

SPOTLIGHTS ON PERNAMBUCO

In the early 1960s the T.V. documentary *The Troubled Land* shocked the North American audience. It brought them face to face with a gun-waving landowner from the Brazilian Northeast threatening to kill any peasant who dared take part in the emerging peasant organizations. The broadcast and newspaper reports made it clear that due to malnutrition, conditions in the Northeast were producing a people of mentally retarded dwarfs. Recife was called the "Calcutta of the Western Hemisphere." Conditions this poor could not help but breed social unrest, the reports warned, and noted the activities of the *Ligas Camponesas* in the rural areas and the rise of a left-wing coalition that had governed Recife since 1955 and had become increasingly strong in Pernambucan politics. In the wake of the Cuban revolution, another revolutionary situation might be in the making.

In Brazil, concern with the misery of the Northeast, the regional disparities exacerbated by the process of import-substituting industrialization in the Center-South and their potential consequences for "national security" had been voiced from the mid 1950s onward. The 1958 draught served as a catalyst for the foundation of the regional development agency, the *Superintendência do Desenvolvimento do Nordeste* (SUDENE), in 1959. Initially it looked as if the SUDENE would be joined in its efforts to develop the Northeast by the Alliance for Progress. Quite soon, however, with Cold War paranoia on the rise, and influenced by intelligence reports based on conversations with the few Northeasterners who could speak English, USAID efforts shifted towards combating what was perceived to be the greatest danger, the militant talk of Peasant League leaders and the rise of the Pernambucan Left. Since "another Cuba" had to be averted at all costs, Alliance for Progress funds were used for immediate political purposes. SUDENE, with its plans for reform, was suspected of harboring fellow-travellers and was circumvented. Such attitudes soon turned the Alliance for Progress into another target for nationalist and leftist grievance (Page, 1972:64-74, 120-145; cf. Hirschmann, 1973; Oliveira, 1977:106-110; Robock, 1963).

Among the events eventually precipitating the 1964 military take-over, those in the Northeast and in Pernambuco in particular played a striking role. For

Brazil as a whole, the years from 1945 to 1964 have been characterized as the period of populist democracy, ushering in a "crisis of populism." However, in the context of Brazilian populism, Pernambuco presented some distinctive features. It is a matter of some debate whether political developments in the Northeast, and Pernambuco in particular, can adequately be understood in terms of populism.¹ Manuel Correia de Andrade (1982) outlines the question, distinguishing populism from popular politics. The characteristic feature of populism, he argues, is the class compromise whereby sectors of the dominant group ally themselves with the popular layers in order to take power. Though concessions are made, the popular layers (*camadas populares*) are not permitted effective participation in decision-making. Popular politics, on the other hand, would result from a class alliance or from an electoral victory of the less favored classes, enabling the dominated classes to really participate in power. By these standards, Andrade argues, Vargas, Goulart and Quadros should be characterized as populist politicians, but Miguel Arraes, who became governor of Pernambuco in 1963, would be a popular politician.

In this chapter, I shall discuss the events that provide the fuel for this debate and, at the time, brought the region into the national and international limelight. To begin with, I shall briefly review the period of populist democracy in Brazil. This will allow me to stake out the specificities of the period in Pernambuco and its capital, which was governed from 1955 to 1964 by left-wing mayors. Finally, I shall discuss the emergence of neighborhood associations as a factor in municipal politics in the 1950s and early 1960s. As such, this was not exceptional. In São Paulo, for instance, the *Sociedades de Amigos de Bairro* (SABs) emerged during this period. However, whereas the SABs in São Paulo were linked to the rise of right-wing populist Jânio Quadros, the neighborhood associations in Recife were linked to a left-wing popular front. The populist and clientelist features of the Paulista SABs were to turn them into a negative reference for the "new urban social movements" as they emerged from the Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) by the mid-1970s (Singer, 1980). By contrast, after some twenty years of administration by imposed mayors, when Recife was to have an elected mayor again in 1986, the experiences of the 1955-1964 period could be invoked as an historical precedent of democratic government and popular participation.

¹ Soares (1982), Weffort (1978:38), Debert (1979:69) and Aguiar (1987) have characterized the political trajectory of Pernambuco in the 1950s and early 1960s as an instance of populism. Camargo (1979) regards it as a borderline case in the conceptual framework elaborated by Touraine (1973). Brayner (1987), Oliveira (1977) and Andrade (1982) argue that the populist label is inadequate and that the Popular Front which came to govern Pernambuco in the late 1950s should be characterized as "popular government." Alluding to the 1964 turn of events, Page (1972), who is not concerned with the labeling-issue, refers to "the revolution that never was."

4.1. Populist democracy: 1945-64

In his review of the Brazilian debate on populism, Cammack (1988:27) comments that the party system that emerged in 1945 "reflected and exacerbated the tensions within the political compromise over which Vargas had presided and could not outlive that compromise itself." The key features of the compromise worked out in the 1930s that populism now emerged from as a latently unstable political solution were:

1. the division and partial incorporation of the landed elites
2. the authoritarian incorporation of the urban popular classes
3. the exclusion of the peasantry
4. the launching on this basis of a program of industrialization backed by the state (Cammack, 1988:28).

The arrangement, a stalemate or compromise between the relatively weak industrializing groups and the landowning oligarchies, gave rise to a relative autonomy of the state, as both accomplice of the decadent agrarian elites and fortuitous ally of popular movements it attempted to harness for its own purposes. It also meant the agrarian question remained unresolved, and in time might become an obstacle for future development. Control over the growing working class was only partial and the peasantry might eventually attempt to break out of its exclusion. In the course of time, the dynamics of development would reveal the latent contradictions of these arrangements and in conjunction with the dynamics of the political system, result in the "crisis of populism" that precipitated the military intervention of 1964.

With the prospect of democratization, various parties emerged in the final years of the *Estado Novo*. The *Partido Social Democrático* (PSD) and the *Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro* (PTB), reflected the compromise Vargas drew support from. Both of them had actually been founded by Vargas. The PSD was a conservative party sustained by the landed oligarchies of the interior as well as urban groups who had benefited from the Vargas years. The PTB, the *trabalhista* party some characterized as the "progressive wing of the PSD" drew its support from the corporatist trade-union machinery and a segment of the "national" bourgeoisie. Apart from the brief Quadros episode (1961), Brazil was to be governed by uneasy coalitions between the PSD and the PTB, with the latter gradually gaining weight in the course of this period.

