest of the city, became populated. Starting with the Boa Viagem area the southward expansion of the city was facilitated by the construction of the *Ponte do Pina* in the early 1920s.

The 1913 Municipal Census and the 1923 Census of the Pernambuco Health and Assistance Department of the state of Pernambuco can give us an impression of the housing situation and dimensions of segregation during the first decades of this century and set the stage for our further discussion. According to the 1913 Municipal Census 34 % of the 37,735 houses were made of stone, 43% were *mocambos*, which were probably predominantly of the *palafita* type constructed in the mangrove swamps, and 23% had *taipa* or mud walls which were not yet a characteristic of poverty. A breakdown of the data by neighborhood shows some extent of spatial segregation, most of the stone buildings being located in the old core area of the city. In the peripheral areas the *mocambos* were predominant, whereas the *taipa* constructions were disseminated throughout the town.

This pattern is confirmed by the 1923 census, when 51% of the 39,026 houses in the municipality were classified as deficient, i.e. *mocambos*. An interesting feature of the 1923 census is that the breakdown was according to building materials used in various parts of the houses, although it is not clear how this breakdown related to the criteria of "deficiency" used in the overall classification. Thus, 59% of the houses had mud walls and 34% brick walls. In addition, 50% of the roofs were covered with tiles, 37% with straw and 12% with zinc roofs. The floor in 44% of the houses was of beaten earth. The data also provide some information on the distribution of different types of housing throughout the city. In neighborhoods like Recife and São José, 95% of the houses had brick walls and all of them were covered with tiles. In the still semi-rural Varzêa, however, 80% of the houses had mud walls and 52% were covered with tiles, the rest having straw roofs. Boa Vista exhibited a clustering of houses with zinc or wood walls. There over half of the dwellings were constructed with these types of material, as compared with a total of 2,632 for the whole city. So although this type of construction accounted for about 6% of the total housing stock in the city, in Boa Vista 16% of the houses were of the zinc and wood type. The remainder was divided between brick constructions (44%) and houses with mud walls (40%). A rather central area of the city was thus characterized by heterogeneity and a concentration of *palafitas*. It was to be a principal target for the program of *mocambo* eradication launched in 1938 (Fontes, 1986:184-194).

The census activities of the Department of Health and Assistance inaugurated an embryonic form of social policies in Pernambuco under the government of Sergio Loreto (1922-26) who, at the same time, repressed the emerging labor

movement (O, 1971:110).² Cheap meals were distributed by the newly created department, which also devoted attention to the housing question. The new policies were motivated by concern with "hygiene" and "delinquency" and must be viewed against the background of the first stirrings of trade unionism in Pernambuco.³ They denoted the emergence of something like a "social question" (Melo, 1985a:50-51).

Efforts to improve housing were accelerated by the flood of 1924, one of the worst the town had ever known (Andrade, 1979:107). With funding from the Department of Health and Assistance and Recife's business community, for aid to the *flagelados*, a *Fundação da Casa Operária* was created which constructed four so-called *Vilas Operárias* (Bezerra, 1965:44; Melo, 1985a). After 1926, under the state government of Eustácio Coimbra (1926-1930), very little initiative was taken in this area. It should be noted, however, that in 1929 the first recorded association of *mocambeiros* emerged, the *Liga Mista dos Proprietários Pobres da Vila de São Miguel (Afogados)*. Three years later, it had 280 members and was registered under the name *Sociedade a Bem da Nossa Defesa* (Bezerra, 1965:41; Cêzar, 1985:159).

It was in the year that Eustácio Coimbra became governor that a more clearly defined opposition to the established oligarchy took shape in Pernambuco. The dissident *usineiro* Carlos de Lima Cavalcanti founded the *Partido Democrático*,⁴ around which a heterogeneous coalition of groups gathered, all opposed to Coimbra, a rather traditionalist representative of the *usineiro* class. The new party joined the *Aliança Liberal*, the coalition supporting Vargas in the 1930 take-over, which put an end to the Old Republic (1889-1930) and the "pact of the oligarchies" that had sustained it. Carlos de Lima Cavalcanti was appointed *interventor* in Pernambuco. The cordial relations he had entertained with Communist groups in Pernambuco cooled off somewhat after 1930, when the new governor, as Paulo Cavalcanti (1978:89, 117) put it, showed his "real face," namely that of an "*usineiro* who has come to power by circumstance." Nevertheless, his admin-

² There had been an earlier, isolated effort toward state-sponsored housing with the establishment of the Vila Proletária do Arrayal in 1921 (Melo, 1985a:51).

