

**THE MEDIA, THE INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC SPHERE,
AND THE KILLING OF STREET CHILDREN IN BRAZIL**

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ERRATA

page 35, third paragraph: "As Mohammadi (1997) argues..." should read, "As Boyd-Barret (1997: 24) argues..."

page 69, second paragraph: "on the grounds of the incompetence..." should read, "on the grounds of the police incompetence..."

page 116, section 4.3, first paragraph: "and way in which they were reproduced..." should read, "and the way in which they were reproduced..."

page 150, section 4.10, first paragraph: "neo-liberal program..." should read, "neo-liberal programme..."

page 253, section 8.1, third paragraph: "examine the reason why these measures had two such different outcomes..." should read: "examine the reason why these struggles for reform had two such different outcomes..."

page 301, Mohammadi, A. (1997) *International Communication and Globalization*, in Mohammadi, A. *International Communication and Globalization*. London: Sage, pp. 11-26, should read as follows: Boyd-Barret, J. O. (1997) *International Communication and Globalization: contradictions and directions*, in Mohammadi, A. (ed.) *International Communication and Globalization*. London: Sage, pp. 11-26.

ABSTRACT

From the mid 1980s, killings of poor youths by the police and death squads escalated in Brazil. Nevertheless, these did not provoke public outrage, as protests against the murders were silenced by primary definitions, provided mainly by the police and the courts. These justified the killings by emphasizing the criminal behaviour of the youths. They were in turn reproduced by the press, which drew on cultural and social prejudices against 'street children'.

With the transition to democracy in 1985, the national movement of street children was organized with the support of UNICEF and the Catholic Church. The movement campaigned against the killings, and also for changes in policies - something that was deeply opposed by law and order sectors. In the early 1990s, the 'killing of street children' in Brazil became a prominent issue both nationally and internationally, particularly following Amnesty International's sponsorship of the campaign. As a result, a new statute reflecting the proposals of the movement was enacted, and a Commission of Inquiry was set up in Congress to investigate the killings.

This thesis examines the media in relation to the development of this campaign. It analyses how the killing of street children and the moves to protect them were reported in the Brazilian press. It considers what influenced this reporting, and what resulted from this. In particular, it seeks to document how a campaign initiated in Brazil was taken up by the international media and how this, in turn, influenced Brazilian politics. In short, it seeks to shed new light on the emergence of the international public sphere, a subject widely discussed but little investigated.

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This thesis cannot remedy the problems it narrates, and this was not its object. However, I hope that it can add something to the news reporting and early academic work on the subject by shedding more light on, and maybe changing, somewhat indifferent and prejudiced views about such issues, as has been my own experience, and also that of some journalists who investigated the killings of poor children and adolescents in Brazil.

List of Abbreviations

ABI – Associação Brasileira de Imprensa (Brazilian Press Association)

ABRAPIA – Associação Multiprofissional de Proteção à Infância e à Adolescência (Multiprofessional Association for the Protection of Children and Adolescents - NGO)

ABRINQ – Associação de Fabricantes de Brinquedos (Association of Toy Manufacturers - NGO)

AERP – Assessoria Especial de Relações Públicas (Special Public Relations Division - GOV)

AFP – *Agence France Press* (French news agency)

ANDI – Agência de Notícias dos Direitos da Infância (News Agency for Children's Rights - NGO)

AP – *Associated Press* (American news agency)

ASSEAF – Associação dos Ex-alunos da FUNABEM (Association of former students of FUNABEM - NGO)

AT – *A Tarde* (Brazilian regional daily newspaper - Bahia)

CB – *Correio Brasiliense* (Brazilian daily newspaper - Brasilia)

CBIA - Centro Brasileiro para a Infância e Adolescência (Brazilian Centre for Children and Adolescents - GOV)

CDDPH - Conselho de Defesa dos Direitos da Pessoa Humana (National Human Rights Council – GOV)