Most of the opponents of the *Estado Novo* initially banded together in the *União Democrática Nacional* (UDN), but soon the left-wing formed the *Esquerda Democrática* which subsequently gave rise to the *Partido Socialista Brasileiro* (PSB). Thus the UDN came to represent the ultra-liberal conservative groups opposed to nationalist tendencies, restrictions on free trade and what was called the *república sindicalista*, the populist mode of working-class incorporation by way of more or less controlled trade unions. The party drew its main support from the traditional export-oriented rural oligarchy, especially the coffee planters, the

export-linked banking sector and conservative elements among the urban professionals and small businessmen.

The *Partido Comunista Brasileiro* (PCB) made a good showing at the 1945 presidential and congressional elections and the 1947 elections for state legislatures, particularly in the larger urban agglomerations of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Recife. This ranked the PCB as the fourth most powerful party in the country, but it was outlawed in March 1947. For some time it adopted an "insurreccional line," but that changed again with the 4th Party Congress in 1954 when the PCB started to pursue a united front policy in favor of national and democratic development against the landed oligarchy and US imperialism and thus gained influence within the trade-union structure (cf. Chacon, 1981:334-358).

After the Dutra presidency (1946-51), during which the foreign reserves that had been built up during the war were recklessly squandered on non-essentials, Vargas once again became president. This time he was duly elected on a platform advocating nationalist industrialization and the expansion of social legislation. One of the main achievements in this period was the creation of the state petroleum company PETROBRAS. During the second part of Vargas' mandate, there were economic problems entailing increasing inflation, a balance of payments deficit and more and more strikes. To counter these problems, a stabilization program was prepared. Meanwhile Vargas cultivated labor support and appointed militant PTB leader João Goulart to the Ministry of Labor. Goulart was soon dismissed again as a result of strong opposition to the proposal of a 100% minimum wage increase to protect the working population from the consequences of the stabilization program. The wage adjustment was nevertheless carried through by Vargas in May 1954.

After the troubles caused by Vargas' suicide in August of that year had been resolved through General Lott's constitutionalist *coup*, Juscelino Kubitschek was able to assume the presidency in 1956. He launched an ambitious development program, the *Plano de Metas* inspired by *nacional desenvolvimentismo* and aimed at "fifty years of development in five." The economy was opened up to unprecedented foreign penetration by transnational corporations, which sustained the process of import-substitution. Huge subsidies were passed on to industrial enterprises, the role of state enterprises was massively expanded and large sums were invested in the construction of highways, thus promoting the growth of new automobile industries. The capital of the country was relocated to the interior with the construction of the new city of Brasília. Whereas over the GDP had increased by 35.4% over the 1951-1956 period, an increase of 48.6% was recorded between 1956 and 1961. By 1961, however, the growth model and the political arrangements sustaining it ran into increasing difficulties. Over the next five years (1962-1967), the GDP only increased by 18.3% (Baer, 1979:79; Singer, 1976:72).

The exuberant economic growth between 1956 and 1961 was concentrated in a limited number of sectors and heralded the shift from the import substitution of mass consumer goods -the "easy phase"- to the import substitution of capital goods and durable consumer goods. The transport sector, the automobile industry in particular, grew by 32.8% annually and the electronics and communication sector, including durable consumer goods, exhibited a 24.2% annual growth. The growth in these sectors was sustained by a concentration of incomes through inflation, while the large labor reserve and wage policies kept the incomes of the working population at a low level. Together with these "forced savings" of the working population, the *confisco cambial*, the manipulation of the exchange rate to the detriment of export agriculture propped the import-substituting growth model. This mechanism became particularly problematic when, after the Korean war, the international terms of trade for agricultural exports started to fall. Agricultural production for the internal market was another bottleneck. The increase of output was based on expanding the frontier and became increasingly unable to keep pace with the rise in demand accompanying the urbanization process, thus adding another inflationary pressure which contributed in turn to social unrest. Simultaneously the widening income gaps between regions as well as income categories contributed to the strain. Last but not least, foreign debts that had partly financed the growth became an ever heavier burden in view of the failing dynamics of the agricultural export sector (Baer, 1979:57-85; Goodman & Redclift, 1981:128-144; Oliveira, 1976; Singer 1976).

As industrial trade unions radicalized and the rural population became increasingly restless, the populist mode of political regulation became increasingly unstable. Kubitschek was succeeded in 1961 by UDN-supported Jânio Quadros, who promised to pass a broom through the corrupt state apparatuses. After seven months he resigned and Vice-President Jango Goulart (PTB), whose popularity rested on his links with the trade unions, became president after some of the restrictions advanced by conservative and military sectors had been overcome.² By that time, the situation was marked by economic stagnation and growing political polarization. Celso Furtado's three-year plan to save the situation remained largely without effect. By 1963, several strikes were organized to express support for Goulart, but they also demanded that he do something about the promised "basic reforms" and advanced demands for higher wages and better working conditions. The hitherto excluded rural population had now also started to play a role on the political scene, particularly in the Northeast where the *Ligas Camponesas* demanded a radical land reform while vociferously expressing solidarity with the Cuban revolution. On the other side, polarization was fueled in part by US-financed

² Presidential powers were restricted, however, by the introduction of a parliamentary regime. Through a plebiscite in January 1963, presidentialism was restored.

organizations such as the *Instituto Brasileiro de Ação Democrática* (IBAD), which promoted a crusade against the "communist menace." Caught between two fires, Goulart gradually took a more radical stand, culminating in the famous *comício* of March 13 1964, where he promulgated two presidential decrees, one nationalizing privately-owned oil refineries (all of which were owned by Brazilians), the other expropriating land located within six miles of federal highways, railroads, dams, and irrigation projects, and classified as "underutilized." He also promised to take agrarian and tax reform measures and to give illiterates and servicemen the right to vote. Although as such, the measures were far from spectacular, they served as a justification for the military intervention of April 1, 1964.