³ In 1914 a Federação dos Trabalhadores de Pernambuco of anarcho-sindicalist inspiration was organized by José Elias. Workers of the Great Western Railway Company had staged the first important strike in Recife's history in 1909 and ten years later a first "general strike" took place followed in 1922 by participation in the national strike against the Lei Monstro, which imposed a 50% increase of consumption taxes. In the same year, a Pernambucan section of the Communist Party, led by Cristiano Cordeiro, was founded and gained influence, notably among the workers of the US-Canadian owned Pernambuco Tramways, which also supplied electricity and piped gas and operated the telephone system. It was the largest single employer in the city. Another important less radical labor leader of the time was Joaquim Pimento (cf. Barros, 1985; Cavalcanti, 1978; Levine, 1978: 82; Melo, 1985a: 48-49; O, 1971; Rezende, 1987).

⁴ In the early 1930s the party was converted into Partido Social Democrático de Pernambuco.

istration was marked by reformist liberalism and Cavalcanti was characterized as a "civilian with a *tenente* spirit." The appointment of progressive intellectuals such as Josué de Castro and Ulyses Pernambucano to official posts tended to displease the more conservative groups as well as the Church. The communist *intentiona* of 1935 provided one of the pretexts for discrediting the governor, who was accused of collaboration.⁵ Cavalcanti's regionalist points of view, which contradicted the centralizing tendencies of the Vargas government, and his opposition to the *Estado Novo*-scheme were additional sources of friction and in 1937, he was removed from office and succeeded by Agamemnon Magalhães (Barros, 1985; EFEM, 1988:25-27; Levine, 1978:69-72, 84-89; Pandolfi, 1984:44-47)

The main initiatives on the housing problem during the Cavalcanti administration were the proclamation of two decrees. In 1930 a rent reduction was decreed, reducing the lowest rents by 40% and the highest of four rent categories by 15%. Four years later a tax on rented *mocambos* was decreed, the proceeds of which were to be used for the construction of "modest brick houses to be rented or sold on installments to private persons" (Leitão, 1987: 74-75; Melo, 1985a:53). The effect of the measures, however, was negligible.

3.2. The time of eclipses

In 1937, Agamemnon Magalhães was nominated governor. He belonged to a faction of the ruling PSD that had gradually broken with Lima de Cavalcanti. From 1934 onward, he had been Minister of Labor, Industry and Trade in the Vargas government. In January 1937, he also became Minister of Justice and helped Vargas prepare for the proclamation of the *Estado Novo*. Magalhães was one of its outstanding ideologists, drawing inspiration from Southern European Corporatism and neo-conservative Catholicism.⁶ In Pernambuco *Estado Novo* reformism acquired a

⁵ Shortly before being deposed, in 1937, Lima de Cavalcanti affirmed that he had faithfully complied with the orders of the Superintendent Commission of the State of War, but that he "could not 'invent' communists to fill up the prisons and make an appearance" (Pandolfi, 1984:47). Communists had made a good showing in the Pernambucan capital in the 1933 elections for the National Constituent Assembly and only fraud had impeded them from sending a delegate. In the elections at state level in 1934 their role was insignificant as a result of internal disunity. With the municipal elections of 1935 they managed to elect three representatives to the city council who, after much juridical tugging, only were allowed to take their seats in 1937 on the eve of the proclamation of the *Estado Novo*, when they were moved on to the prison of the Secretary of Public Security (Cavalcanti, 1978; 1986; cf. Rezende (org.), 1987).