CEAP – Centro de Articulação de Populações Marginalizadas (Centre for the Coordination of Marginalized Populations – NGO)

CEDECA – Centro de Defesa da Criança e do Adolescente (Centre for the Defence of Children and Adolescents – NGO)

CEDI - Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação (Ecumenical Centre of Documentation and Information)

CESE – Coordenação Ecumenica de Serviço (Ecumenical Centre for the Coordination of Services)

CNBB – Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (National Conference of Brazilian Bishops)

CNN – *Cable News Network*

CONANDA – Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente
(National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents – GOV)

CPI – Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito (Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry)

CTV – Comissão Teotônio Vilela (Teotônio Vilela Commission – NGO)

DCI – Defence for Children International (INGO)

DOPS – Departamento de Ordem Política e Social (Department of Political and Social Order of the Federal Police)

DP – *Diário de Pernambuco* (Brazilian regional daily newspaper - Pernambuco)

EFE – Spanish news agency

EP – *El País* (Spanish daily newspaper)

ESG – Escola Superior de Guerra (Superior War School)

FEBEM – Fundação Estadual para o Bem-estar do Menor (State foundation for the welfare of minors - GOV)

FORUM DCA – Forum dos Direitos da Criança (Forum for the Rights of Children – pool of NGOs)

FSP – *Folha de São Paulo* (Brazilian quasi-national daily newspaper - São Paulo)

FUNABEM – Fundação Nacional para o Bem-estar do Menor (National foundation for the welfare of minors – GOV)

G7 – Group of Seven

GAJOP – Gabinete de Assessoria Jurídica a Organizações Populares (Office for legal assistance to popular organizations – NGO)

GD – *The Guardian* (British daily newspaper)

GM – *Gazeta Mercantil* (Brazilian quasi-national daily business newspaper – São Paulo)

GOV – Governmental agency

IADB – Interamerican Development Bank

IBASE – Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Econômicas e Sociais (Brazilian Institute for Economic and Social Analysis – NGO)

IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics – GOV)

ICCB – International Catholic Child Bureau

IE – *Isto É* (Brazilian news and current affairs weekly)

IHT – International Herald Tribune

IMF – International Monetary Fund

INGO – International non-government organization

IPEA – Instituto de Pesquisas Sociais Aplicadas (Institute for applied social research)

JB – *Jornal do Brasil* (Brazilian quasi-national daily newspaper - Rio)

JBR – *Jornal de Brasília* (Brazilian daily newspaper - Brasilia)

JC – *Jornal do Comércio* (Brazilian daily regional newspaper - Recife)

JT – *Jornal da Tarde* (Brazilian daily newspaper - São Paulo)

LM – *Le Monde* (French daily newspaper)

MNDH – Movimento Nacional de Direitos Humanos (National Human Rights Movement –NGO)

MNMMR – Movimento Nacional de Meninos e Meninas de Rua (National Movement of Street Boys and Girls – NGO)

NEAM – Núcleo de Estudos e Ação Sobre o Menor (Centre for studies and action for minors – NGO)

NEPI – Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisas sobre a Infância (Centre for studies and research about infancy – Federal University of Rio de Janeiro)

NEV-USP – Núcleo de Estudos da Violência – Universidade de São Paulo (Centre for the Study of Violence – University of São Paulo)

NGO – Non-government organization

NW – *Newsweek* (American weekly news magazine)

NYT – *The New York Times* (American daily newspaper)

OAB – Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil (Brazilian Bar Association)

OAF – Organização de Auxílio Fraternal (Organization for Fraternity Help – Catholic organization)

OD – *O Dia* (Brazilian daily newspaper - Rio)

OE – *O Estado de São Paulo* (Brazilian quasi-national daily newspaper – São Paulo)

OG – *O Globo* (Brazilian quasi-national daily newspaper – Rio)

OP – *O Povo* (Brazilian regional daily newspaper - Ceará)