4.2. The troubled land

The developments that propelled the Northeast, and Pernambuco in particular, into the spotlights were related to the erosion of the power bloc that had consolidated in the region during the *Estado Novo* period. Although economics, in itself, does not explain much, it should be noted that from 1949 to 1959 the contribution of cotton to Pernambuco's GDP declined from 33% to 19%. At the same time, sugar production entered a period of renewed expansion that played an important role in triggering rural unrest. In political terms, the 1958 gubernatorial elections can be regarded as a turning point in the region, reflecting the demise of political domination by the agrarian oligarchy from the interior. In Pernambuco the PSD was ousted from power (Cohn, 1976:92-98; Oliveira, 1977:94; Soares, 1982:71).

At the outset of the discussion of these developments, I should draw attention to two peculiarities of Pernambucan politics. Firstly, the UDN and the PSD presented themselves with "inverted signs" in relation to their presentation at a national level. Whereas at a national level the UDN came to represent the most "retrograde forces" in the Pernambucan circumstances the PSD was regarded as the more "retrograde." Secondly, the role of the PTB was rather insignificant in Pernambuco and its capital whereas, by contrast, the PCB played an influential role. This also meant the "political expression" of the Pernambucan version of the *aliança desenvolvimentista* was in the form of a -shortlived- coalition between the UDN and the PCB, rather than the populist PSD/PTB tandem, as was the case at a national level. The break-up of this local coalition in 1961/62 paved the way for the emergence of a "popular government" in Pernambuco.

State Governors - Pernambuco, 1946-1964

<i>year</i>	<i>elected governor</i>	<i>other candidates</i>
1947/50	-Barbosa Lima Sobrinho (PSD): 91,985 votes.	-Neto Campelo (UDN, PSD dissidents, PDC): 91,410 votes; -Pelópidas Silveira (PSB): 58,155 votes; -Eurico Souza Leão (PR): 1,685 votes.
1951/52	-Agamemnon Magalhães (PSD): 196,880 votes.	-João Cleofas (UDN): 186,857 votes.
1953/54	-Etelvino Lins (PSD): 211,393 votes.	-Osório Borba (PSB): 57,400 votes.
1955/58	-Osvaldo Cordeiro de Farias (PSD): 239,315 votes.	-João Cleofas (UDN): 203,611 votes.
1959/62	-Cid Sampaio (UDN): 311,258 votes.	-Jarbas Maranhão (PSD): 210,249 votes.
1963/64	-Miguel Arraes (PST): 264,499 votes.	-João Cleofas (UDN, PR): 251,146 votes; -Armando Monteiro Filho (PRT): 36,499 votes.

(Source: Pandolfi, 1984: 100)

The electoral strength of the PCB in Recife became clear in the presidential elections of 1945.³ After a brief campaign, PCB candidate Yedo Fiúza scored 40% of the vote in Greater Recife, as compared to a national score of 9.7%. The 1947 elections for state legislatures and governors confirmed the PCB electoral position in Recife and elsewhere in the country, notably in cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Pernambuco, where the party claimed to have 25,000 militants, was considered one of the PCB strongholds. The PCB aim at the time was to consolidate the newly won democracy, and it advised its supporters to vote for the "most progressive candidates" for governor. Since neither the Pernambucan UDN nor the PSD was eager to enter into a coalition with the communists, the latter came to

³ Extensive discussions of electoral developments in this period can be found in Lavareda & Sá (1986), Pandolfi (1984) and Soares (1982).

support the *Esquerda Democrática* candidate Pelópidas Silveira.⁴ PSD candidate Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, former director of the IAA who had the support of Agamemnon Magalhães, was elected governor with 37.8% of the Pernambucan vote. With a slight difference, Manuel Neto Campelo, the UDN candidate who also had the support of PSD dissidents, ended second and Silveira ended third with 23.9% of the vote. In Recife, however, he got no less than 57%. Moreover, the PCB elected nine of the 55 delegates to the state Legislative Assembly. As a result of outlawing the party, they lost their mandates again in early 1948.

There were new elections for the presidency and for state governors in 1950. It was the year of Vargas' return to power. Agamemnon Magalhães was the PSD candidate for the Pernambucan governorship, whereas the UDN advanced *usineiro* João Cleofas. The Pernambucan section of the PSD was strongly committed to Cristiano Machado, the PSD candidate for the presidency, and refused to support Vargas who then turned to the local UDN for support. Although Vargas supported Cleofas in return, the latter could not beat the PSD machine supporting Magalhães. For these elections, the PCB had called for blank votes, since it deemed none of the candidates worth voting for. The electoral outcome in Recife nevertheless once more diverged from the state results. In the capital, Cleofas got 42,567 votes against 39,467 for Magalhães, who reacted by calling Recife a *cidade cruel*. Cleofas was appointed to head the Ministry of Agriculture in the Vargas government.

The sudden death of Agamemnon Magalhães necessitated new elections in 1952. This time an exceptional reconciliation took place between the PSD and the UDN, who united behind Etelvino Lins, Secretary of Public Security during the *Estado Novo* period, who had replaced Magalhães when the latter was called to the Ministry of Justice to articulate the democratic transition in 1945. In those days, Lins had gained national publicity with the brutal repression of a demonstration against the dictatorship, producing two martyrs for democracy. This time he not only gained the support of the UDN and the PSD, but also of nine smaller parties that joined the *Coligação Democrática Pernambucana*, also known as the *União Sagrada dos Partidos*, to counter the menace of the Left. The leftist candidate, PSB member and journalist Osório Borba, was accused of being an atheist and supporting the right of divorce. These accusations gained the Sacred Union the backing of the Church. Borba was swept away in the following elections, but once more Recife was the exception with 36,316 votes going to Borba against 30,276 for Lins.

⁴ In various states the PCB entered into rather improbable coalitions with conservative or right-wing populist candidates in the run-up to these elections. Pelópidas Silveira was a socialist and the Pernambucan coalition had a markedly "popular character." Silveira had become popular during the six-month period when he was Mayor of Recife in 1946, combating market speculation by regulating fish prices during the Semana Santa and opening new feiras livres.