⁶ In 1938, in one of his daily articles in the *Folha da Manhã* (March 13, 1938), Magalhães wrote: "Against the class struggle, which is proposed by marxism as a technique of violence and means of destruction of the capitalist system, there arose in Italy and also Germany a nowadays victorious experience of corporative organization of the national economy. Instead of an antagonism between capital and labour, cooperation realizes agreement, conciliation, the harmony between the factors of production. The concept of collaboration has taken the place of that of struggle through the integration

special dimension. The state "became sort of an exemplary social and political laboratory for the regime" as a result of the political stature and charisma of Agamemnon Magalhães (EFEM, 1988:29-34). His administration was also the "time of the eclipses when these hills became so crowded."

In the context of the policies implemented by the Magalhães administration, those on the urban question are of special interest to us. It should be noted, however, that they were embedded in a larger project with strongly ruralist features. Manifestly aimed at the "fixation of man to the land" by promoting cooperative schemes, in practice this served to mount a political machine, resting basically on the *coronéis* of the interior, which would dominate Pernambucan politics until 1958 (Pandolfi, 76; cf. Vilaça & Albuquerque, 1965).⁷ Legal measures aimed at crop diversification and the promotion of the "social use" of land were adopted, but remained without effect. Reportedly Magalhães took the saying "to my friends, facilities; to my enemies, the rigor of the law" to heart. Whereas the elimination of the *mocambo*, regarded as a "cell of discontent and misery," was undertaken with enthusiasm, the measures to "fix man to the land" mainly served to boost the position of the local bosses.

Magalhães' measures with regard to the social question were backed by a rhetoric based on the opposition between the "communist menace" and the "voracious shark" of liberalism. They were accompanied by orchestrated popular mobilization in *festas cívicas* along corporatist lines aimed at the promotion of "maximal consensus." The theme of the "battle against communism" was pervasively present in the rhetoric accompanying the measures, and according to some Magalhães did not hesitate to occasionally invent a communist plot to make reluctant employers toe the line (cf. Pandolfi, 1984:55). In Recife, *Centros Educativos Operários* were created with the prime objective of "orienting the sectors of the working classes contaminated by communist propaganda." Alleged communist were persecuted. Soon after his installation as *interventor* Magalhães informed Vargas that he had already rounded up 269 communists in Pernambuco. This earned him the lion's share of the special credit extended by the Ministry of Justice for combating communism on a national level. The mixture of repression and state-directed "popular mobilization" of workers and employers alike, to be sure, also characterized the approach to Recife's "*mocambo*-problem." The attention devoted to the housing question exemplifies the "social and political laboratory" aspect of the Magalhães administration. On a national level, policies along similar lines were

of capital and labour in their economic and social functions. In this way capital and labour are one single economic category" (Magalhães, 1985:21; cf. EFEM, 1988:31; Pandolfi, 1984:38).

⁷ Sugar production stagnated in this period and did not recover until after the Second World War, whereas cotton production fared relatively well in the 1930s. Cotton-producers were less affected by the trade policies of the Vargas regime.

introduced in 1946 with the creation of the *Fundação da Casa Popular* (Pandolfi, 1984:60).

The first measure taken in what was called the "Social Crusade against the *Mocambo*" was a decree issued in April 1938 by the Mayor of Recife, Novaes Filho, prohibiting the construction of *mocambos*. Five months later a *Comissão Censitária dos Mocambos* was created to inventory the housing situation within six months. The Commission defined *mocambos* as constructions with