PCB – Partido Comunista Brasileiro (Brazilian Communist Party)
PDT – Partido Democrata Trabalhista (Democratic Labour Party)
PSB – Partido Socialista Brasileiro (Brazilian Socialist Party)
PSDB – Partido Social Democrata Brasileiro (Brazilian Social Democratic Party)
PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party)
PV – Partido Verde (Green Party)
TI – Time (American weekly news magazine)
UH – Última Hora (Brazilian daily newspaper - Rio)
UN – United Nations
UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund
UPI – United Press International (American news agency)
VE – Veja (Brazilian news and current affairs weekly)

CHAPTER 1: THE RISE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC SPHERE AND THE KILLING OF STREET CHILDREN IN BRAZIL

1.1 Introduction

The centrality of communication to democracy is an ever present but continually changing reality. In the Greek city-states, participatory democracy relied on face-to-face communication, as citizens were directly involved in political decisions, and chose by lot the ones responsible for enforcing them. In Western societies, after periods of absolutism, it was the national mass press which supported the establishment of representative democracy in nation-states, as political parties and delegates in parliaments, assisted by the press, had the role of representation and mediation between elected governors and voting subjects.

In the age of global markets, supra national polities and ubiquitous media, there is a complex web of institutions responsible for representing different publics and collectives and mediating between states and peoples. Among them, civil society organizations and social movements, alongside the press, have taken a special role, becoming essential elements for the rise of deliberative democracy. Transcending the boundaries of nation states, non-governmental organizations and global media redefine the public space and change the character of political life. In this scenario, emergent practices of 'global governance' and 'networking' challenge notions of national sovereignty and transverse top-down relations between states, courts, markets, and citizens. How, then, have these significant transformations been approached by theories of the press? Now that metatheories of social processes have been challenged by recent history, what are the best frameworks to account for the role of the press and the processes of policy-making and opinion shaping in contemporary complex societies?

This thesis argues that Habermas's (1997) revised concept of the public sphere offers a powerful model for considering the new roles of the media in bringing issues into the public arenas of post-liberal societies, provided that it is extended to address more fully the new configurations mentioned above. It aims to

flesh out this theoretical enterprise by providing an empirical illustration of the operation of the international public sphere. This is done by examining the emergence of the issue of the killing of street children in Brazil on the international scene and the national political agenda. This also enables a rethinking of the role of the media and civil society in centre-periphery relations from a transnational perspective, alongside a view of the impact of these interactions in policy-making and in the production of news in a globalized world. In this chapter, I present the wider framework and organization of the study.

1.2 The public sphere, civil society and social movements

Jurgen Habermas's (1989, [orig. 1962]) concept of the *public sphere* represented a powerful model for analysing the conditions of political communication and the formation of public opinion in bourgeois and early capitalist formations. This was the case despite arguments against the historical pertinence of his account of the emergence and later erosion of the liberal public sphere (for a summary description of this process see e.g. Genro Filho, 1989; Calhoun, 1992a; Kellner, 1990; Peters, 1993; for a critical appraisal see e.g. Thompson, 1995; Curran, 1991a).

Habermas (1992b) himself conceded that he could have idealized some of the positive features of the bourgeois public sphere or overstated some negative trends of its capitalist phase. Observing the ambivalent nature of the public sphere and the media in conditions of late modernity, he (1992b: 456) commented that if he made another attempt to examine the structural transformation of the public sphere, its outcome "could give cause to a less pessimistic assessment". Nevertheless, together with other authors, he still advocated the political or normative use of the concept as an ideal-type or as a critical yardstick (Habermas, 1992b; Curran, 1991b; Garnham, 1990; Golding & Murdock, 1991; Dahlgren, 1995; Gomes, 1997).