Etelvino Lins attempted to use his short mandate to construct a coalition of anti-Vargas forces to carry him to the presidency in 1955. He represented the PSD segments that were unhappy about what they saw as Vargas' leftist tendencies and sought the collaboration of the UDN, which also saw Vargas as a promotor of subversion and disorder and abhorred the *república sindicalista*. However, with his anti-Vargas unity schemes, Lins also managed to alienate the *pessedistas históricos* of Pernambuco, notably the *coronéis*. Giving in to pressure from his coalition partners, Lins abrogated their traditional "right" to appoint the police in the areas under their control. Things came to a head when, against the wishes of the *históricos*, Lins started to articulate the extra-partidarian -and not even Pernambucan-candidature of General Cordeiro de Farias, strongly opposed to Vargas, for the gubernatorial elections of 1954. One of the famous *coronéis*, Chico Heráclio from Limoeiro, commented:

For my part I am proud of having decisively contributed to three victories of my party, and in the last elections I gave 6,062 votes to Etelvino Lins against only 48 to his opponent and those came from traitors, communists and assassins.....With his stubbornness the governor may finish off the party (cf. Pandolfi, 1984:158).

At the same time, the candidature of Cordeiro de Farias provoked a crisis in the local UDN. At the national level, there was strong pressure to support it, but at a local level the decision was finally made to launch João Cleofas. In the end, Cordeiro de Farias became the candidate of the Pernambucan PSD, whereas João Cleofas was supported by the UDN, the PSD dissidents, the PST, the PTN, the PTB, the PSB and the PCB in its "anxiety to rout the retrograde forces of *pessedismo*." Cordeiro de Farias won the elections by some 36,000 votes of a total of about 440,000. In Recife, Cleofas did just a bit better than Cordeiro de Farias. The negligible size of the difference can partly be explained by the fact that many of the voters who supported the PCB preferred not to follow the party's advice and cast a blank vote. The difference between the two candidates was between ultra-conservative and extremely ultra-conservative (Cavalcanti, 1978:268).

The emergence of the ideology of *nacional desenvolvimentismo* and the 1954 change of the PCB strategy, which now started to explicitly pursue a strategy of "national democratic" anti-imperialism allowing for alliances with the "national bourgeoisie," served as the background for the events of the 1955-1964 period (Jaccoud, 1990; Soares, 1982:40-43). In 1955 the *Liga de Emancipação Nacional*, an organization where communists and various kinds of nationalists played a prominent role, and which would soon be disbanded by the Kubitschek government,

organized the *Congreso de Salvação do Nordeste*.⁵ One of the results of the rapprochement among communists, the PTB and other left-wing nationalists, was the formation of the *Frente do Recife* at the city elections for mayor in 1955 (the first time the city was allowed to elect a mayor since 1892). Pelópidas Silveira was the candidate of the *Frente*, a combination of the PCB, the PTB and the PSB. The UDN did not participate in the elections, but some of its supporters were active in the campaign for Pelópidas. In spite of Church efforts to keep people from voting for a candidate so manifestly supported by communists, he received 67% of the vote. There were three other candidates. The PSD candidate ended last. From that moment until the military *coup* of 1964, Recife was administrated by progressive mayors -Silveira, Arraes and Silveira again- who promoted neighborhood associations and "popular participation," a point I will discuss later.

If the 1955 municipal elections witnessed the first manifestation of the *Frente do Recife*, it was the 1958 gubernatorial elections that brought the demise of PSD dominance in Pernambuco. It was brought down by a local variety of the *aliança nacional desenvolvimentista*, consisting of the parties united in the *Frente* and the UDN as representative of the *classes produtoras*, a designation marking them off from the parasitic and backward oligarchy of the interior. In the opposition against a new tax code proposed by the Cordeiro de Farias-administration, the *Oposições Unidas* came into being. The new code, which passed the state legislative with the support of the "situationist" group, met with the fierce opposition of the Pernambucan industrialists and businessmen, who had not been consulted. They subsequently issued a manifesto and called for a general one-hour strike, paralyzing Recife as well as various other municipalities. Moreover, the movement gained the support of the trade unions, who argued that the new code went against workers' interests. From that moment on, the Cordeiro de Farias administration became increasingly isolated and clear opposition was articulated in the Legislative Assembly, where Miguel Arraes (PSD at the time) and communist deputy Clodomir Moraes (elected on a PTB ticket) played a prominent role. A second clash occurred

⁵ The outcome of the Congress was the Carta de Salvação do Nordeste, which partly reflected the theses adopted by the PCB at its 4th Congress (1954) (cf. Cavalcanti, 1978:233-235; Soares, 1982:51-63). At the time, concern about Northeastern underdevelopment and its social and political implications was growing. In 1956 the Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (CNBB), which had been created in 1952, organized the Encontro de Campina Grande to debate the problems of the Northeast. Further contributions to the discussion of the Northeastern problematics were made at the Encontro de Salgueiro of 1958, where PSD politicians of the sertão and agreste presented their views, and the Seminário de Garanhuns, sponsored by Pernambucan industrialists and with President Kubitschek attending the opening ceremony (Cohn, 1976:78-103). Meanwhile the government had created the Grupo de Trabalho para o Desenvolvimento do Nordeste (GTDN). The severe drought of 1958 served as a catalyst for the discussions and in 1959 the "Furtado Report" (GTDN, 1959) was published, which diagnosed the increasing regional differences between the Northeast and the Centre-South. The recommendations made in the report provided the basis for the creation of the SUDENE in December 1959, though the agency was not to become operational until two years later, due to obstruction by northeastern power groups (cf. Hirschmann, 1973).

over the nomination of Clélio Lemos, the author of the new tax code, as president of the legislative. Another *lock out* was called, which was to last 72 hours this time, but could not prevent Lemos' nomination by the "situationist" majority.