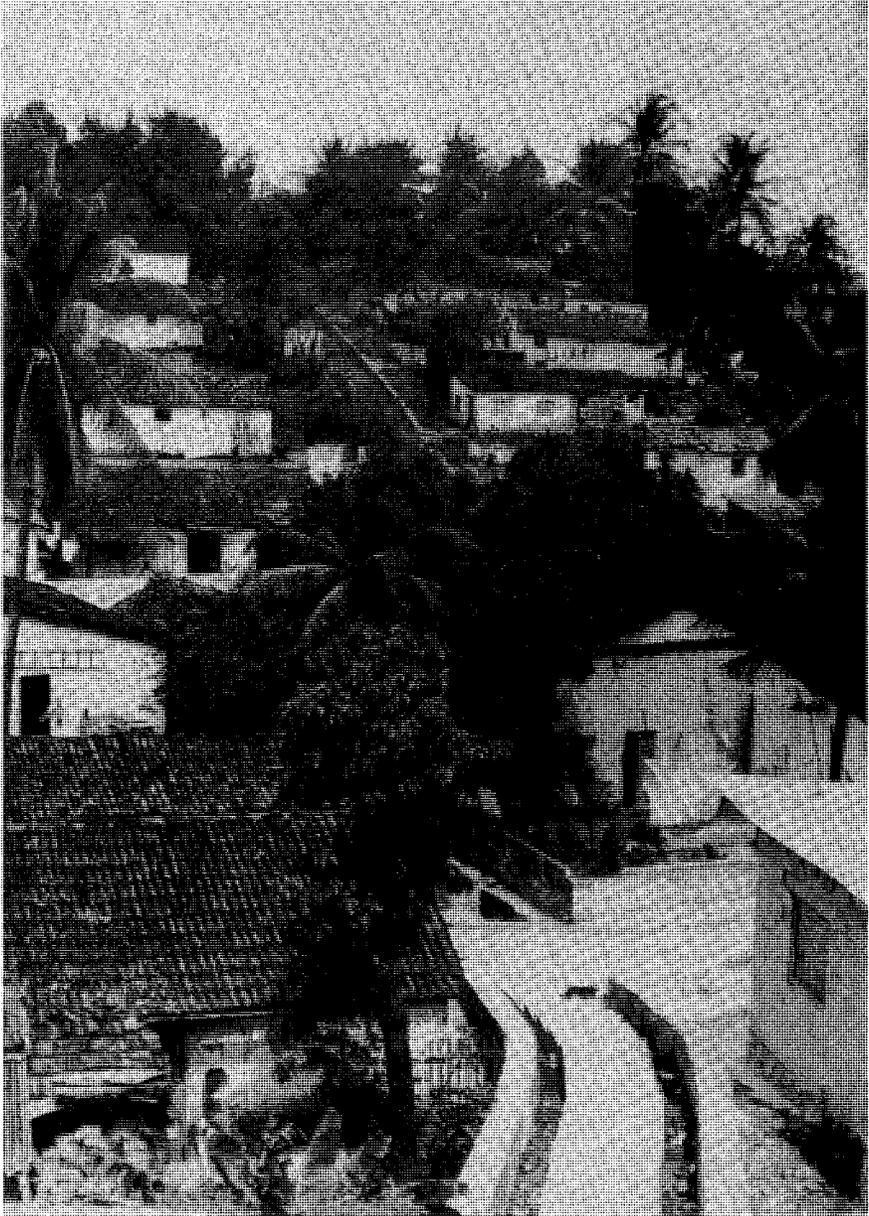
walls made of mud, used wood, zinc, iron sheets, *capim*-grass or straw. The floor is made of earth and the roof is covered with straw or tin plates. It has a room and a bedroom. The bedroom has no direct light and is no larger than 4 to 5 metres, whereas the minimal area should be of 8 square metres. In this space without light or floor, an average of 4 to 5 persons live. The excrements of the *mocambos* are left in the tidal creeks, in holes that are dug for the purpose every day or simply on the ground.⁸

The outcomes of the census were considered alarming. In a city of about 350,000 inhabitants, 164,837 persons lived in *mocambos* and the number of *mocambos* was rising about twice as fast as that of "normal" houses with either brick or mud walls. There were 45,581 *mocambos*, accounting for about 40% of the total housing stock; 34% of the *mocambos* was rented and 43% owned by the occupants who, however, still had to pay land rent (*foro*), whereas only 8% were owner-occupied and did not pay land rent. The annual return of renting out a *mocambo* represented more than 50% of the value of the *mocambo*, whereas a similar calculation for brick houses showed that the corresponding percentage was only 12%, so that the existence of a "*mocambo*-industry" was concluded from this data. The actual rent paid per year corresponded to about one tenth of what a middle-class house would cost. Of the *mocambo* population, only 3.3% was unemployed and two thirds were literate (Magalhães, 1985:198; Pandolfi, 1984:61; Melo, 1985a:56; 1985b:11).⁹

In the official analysis of the *mocambo* problem, it was argued that the *mocambos* themselves and not the political-economic model, were at the root of the problem. According to Agamemnon Magalhães, "one of the factors in the large concentration of people that migrate to Recife is the *mocambo*. As an improvised and easily constructed form of dwelling, in a city with immense areas without construction and with lowlying, occasionally flooded areas, it is the *mocambo* and not employment that attract the migrant." His conclusion was that "eliminating the