Thirty years after the publication of *Structural Transformations* (Habermas, 1989 [orig.1962]), the German thinker offered another version of the concept of the public sphere, which revises some of his premises and represents a significant

improvement. However, if his early work elicited numerous positive and negative responses (see also e.g. Scanell, 1989; Lipovetsky, 1989; Thompson, 1990; Dahlgren, 1991; Holub, 1991; articles in Wuthnow, 1991b and Calhoun, 1992b), his more recent attempts to re-envisage the public sphere have not yet received due attention, at least in the English-speaking world. This gap needs to be filled, and its further elaboration is one of the aims of this research.

This later account, as outlined predominantly in *Between Facts and Norms* (Habermas, 1997 [orig 1992]), which represents one of Habermas's most recent commentaries on the matter available in English at the time of writing, is a highly elaborated model that has benefited from scholarly critique of his previous work, and is also informed by the historical developments which have taken place over the period. It condenses and refines important developments of his thinking presented in his later works (e.g. Habermas, 1992a, 1992b, 1994) but, as he himself recognizes, the scope of the dynamics of this model still needs to be extended to account for new "constellations". For the purposes of this chapter some points in this revision are especially relevant: the concept of civil society, the new role of social movements, the performance of the media and public opinion concerning the rise of issues in public arenas and the configuration of the public space.

A reworking of the notion of civil society - a term which was rediscovered in Europe due to revolutionary changes in Eastern and Central Europe, and which had also regained significance in Latin America during processes of transition from authoritarian rule - plays a central role in this revised concept of the public sphere. Habermas (1997: 367) now defines civil society as "composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations, and movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life spheres, distil and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere".

The public sphere is defined as a social space between the political system, on the one hand, and the private sectors of the lifeworld and functional systems, on the other. It is a network for communicating facts and opinion, an arena for the detection, thematization, problematization, and even dramatization of problems, which must be processed by the political system. It functions as a "sounding board" and stimulates influential opinions.

A focus on the innovative force of social movements, which Habermas had neglected in his previous work (Calhoun, 1992b; Dahlgren, 1991; Eley, 1992) also plays an important part. But, as distinct from authors who regarded social movements which transcend nation-state schema as the path to radical socialist transformation (e.g. Frank & Fuentes, 1990) and the alternative to liberal electoral democracy as taking the form of participant civil democracy (e.g. Frank, 1993), Habermas believes that they cannot overcome the political system, but only have an indirect impact on its self-transformation.

As Habermas (1997) observes, citing Cohen & Arato, social movements perform both an offensive and a defensive role. Offensively they attempt to bring up new issues, solutions and values, to produce broad changes in public opinion, to shift the parameters of institutional political will-formation, and to exert pressure on legislative, juridical and administrative systems in favour of certain policies. Defensively, they seek to preserve and amplify the associative structures of public influence and to generate counter-institutions and alternative publics. They contribute, then, to extending and radicalizing existing rights.

Habermas's later notion of the public sphere is elaborated within the framework of a proceduralist deliberative democracy. Deliberative politics depend on the interplay between informal processes of public opinion and formal democratic procedures of will-formation developed in constitutional states, in such a way that problems discovered and thematized by informal 'weak' publics in the unregulated public sphere are dealt with in formal 'arranged' representative publics such as parliaments. (For the notions of weak as opposed to strong publics see Fraser, 1993).

A pluralist public sphere, with active voluntary associations and social movements with grass-roots bonds, relatively unsubverted by the effects of power and based on a political culture which is sufficiently separated from class structures, as well as a political system porous and receptive to the influxes from the periphery, appears to be the way to reconcile participatory democracy with representative democracy. In Habermas's formulation, Tocqueville's early question: Does the existence of voluntary associations alter the shaping of public discourse? (Wuthnow, 1991a) receives a positive answer.