Following this clash, relations between the state government and the *classes produtoras* improved somewhat. Internally the PSD made an effort at reunification which was successful in that the party managed to come up with a unanimously approved candidate for the 1958 elections, Jarbas Maranhão. However, the PSD now alienated the small parties that hitherto had remained in its gravitational field. The *Oposições Unidas* came up with Cid Sampaio, president of the *Federação de Indústrias de Pernambuco*, who had distinguished himself in the opposition to the tax code, for governor and Pelópidas Silveira for vice-governor. The coalition of UDN, PTB, PSB, PSP and the illegal PCB was officialized in April 1958, when they issued a statement promising to

march together in the upcoming gubernatorial election, aiming above all at the economic and political recuperation of the region and combating all the retrograde methods of exercising of public power (Soares, 1982:67; cf. Pandolfi, 1984:187).

During the subsequent campaign, the left-wing segments of the new coalition managed to convince their supporters to vote for *usineiro* Cid Sampaio by stressing the *desenvolvimentista* theses of industrial growth, regional planning, economic development according to nationalist norms, political and economic recuperation of the region and combating retrograde methods of exercising public power. The need to vote for Sampaio was underscored by the appearance of Luís Carlos Prestes at a famous *comício* in *Casa Amarela* on September 25, 1958, and the support given by Goulart. In spite of a counter-campaign by the Church, emphasizing the communist support for Sampaio, he gained 60% of the vote in Pernambuco and even scored 79% in Recife. PSD domination had come to an end.

The local variety of the *aliança desenvolvimentista* did not last long. The creation of an *assessoria sindical* seemed promising and Sampaio enthusiastically set about dismounting the PSD influence inside the state apparatus. He soon announced, however, that left-wing electoral support did not mean it could influence his governmental program. UDN collaboration regarding the social-economic reforms proposed by the Left was minimal at best. A newly created *assessoria sindical* played a role in the negotiations of a dockers' strike in 1959, but opportunities for reform reached their outer limits where the increasingly difficult situation in the countryside was concerned. In 1959, after peasant demonstrations, the *Engenho Galiléia*, where the Pernambucan Cattle Raisers and Planters Society

(SAPP)⁶ -the precursor of the *Ligas-* had been founded, was expropriated. A *Companhia de Revenda e Colonização* (CRC) was set up to mediate the sale of parts of privately owned estates to the peasantry. The proposal for a land tax which would weigh heavier on underutilized land was undercut when the federal government decided this type of legislation was of federal competence. For the Left, the alliance with Sampaio's UDN resulted in disappointments.

Meanwhile, Miguel Arraes, who had been Sampaio's Secretary of Finance for some time, had become the *Frente* candidate to succeed Pelópidas Silveira as mayor of Recife in 1959. He also had the support of Sampaio and the UDN against PSD candidate Antônio Pereira and a third candidate launched by the PR. Arraes won the election with 52% of the vote.

The presidential elections of 1960 led to a final break between Sampaio and Arraes. The Pernambucan UDN now fell in line with the UDN on a national level in its support for Jânio Quadros. Arraes and the Left supported General Lott. Even in Recife, however, Quadros got 51% of the vote, against 37% for Lott and 12% for Adhemar de Barros. During the Quadros presidency and thereafter tension between the *Frente* and the UDN steadily mounted in the general climate of polarization. In close collaboration with the IBAD and the Alliance for Progress, combating "subversion" became one of the primary aims of the Sampaio administration (Jaccoud, 1990). A case in point is the creation of the *Fundação da Promoção Social* as an alphabetization agency. It was the conservative response to the *Movimento de Cultura Popular* (MCP), which was promoted by the municipal administration of Recife under Arraes.⁷ Moreover, Sampaio attempted to bring the SUDENE under the control of the Northeastern governors, an idea that met with strong opposition from the leftist *desenvolvimentistas*. The final break between the *Frente* and Sampaio did not come until 1962, when the PCB published an open letter stating that

Cid has turned his back on the measures defended during the electoral campaign. He has started to suppress the workers' movement. He established an exclusively *Udenista* government, associat-

⁶ The *Sociedade Agrícola de Plantadores e Pecuaristas de Pernambuco* (SAPP) had been founded in 1955 as a mutual benefit association. Its aims were to hire a school teacher and purchase seeds and implements. Another concern was to buy decent coffins instead of the cardboard boxes provided by the municipality for charity burials. There are various accounts of the early years of the SAPP, some (e.g. Moraes, 1970) claiming that it was inspired by the PCB, which had made similar attempts in the 1940s, others emphasizing the role of Francisco Julião (see also: Andrade, 1986; Castro, 1969; Forman, 1971; Hewitt, 1969; Julião, 1972; de Kadt, 1970; Souza Martins, 1985).

⁷ The aim of the MCP was alphabetization in an effort to enfranchise segments of the population that until then had been kept from voting, rather than wait for the literacy requirement to be dropped. The method developed by Paulo Freire could teach people to read and write in about forty hours, hence the slogan that it would make a "revolution in forty hours." It promoted the *concientização* of the pupils, which is why it was deemed subversive, all the more so since communists participated in the movement in uneasy coexistence with radical Catholics (Batista Neto, 1987; Farias, 1986; Kadt, 1970; Weber, 1984).

ed himself with American imperialism and attempted to undercut SUDENE (cf. Soares, 1982:78).

This left the *Frente* free to come up with its own candidate for the gubernatorial elections of 1962: Miguel Arraes.

Arraes did not solely rely on the support of the *Frente*. In his earlier career, he had established good contacts with some of the old PSD groups in the interior. Arraes's campaign was to be financed by José Ermírio de Moraes, the nationalist owner of the Votorantim group who had earlier contributed to Quadros' campaign and was now was in the running for a senate seat. The PSD was divided. One of its leaders, landowner-politician Paulo Guerra, readily accepted the vice-gubernatorial nomination on Arraes' ticket. Part of the PSD did not follow suit, however, since Arraes would not publicly denounce communism or promise not to appoint any communists in his administration. In the end, this group gave its support to Armando Monteiro (PRT) who stood no chance of winning. Arraes' principal opponent was UDN's perennial loser, João Cleofas. He was backed by Cid Sampaio, who had tried at first to find a "more dynamic candidate," and received ample support through the Alliance for Progress and the IBAD, which channeled funds provided by a number of multinational corporations. They mounted a campaign against "atheist communism" and Cleofas' supporters even built a replica of the Berlin Wall in downtown Recife. Their campaign was successful in that it diminished middle-class support for Arraes, but it could not keep him from winning the election with 48% of the vote against 45% for Cleofas. The vote in Recife tipped the balance, with 58% for Arraes against 34% for Cleofas. In the "interior," Cleofas got 50% against 43% for Arraes.