⁸ "O Mocambo tem as paredes de taipa, madeira usada, zinco, flandres, capim ou palha. O seu piso é de terra e a sua cobertura de palha ou de folhas de lata. Tem uma sala e um quarto. Quarto sem luz direta de 4 a 5 metros, quando a área mínima devia ser de 8 metros quadrados. Neste espaço sem luz, sem piso, vivem uma média de 4 a 5 pessoas. Os despejos dos mocambos são feitos nos braços das marés, em buracos abertos diariamente para este fim, ou à flor da terra" (cf. Pandolfi, 1984:59).

⁹ The IBGE General Census of 1940 suggested a similar picture, counting about 18,000 brick houses housing one third of Recife's population, against 50,000 "wooden houses" (Fontes, 1986:197).



The *Morros* of Casa Amarela (1988)

mocambo, the urban concentration of Recife will adjust to the necessities of industry and commerce" (cf. Leitão, 1987:85-88). It was reasoned that the disappearance of the *mocambos* would contribute to an increase in the wages of those who remained in the city. The counterpart of these views were Magalhães' professed "ruralism" and his ideas about "fixing man to the land" through the promotion of rural cooperativism.

Through the *Liga Social Contra o Mocambo*, which was officially created in July 1939 (Pandolfi, 1984:59-77), the low income groups remaining in the city were to be provided with "popular housing." The *Liga* was a private agency of "humanitarian character, to promote the extinction of this type of housing and further the construction of popular houses with hygienic conditions and easy to acquire" (cf. Melo, 1985:55). Among the working population, private ownership of houses was to be promoted to strengthen their "sentiments of order and conservation." The *Liga* was to be financed by contributions from the state, associations of employers in commerce and industry as well as unionized workers' welfare and retirement funds. In 1940, the central government also made a contribution to the campaign against the *mocambo* in Pernambuco.

The "Social Crusade against the *mocambo*" should be viewed in the context of a large scale-urban intervention scheme, more comprehensive than earlier ones since it reflected the belief in *Estado Novo*-style planning (Magalhães, 1985:196). The increasingly valued central areas of the city were provided with broad avenues, the mark of modernity, while low-income groups were evicted to make way for high-rise buildings. With the opening of Avenida 10 de Novembro (commemorating Vargas's take-over and now called Avenida Guararapes) and Avenida Dantas Barreto, the central areas of the town underwent a metamorphosis. Most of what was still left of the old core neighborhoods was demolished. Canals were dug or reconstructed to cope with the hydraulic problems of the city, the Duarte Coelho Bridge was built. "Africanized patches" in the central parts of the city were to be extinguished (Melo, 1978:74). Bezerra (1965: 46) calls the period, with its harsh treatment of the *mocambeiros*, a "time of pain and tears" and notes how the demolition program as well as the construction of new houses concentrated in some of the most visible parts of the city (cf. Leitão, 1987:91, 107-109; Melo, 1985:60). Rather than becoming areas of happy lower-class families gathered together along corporatist lines, as some of the names of the new *vilas* -*Vila das Lavadeiras*, *Vila das Costureiras*- suggested, they became middle-class residential areas, since the groups they were allegedly were built for were not able to pay the installments (Cavalcanti, 1978:318). The distribution of the newly built houses was strongly influenced by clientelist schemes (Melo, 1985a).

In its overview of the 1939-1944 period, the *Liga* reported that 12,434 *mocambos* had been demolished and some 5,500 houses had been constructed.¹⁰ That leaves a deficit of some 7,000 houses, meaning that as a result of the measures, about 30,000 people lost their homes. The government prided itself on having reversed the process of urban concentration and calculated that about 20,000 people had left the city, suggesting that they had returned to the countryside (Pandolfi, 1984:65). It is questionable whether that is true. The problems were simply shifted to peripheral areas, like the *morros* of Casa Amarela.¹¹ Significantly, in September 1939 a decree was issued which allowed the "adaptation" of existing *mocambos* in "determined areas of the city," requiring the replacement of straw or *capim*-covering with tiles (Leitão, 1987:86), a measure recalled by many of the older inhabitants of Casa Amarela. It was in these days that "the hills became so crowded" and the *sítios* of Casa Amarela were subdivided into small plots subject to the payment of *foro* -rent- (cf. Mendonça, 1986; Ribas Neto, Lubambo & Souza, 1984). The payment of *foro* and the location on the *morros*, exposed to rain-provoked landslides, were to be main themes for the neighborhood associativism that developed over the following decades.