1.3 Reversing centre-periphery flows

Habermas's later writings emphasize that democracy has to be recast from a theory of communication. To explain how communicative power can be converted into political power, Habermas (1997) starts from Bernard Peters' model, which describes the circulation of power in constitutional democracies as having a centre-periphery axis, and containing two main explanatory elements: the system of "sluices", and a two-tiered mode of problem solving; one for routine operations and the other for extraordinary situations. According to the model, in the centre of the political system are the complexes of administration, parliamentary bodies and the courts. At the edges of the administrative complex, as an *inner* periphery, there are institutions with functions delegated by the state, such as universities, professional associations and foundations. On the outer periphery there are different types of "customer" and "supplier" groups, which include private organizations, business associations, labour unions on one side, and public interest groups on the other. The "real periphery", Habermas (1997: 355) says, is constituted by voluntary informal opinion-forming associations which "belong to the civil-social infrastructure of a public sphere dominated by the mass media".

The communicative flows that originate on the periphery have to pass through the sluices of democratic and institutional procedures of the parliamentary complex or the courts, and to persuade authorized members of the political system, before they can be transformed into political power. A significant feature of the model is the possibility that in cases of conflict, the established patterns of the usual routine mode of operation of the political system are surpassed by a different mode. In this case, following a 'consciousness of crisis', there is an increase in public attention and an intensified search for solutions takes place.

For this to happen, Habermas introduces two further assumptions. First, that the periphery has sufficient capacities not only to detect, but to interpret and present the problems in a way that is original and attention-grabbing, and thus can disrupt the routines, and secondly, that it has occasion to exercise them, in the sense of social integration. In routine modes, the initiative in agenda setting and policy making lies

with the centre of the political system. But as Habermas (1997: 381) argues, the great issues of the last decades were not initiated by central powers. Instead, they were brought up by intellectuals, concerned citizens, radical professionals and self-proclaimed advocates.

On this view, before problems are formally considered by the political system, they face a public struggle for recognition, which sometimes includes incessant campaigning and sensational demonstrations. For civil society and social movements to perform their role and thus for a liberal public sphere to develop, some conditions have to be met - most particularly democratic constitutional guarantees and the climate of a liberal political culture. Alongside this there must be a rationalized lifeworld and a contained media power. Freedom of assembly, association and expression, a protected private life, a political system which operates with freely organized political parties and general elections, and a democratically regulated media system are prerequisites for liberal public spheres, which cannot flourish under authoritarian conditions.

Nonetheless, even under democratic conditions, one of the most difficult issues remains the question of how social inequalities affect access, inclusion and performance in the public sphere, which reflects both systemic and individual asymmetries. In principle, the public sphere is characterized by open accessibility and equality. The only prerequisite for inclusion is the capacity for public use of reason. The force of the best argument is to prevail over status or power and, historically, it was indeed envisaged as a liberating defence mechanism against absolutism (Gomes, 1997).

In practice, it has been shown (and Habermas himself does not deny this), that the public sphere has always been constrained by social status, patriarchalism, and other forms of discrimination, which are increasingly reinforced by the selective pressures of the media. Radical critics of Habermas such as Fraser (1993: 27) argue that an "adequate conception of the public sphere requires not merely the bracketing, but rather the elimination, of social inequality".

Another significant issue in Habermas's later writings is his answer to such criticism. Habermas argues that constitutional guarantees and the absence of exclusion mechanisms grant a potential for self-transformation of the public sphere.

He further argues that civil society is expected to neutralize such inequalities, since autonomous associations act as advocates for subordinate groups and campaign for neglected issues. In doing so, such associations help to preserve an openness towards divergent opinions and to guarantee a representative diversity of voices. This, in turn, means that counterknowledge can be produced and countervailing forces can be unleashed.

However, Habermas also argues that it is only through their controversial presentation in the media that issues can reach the larger public and thereby shape the public agenda. To counteract the possible subversion of the media from sources of power, he further argues that the professional codes of journalists are not sufficient, and that both constitutional regulation and a vigilant civil society are needed. At this point it is worth examining how public opinion is conceived, and what role the media plays in Habermas's recent thoughts.