In a famous inaugural address, Arraes reiterated the main points of the radical *nacional desenvolvimentista* electoral platform he was elected on, without failing to stress the regional dimension. The election, he declared, marked the emergence of the People as an historical category. It had now made itself government in Pernambuco. The time had come to put an end to paternalism and godfather-like governments that concede favors, and to create a government that enables the people to participate in the administrative process (cf. Farias, 1986:147-160; Debert, 1979).

However, the new administration had little room to maneuver in. In Arraes' cabinet, there were a number of technicians who backed the popular front program, but the PSD group that had supported him also had to be taken into account. Moreover, the PSD had the majority in the Pernambucan legislative. Soon Vice-Governor Paulo Guerra started to articulate what he called a "parallel government." At the same time, Arraes could hardly count on support from the federal government, since Goulart regarded him as a rival and suspected him of communist leanings. Brizola, on the other hand, thought Arraes too conciliatory. In the climate of polarization that marked the final years of populist democracy, the *Frente* also

gradually lost its middle-class support. That became clear at the municipal elections of 1963. Pelópidas Silveira was the *Frente* candidate to succeed Arraes at the head of the municipal executive. He only won by a small margin from Cid Sampaio's brother, Lael Sampaio, while Augusto Lucena of the UDN opposition bloc was elected vice-mayor.

During the Arraes administration Pernambuco became "the most democratic state of the Union," as reporter and well-known author Antônio Callado (1979) put it in one of his articles. Labor disputes were no longer police matters, but had to be negotiated. There was room for a host of initiatives, for example in the field of popular education. The principal concern, however, was the situation in the countryside. The Peasant Leagues had come to adopt increasingly radical points of view, but their influence was on the wane. Communists of various sorts as well as more or less radicalized Catholics had, in frantic competition, substantially increased the organization of rural workers, particularly in the sugar zone (de Kadt, 1970). Shortly before Arraes assumed the governorship, the first large strike in the history of Pernambucan sugar production broke out. Through the mediation of the governor elect, the strike ended four days later and a wage increase of 80% was conceded. Later negotiations resulted in the *Acordo de Campo*, fixing the pay for various tasks in the sugar fields in detail. After the *Estatuto do Trabalhador Rural* was proclaimed by the central government in June 1963, it was most strictly applied in Pernambuco, suddenly bringing relative prosperity to many sugar workers. As to the Leagues, Arraes mediated in some of the cases where estates were invaded and simultaneously called for the implementation of the *reformas de base* by the Goulart government.

By 1963, however, developments were clearly on a collision course. Early that year, the Pernambucan *usineiros* obstructed the sugar supply in the state of Pernambuco. The government intervened, seizing 40,000 bags of sugar, to guarantee the supply to the population. In the first months of 1964, the crisis intensified. There were rumors of impending federal intervention by Goulart, who might thus rid himself of the right-wing governor of Guanabara, Carlos Lacerda, and of Arraes in one fell swoop. Peasants had occupied one of the Pernambucan sugar mills and students were staging demonstrations against the decision to grant SUDENE's tax incentives to foreign investors. In March 1964 business circles staged another *lock out* in response to the call for a general strike by the trade union movement in support of the labor legislation. Through Arraes' mediation, the dispute was settled and the *lock out* only lasted one day. The Pernambucan right wing had by then become deeply involved in plotting for the April 1st *coup*.

As elsewhere, the take-over met with little resistance. Two students were killed in Recife at a demonstration backing the governor, but there was hardly any organized resistance. After some hesitation among the military command due to Arraes' refusal to resign, he was arrested. The Pernambucan legislature debated the

matter and concluded with 45 against 17 votes and one abstention that Arraes was no longer able to perform the functions of his office. Vice-Governor Paulo Guerra, who stood in close contact with the conspirators, took charge. The next day the Municipal Council of Recife voted 20 to 1 to oust Pelópidas Silveira. Vice-Mayor Augusto Lucena (UDN) took charge.

4.3 Neighborhood associations and municipal politics, 1945-1964

It was the developments above that distinguished the neighborhood associativism in Recife from neighborhood associations elsewhere in the country. The years after 1945 witnessed the emergence of associations viewed as the precursors of the ones that would later would be sponsored by the *Frente* administration. In some cases, initiative was taken by communists, who promoted the formation of *Comitês Populares e Democráticos de Bairro* at the time. Other associations focussed on defending the interests and the rights of the residents of certain areas and promoting progress there by demanding schools and medical posts to promote the well-being of their members. Still others tried to "moralize" their members and establish harmonious relations between workers and employers (Bezerra, 1965:41; César, 1985:162; Melo, 1985a:59). The organizations with a left-wing orientation were subject to regular police harassment.

A real expansion of neighborhood associations took place from 1955 onward, promoted by Pelópidas Silveira during his campaign for the mayoralty of Recife. He had picked up the idea during a trip to São Paulo, where he became acquainted with the activities of the *Sociedades de Amigos do Bairro* (SABs).⁸ The groups supporting Pelópidas, notably the PCB, set about forming similar organizations in Recife to pressure the *vereadores* (city councilors), since Pelópidas could not count on a majority in the City Council. The municipality provided a model for the Statutes of the associations, but did not interfere in their internal affairs, nor did it require the legalization of the associations in order to recognize them as interlocutor (Jaccoud, 1990:54-60). The general objective was "to promote the well-being of the community and struggle for improvement of the neighborhood," but some associations went further and included the "promotion of the proletarian class" in their Statutes or the education of their members "according to democratic

⁸ Most of the SABs in São Paulo had been created on the basis of electoral committees that had supported Jânio Quadros in his campaign for the mayoralty of São Paulo in 1953. They seem to have developed into representative neighborhood organizations, but after 1964 became increasingly dominated by politicians of the ARENA party, which supported the new regime. The SABs were transformed into essentially recreational entities, whereas from the late 1960s onward the emerging ecclesial base communities provided for a new mode of organization in the neighborhood movement (Moisés, 1982; Singer, 1980).

and nationalist principles, the economic independence of the country and the structural reforms needed for its social development" as the *Associação Defensora dos Moradores do Alto do Mandu* put it (cf. César, 1985:163-164; URB/DPU, 1987b).