3.3. Concluding remark

In this chapter I discussed the development of Recife in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century against the backdrop of economic and political developments. I noted the political decline of the old planter class and the *Partido Republicano*. In the 1930s the relatively liberal wing of the *Partido Social Democrático* (PSD), which governed Pernambuco, was increasingly under pressure from the more conservative authoritarian wing, which effectively came into power in 1937 with the nomination of Agamemnon Magalhães as state governor. The local *Estado Novo* government basically relied on the support of the *coronéis* of the *sertão* and the *agreste*, who were less affected by the Center-South oriented trade and industrial-

¹⁰ Throughout Pernambuco another 8,000 houses were said to have been constructed (Bezerra, 1965; Magalhães, 1985:229; Melo, 1985:59).

¹¹ Casa Amarela or more broadly, the area between the Capibaribe and Beberibe Rivers, was attractive since the area was traversed by the maxabomba-line going to the nucleus of the neighborhood, which had started to become populated since the early 20th century and where a market was built in the 1930s. Nearby was also the textile factory of the Othon Bezerra de Melo family, the Fábrica da Macaxeira, which in the course of the 1920s became an important employer in the area. Casa Amarela became the 'popular neighborhood' of Recife (FEACA, 1988; Mendonça, 1986; O, 1971; URB/DPU, 1987b).

ization policies of the Vargas government. The weakened sugar producers of the *zona da mata* were relegated to a subsidiary role.¹²

In February 1945, Agamemnon Magalhães was called upon by Vargas to head the Ministry of Justice once again and articulate the transition to democracy. "The regime is changing, I am changing as well," he said and set about producing the controversial Electoral Code of May 1945 and the equally controversial Anti-trust Law of June against monopolistic practices. On October 29, a few weeks before the elections due on December 2, 1945, Vargas was deposed by the army, which carried through the elections. Magalhães returned to Pernambuco as leader of the local *Partido Social Democrático* (PSD) and was elected Congressional Deputy in the December elections. The coalition that had sustained his governorship was to continue to dominate Pernambucan politics until the end of the 1950s (Pandolfi, 1984:87-91). In the following chapter, I shall discuss the erosion of this coalition and the accompanying radicalization of local politics which brought Pernambuco into the international limelight.

During the Magalhães administration, the city of Recife underwent a process of restructuring and it is against this background that the "social crusade against the *mocambo*" should be evaluated. In the absence of any comprehensive restructuring of the agrarian sector, despite the rhetorics, and in the context of economic stagnation, the crusade did not solve the *mocambo* problem. As the following table demonstrates, the number of *mocambos* continued to grow in the "decades of explosive growth" that started in the 1940s.