1.4 Media and publics

In his earlier analysis, Habermas (1989: 201, 195 [orig.1962]) claimed that in late capitalism, the public sphere was subverted by the interpenetration between state and society, the commercialization of the press and the increasing relevance of advertising and public relations. These led to the depoliticization of public life and to forms of publicness bearing semblance to those typical of feudal times. He thus wrote that the public sphere became "the court before whose public prestige can be displayed - rather than in which public critical debate is carried on", as "opinion management... invades the process of 'public opinion'".

The assumption that the media contributed to this 'refeudalization' of the public sphere has been rightly criticized for, among other things, implying the idea of a passive audience that can be manipulated by news management techniques (Scannell, 1996, Thompson, 1995). It has also been challenged by reception studies which reveal strategies of interpretation, and by notions of a more pluralistic public sphere. Thus Habermas (1992a: 438) himself concedes that his analysis of a direct

development from a "'culture-debating to a culture-consuming public' is too simplistic".

In Habermas's (1997 [orig. 1992]: 364) more recent studies, public opinion, although relieved of the burden of decision-making, is no longer referred to as just a backdrop. The public audience is said to have the "final authority because it is *constitutive* for the internal structure and reproduction of the public sphere". The public, composed of citizens, is again capable of critical judgement, and it must be convinced by interesting and comprehensible propositions. Habermas admits this can be more or less rational. It is public opinion that supports political influence before it can be transformed into political power through formal procedures. This influence acquired through public communication must "*ultimately* rest on the resonance and indeed the approval of a lay public whose composition is egalitarian." Even actors with strategic intention cannot "manufacture" the public sphere.

Habermas distinguishes this concept of public opinion, which represents preferences expressed after weighing information and points of view, from the aggregate of opinions of isolated individuals, which are gathered on an individual basis and privately manifested, as is usually the case with opinion polls, and stresses that it is not statistically representative. As for the process of constituting this public opinion from what Habermas describes as 'bundled' opinions, it involves sorting out issues and contributions, attributing negative or positive values to them in a controversial way, that is again more or less rational.

In Habermas's earlier notion, the political press initially had a critical and pedagogic function in the bourgeois public sphere, and was also the forum of debates from which public opinion arose. Later, as seen, in the pseudo-public sphere of late capitalism, the commercial media became the medium of circulation of established opinions, which appeared before the audience seeking support through public relations efforts and market strategies. This raises the further question: What is now the role of the media in the post-liberal public sphere of deliberative democracies?

Habermas (1997: 367) still considers that these strategies play an important role in a public sphere, which he describes as dominated by the mass media, subject to administrative and social power, and "inundated by the public relations work, propaganda, and advertising of political parties and groups." However, in

Habermas's (1997: 307) new analysis, the media not only select which issues and voices gain publicity in the public sphere, but in doing so they also take on significant roles of institutional mediation and social integration. They channel currents of public communication which "flow through different publics that develop informally inside associations", they mediate between the centre and the periphery, and they perform the unique role of bringing together readers, listeners and viewers scattered across different areas of the globe in complex societies. The mass media thus enlarge the public sphere, which becomes more inclusive the more the audience is widened. The media also enable participation in the public sphere through the diffusion of information and points of view.

Using this revised concept of the public sphere, Habermas takes a macro perspective that is highly illuminating. Nevertheless, some issues, such as the roles played by different media in the division of labour of the public sphere, need to be further examined for a more concrete understanding of how the media function in society. As recent scholarly work in the field of communication has highlighted, the press is not a monolithic unit (Martin-Barbero, 1984; Silva, 1985; Hansen & Murdock, 1985; Curran, 1990; Hackett, 1991; Golding, 1992; Cardoso, 1993; Eldridge, 1993). But, in *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas (1997) does not differentiate between different types of media in terms of technical characteristics (Thompson, 1995), medium format and their insertion in the market (Ericson, Baranec & Chan, 1989; Ericson et al, 1991), and nor does he comment on organizational ethos (Curran, 1990), "grammar of production" (Fausto Neto, Castro & Lucas, 1994) and editorial position (Lima, 1989, Beharrell, 1998). This is because he is more concerned with the links between the media and other organizations in the public sphere and the political system, and their net contribution to the public debate and the policy making process. Remarks by Habermas in other works nonetheless show that he is not unconcerned with the specificity of different media.