A related innovation was the organization of biweekly *audiências populares* in the Santa Isabel theater attended by Silveira himself as well as his cabinet members, the directors of the various municipal departments and the chief engineers of the various districts of the city. At a later stage, these audiences were also organized in the neighborhoods to facilitate access by the population. Some of the demands made by the newly created associations revolved around the urban land question. The payment of the *foro* increasingly became a source of conflict. In 1961, discussion raged on this issue in the *Sociedade de Amigos de Casa Amarela* (SACA, 1961). In the adjacent area of Bomba do Hemetério and the surrounding *altos*, people I interviewed recalled a *foro*-collector who used to ride his horse back and forth through the *mocambos* if no money was forthcoming at his call for *foro*, and how people started contesting the *foro* in the early 1960s. In subsequent chapters, I shall examine examples of the struggle for land in greater detail.

Other demands pertained to paving streets⁹, lighting, assistance with landfills, building schools and installing distribution posts of the municipal program aimed at reducing food prices by eliminating intermediaries. Demands were also made for new bus lines, which were partly met by a newly founded municipal *Companhia de Transportes Urbanos* (CTU) and the introduction of trolleycars in Recife (cf. César, 1985:164; Mendonça, Cavalheira & Pereira, 1987).

The *Frente*-mayor's initiatives met with fierce hostility on the part of the *vereadores*, however, since they saw the clientelist hold over "their constituencies" undermined. They overcame party allegiances to form a united front in the debate on neighborhood associations, claiming that the associations were a cover-up for communist cells, a view shared by the Secretary of Public Security of the staunchly anti-communist Pernambuco government under Cordeiro de Farias. In an official document, they stipulated that the number of associations should be limited to five per neighborhood, and that the leaders should be selected by the *vereadores* with influence in the area. Pelópidas, however, refused to take their complaints into consideration, arguing that the executive should not interfere with the organizations of civil society and that during the electoral campaign, he had promised that popular participation would be based on genuinely popular organizations, a promise he intended to keep. The problems assumed crisis dimensions when Vice-

⁹ The introduction of the *mutirão* system, with the municipality providing the construction material and the community the labor force for various tasks, was another non-conventional approach. In richer areas like *Boa Viagem*, the residents' contribution might be in cash and the works were executed by hired labor.

Mayor Vieira de Menezes, who replaced Silveira during a trip to Rio in May 1956, issued a series of measures in total contradiction with the policy hitherto pursued. He was backed in this attitude by a majority of the City Council, but it led to the resignation of the municipal secretaries. The crisis was resolved with the hasty return of Silveira, who was welcomed by a popular demonstration of support (Cavalcanti, 1978:259; C ezar, 1985; Pandolfi, 1984:178).

Nevertheless, the decision to organize *audi ncias populares* in the neighborhoods themselves partly seems to have been designed to meet the demands made by the *vereadores*. At meetings with the municipal authorities

the *vereador do bairro* would be present, no matter what party he belonged to, as well as the doctor, the priest, the teacher, the parson - in a general climate of concurrence of wills to do something about the most important problems (Cavalcanti, 1978:257).

These policies were to be continued when Arraes became mayor in 1959.

With Cid Sampaio as governor of Pernambuco and Arraes as mayor of the capital, the relationship between the two became one of the principal sites of conflict, whereas the conflict between the municipal executive and the legislative authorities was attenuated somewhat, since Arraes was more flexible in his dealings with the *vereadores* (Cavalcanti, 1978:284; C ezar, 1985:169). The divergence between the two executives was already evident when they presented different options to solve the water supply problem in Recife. The municipality advanced a project of public *chafarizes* (fountains). The state government, by contrast, argued for domestic connections. Whereas the former solution would broaden access to drinking water, the latter would be more profitable for industrial enterprises. In the end, the proposal advanced by the municipality prevailed, gaining the support of the SUDENE and resulting in the construction of 53 fountains in the poorer parts of the city. This contributed to the fall in state government support for SUDENE (Oliveira, 1977:96; IAB, 1982:17).

The relationship between the two executives became increasingly marked by the polarization of the early 1960s, as also could be noted in the competition with respect to adult alphabetization. Similarly, the organization of neighborhood associations became a bone of contention. In April 1962, shortly after the break between the *Frente* and the UDN, an *Uni o dos Bairros do Recife* (UBR) was launched. It was sponsored by Cid Sampaio to counter the left-wing influence in the neighborhood associations. The UBR promoted the creation of *Uni es de Moradores*. According to the Statutes of the organization the aim was to struggle for neighborhood progress of the neighborhood and stimulate civic-mindedness. Neighborhood youths, between the ages of 15 and 18 years were to be organized into "legions" to cooperate in social assistance campaigns. Younger children could become *soldadinhos do bairro*. The president and organizer of the UBR was Severino Barbosa, a radio reporter closely linked to Cid Sampaio. With his daily

radio talks in the program *Dramas da Cidade*, Barbosa was in a good position to undertake the endeavor. The UBR was a strongly hierarchic organization under the surveillance of its president. There is no doubt that it was partly financed and supported by the Alliance for Progress, the Food for Peace Program and the IBAD, and it played a part in the efforts to mobilize popular support for Cleofas in the gubernatorial elections of 1962.