Number of Mocambos in Recife, 1939-1983

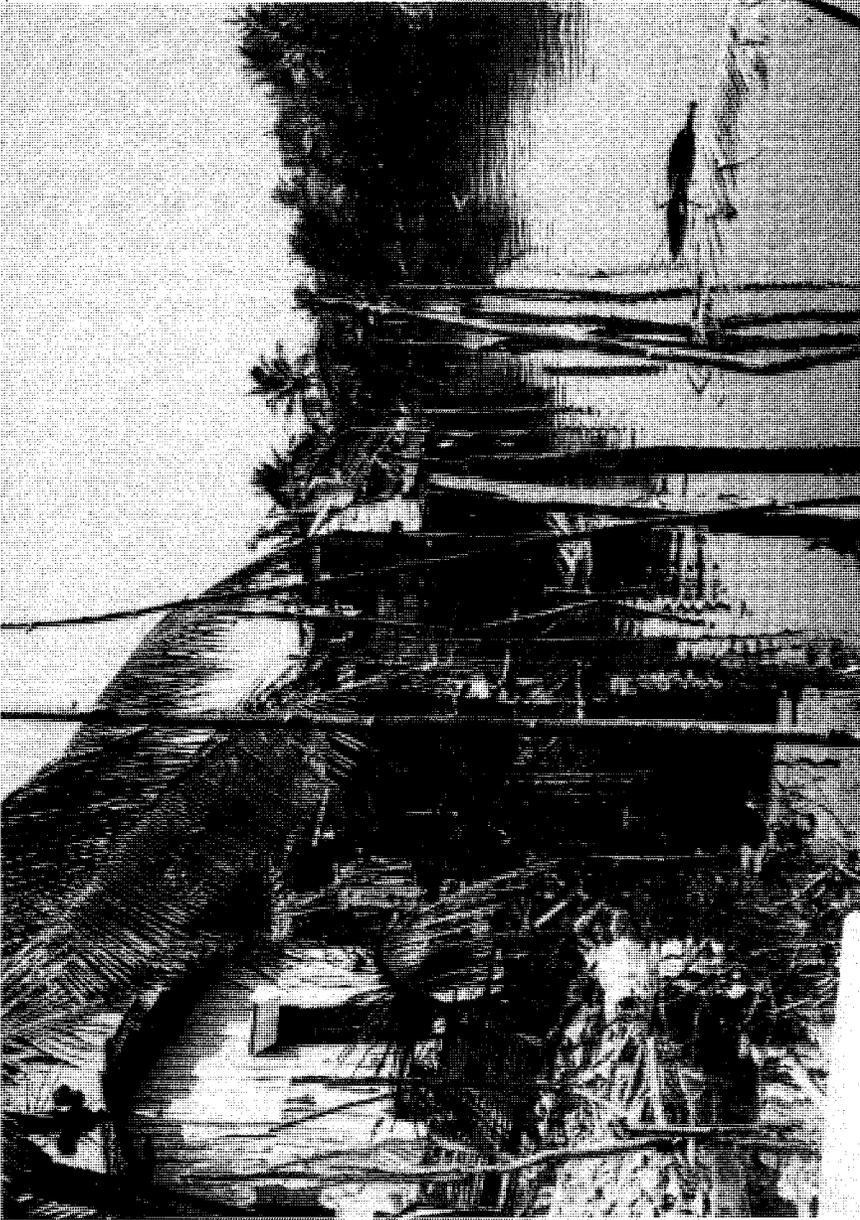
	1939	1960	1973	1983
Mocambos	45,000	90,000	120,000	150,000
Residents of Mocambos	165,000	440,000	650,000	780,000
% of total population	50%	55%	60%	60%

(Source: Fontes, 1986:273)

The policies of the Magalhães government resulted in a relocation of *mocambeiros* from the more visible and valorized areas of the city center toward the *morros* of the periphery. In spite of the governor's call for the construction of modest housing rather than skyscrapers (Magalhães, 1985:213; Pandolfi, 1984:64), the latter prevailed. A popular housing construction company created simultaneously with the *Liga Social Contra os Mocambos* relied largely on private donations and did not

¹²The *usineiros* were wholly marginalized by the Magalhães administration, whereas the *bangueseiros* and *fornecedores* were coopted through cooperative schemes.

survive the Magalhães administration for long. In 1945 the *Liga* was renamed the *Serviço Social Contra o Mocambo*, which was to receive 1.5% of the Pernambuco state budget. After 1945 the role of the *Serviço Social Contra o Mocambo* (SSCM) gradually diminished with the emergence of the *Fundação da Casa Popular* (FCP), which operated on a "national level" but in fact focussed its activities in the Southeast (Shidlo, 1990: 44). When Agamemnon Magalhães returned to the Pernambucan government in 1950 and reanimated the *Serviço*, its main concerns were the distribution of sewing machines and the provision of dental and medical services. *Empreguismo* and the payment of exorbitant prices for construction material became salient features of the organization. Between 1945 and 1961, the SSCM constructed about 5,000 houses in Recife and pension funds built another 5,000 houses for the lower income groups, at any rate those of them who could afford to pay the installments (Bezerra, 1965:50; Melo, 1985a:62; Pandolfi, 1984:137-139).



Palafitas in Pina