From early 1962 onward, the forces supporting the *Frente* had also been articulating the formation of a master organization, which resulted in the creation of the *Federação das Associações dos Bairros do Estado de Pernambuco* (FABEP) in July 1963. By that time, there were tens of neighborhood associations. The decision to create the FABEP was made at a joint meeting of *Frente*-oriented trade unions (COSINTRA), the administrative council of the Peasant Leagues, the Pernambucan Union of Students (UEP), the Federation of Civil Servants and neighborhood associations. According to the Statutes, the FABEP aim was to install and defend "revindicative associations of legitimate collective and nationalist interests." It was to promote the establishment of an *Associação dos Foreiros do Recife*. Apart from defending democracy, nationalist principles and development, the FABEP was to promote debates on a range of themes concerning "national developmentalism" (e.g. agrarian and urban reform, nationalization of banks and foreign enterprises, housing, health, education, transportation) and support the mobilization of "workers, students and other classes" in the pursuit of justified demands and in "rebellion for democratic legality and the defence of national sovereignty." Delegates from the affiliated associations met biweekly and in the first months of 1964, various departments were founded.

The FABEP actively participated in the *I Diálogo Governo-Povo*, organized in March 1963 by the state government now under Arraes. Trade unions, rural associations of various types and students also participated in this *Diálogo*. At the end of that year, the FABEP organized the *1^o Encontro de Associações de Bairro* and sent a letter of demands to Mayor Pelópidas Silveira and Governor Arraes. It demanded more frequent meetings with the neighborhood associations, the foundation of a Council of Neighborhood Associations and participation in municipal planning commissions. In March 1964, these demands were discussed with the mayor and his secretaries. Silveira called for a stop of the payment of *foro* and announced that the local associations would have the support of the Legal Department of the municipality. He also sent a letter to the City Council to grant the associations access to the planning commissions. Further developments were cut short by the *coup* of 1964 and the activities of the FABEP were terminated. The UBR, which had expected its role to be enhanced, also ceased to function (César, 1985).

4.4. The populist and the popular

As has been noted above, it is a matter of debate whether the events in Pernambuco between 1955 and 1964 can adequately be understood as an instance of populism. In the usual theorizations, the emergence of populism is related to late capitalist industrialization in peripheral countries.¹⁰ Populist leaders can emerge in a situation of hegemonic deadlock between an emerging industrial bourgeoisie and a still powerful agrarian oligarchy. This balance of forces allows for a great relative autonomy of the state and political leaders, usually from the middle classes, who mobilize the urban "masses" to further industrialization, but then clamp down on them again in an attempt to avoid the threats posed by this very mobilization. The "masses" and the working class in particular, are not allowed to play an autonomous role but serve as a "mass of maneuver" to support political projects that are not their own.

Authors who identify the developments in Pernambuco with populism (e.g. Debert, 1979:69; Soares, 1982; Weffort, 1978) usually cite Arraes' use of the word *povo* and his references to the "national community" to conclude that his government should be characterized as a form of populism in which real conflicts, i.e. class conflicts, are mystified. Authors who argue that the developments culminating in the election of Arraes as governor can not be interpreted as an instance of populism (e.g. Brayner, 1987; Camargo, 1979; Oliveira, 1977) argue that the dynamics of the process were different. Rather than being mobilized in support of a project alien to their own interests, the popular sectors in Pernambuco increasingly assumed a leading role. Although the Arraes government can not be characterized as "the people in power," it can be regarded as a popular power-to-be in a conjuncture of hegemonic crisis of the traditionally dominant classes. The local variety of the *aliança nacional desenvolvimentista*, i.e. the electoral coalition between the local *classes produtoras* and the popular sectors in support of Cid Sampaio, was but an episode in this process. The main deviation from "classical populism" is that in the case of Pernambuco, in the absence of a fraction of the dominant classes willing or able to mobilize the masses in support of a hegemonic project, effective participation of the masses in politics was promoted rather than contained. Instead of relying on individualizing and manipulative relations with the state through a leader, the local constellation made for an extension citizenship and

¹⁰ Thus the populist mode of political regulation is regarded as an intermediary mode between central capitalist democracies and countries industrializing under authoritarian socialist regimes. See, for example Touraine (1973, 1978). Poulantzas (1974) takes a similar tack in his theorization of the "exceptional state" which provided the spring board for Laclau's (1977) elaboration of a general theory of populism.

democratic participation articulated with a radical version of *nacional desenvolvimentismo*.¹¹

The neighborhood associations which emerged during the 1955-1964 period, were promoted by the *Frente* administration to strengthen its position. In her study of this development, C zar (1985:179) stresses that this "absence of spontaneity" did not have a counterpart in a lack of authenticity. Her evaluation links up with the view that the *Frente* represented and was closely articulated with popular movements.¹² The radical version of *nacional desenvolvimentismo* provided the discursive matrix for the associations regarded as supports for the struggle of workers or "other classes," rather than a force in their own right, as would be the case after the introduction of the "urban social movement"-discourse in the 1970s. The *Frente* provided the organizational matrix. The nature of the *Frente* and the fact that the executive did not directly interfere in the directives of the associations (C zar, 1985:163-164; Jaccoud, 1990:91) contrasted with the neighborhood associations that emerged in S o Paulo in the 1950s under the tutelage of right-wing populist J nio Quadros. Through the dynamics of the process in Recife, urban politics started to come out of the "parliamentary and palatial spheres" with the emergence of an alternative forum for debate over urban policies and more general political issues (Brayner, 1987:214-217). The recognition of neighborhood associations as legitimate interlocutors and representatives of the popular sectors effectively called into question the representativeness of the right-wing dominated City Council (Jaccoud, 1990:54-60). This development was cut short by the military *coup*.

It was the specific constellation of Pernambucan politics and the emergence of a "popular politics" that infused the neighborhood associations in Recife and their relations with the local executive with a specific meaning, contrasting with that attributed to the Paulista neighborhood associations of the 1950s. In Recife, they were part and parcel of what became known as *O Tempo de Arraes*, the "Time of Arraes." This signification turned the 1955-1964 period into a legitimate reference when, after some twenty years of military rule, a new attempt would be made to democratize municipal politics in Recife.

¹¹ The *Ligas Camponesas* proposed a revolutionary socialist project with the peasantry as protagonist, but by 1962 their influence was on the wane.

¹² To put it differently, one might say that in the case of the *Frente*-promoted associations, practical interests were not dissociated from strategic interests. The UBR, by contrast, stood for inauthenticity, or a dissociation of practical and strategic interests.