Thus, Habermas posits that print is still a primary source of any other media, and a necessary element in maintaining the public sphere. The journal of critical opinion, for instance, is still essential in keeping the discursive character of public communication and setting the standards of political discourse (interview with Navasky, 1998). Television, on the other hand, Habermas (1992a: 456) sees as

having the potential to play a more decisive role in 'revolutionary' events, such as those occurring in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989. There, he argues, the diffusion of protests around the globe through television, which made the presence of the masses on the squares ubiquitous, had not only a contagious effect, but was the very thing responsible for "generating revolutionary power", as the "*mode of occurrence* [of the historical process] was televisional".

Another limitation of the model is that, in its formulation, the media are mostly perceived as transmitters of messages generated by external sources. The political role of the media is largely circumscribed by their selection processes, as well as being influenced by reception conditions and inputs from supplier groups. As some authors have argued, it is not only newspapers with explicitly political aims that take on an active role as political agents. Ideological motives (Marcondes Filho, 1986; Croteau & Hoynes, 1997), partisan political preferences of news organizations (Curran, 1987; Lima, 1989; McNair, 1995), or journalists' biographical motivations (Golding & Middleton, 1982) can all influence the way in which a paper reports any particular story. To a certain extent, this is also related to the increasing importance Habermas attributes to other political actors' roles in the public sphere and also to the 'critical audience'. This means that he is not concerned with issues such as objectivity, for example. He comments: "What's important is extending the range of arguments. It's less important to what conclusion the writer comes. It is the auditorium (the audience) who decides" (Navasky, 1998: 115).

Habermas's general formulation also does not elaborate on inter-media relations. This, along with other points mentioned above, including the relation between media, public and policy agendas and the way in which problems develop in the political arena, will be discussed in chapter eight on the basis of this study's empirical findings. This chapter will be primarily concerned with the configuration of the public space.

Several authors have criticized Habermas for proposing a conception of the public sphere as a single unity and neglecting the existence of counter-publics (e.g. Dahlgren, 1991; Fraser, 1993; Eley, 1992). Instead, they have preferred to refer to multilayered (Hallin, 1994) or interpenetrated public spheres (Braman, 1996). Other authors have offered more elaborated propositions for the organization of media

systems, which also suggest more plural models for the functioning of the public sphere (Curran, 1991b; Dahlgren, 1995). Garnham (1992), nevertheless, concerned with the defence of the system of public service broadcasting and the global dimension of the political and economic systems, has argued for a single universal public sphere to be coterminous with these structures. Against this reasoning, Keane (1995a) dismisses the view of an unified public sphere as merely a chimera (see also Garnham, 1995b; Keane 1995b).

In his later works, Habermas (1992a, 1997) has admitted the coexistence of competing public spheres and, as demonstrated above, his own revised model posits the pluralization of publics. Drawing on Habermas, Fornas (1995: 93) nevertheless observes that these publics are "interwoven through their function as communicating arenas ... and they together form an overarching, general civic public sphere". Habermas's reworking of the concept of the public sphere incorporates some critical commentaries and presents a view of the public space that is heterogeneous, multidimensional and permeable. This complex network consists of numerous overlapping arenas extending from local to international levels, and ranging from the *episodic* publics of taverns, through the *occasional* or "arranged" publics of events such as theatre performances or party assemblies, to the *abstract* public sphere of the mass media audience. It is differentiated in subcultural forms with competing self and world views, but all these partial publics remain porous in relation to one another, as they communicate through ordinary language.

Nonetheless, although we have seen that Habermas's revised notion of the public sphere is concerned to place the international dimension in its configuration, the operation of the proposed model is still confined to the nation-state, and there is no elaboration of the ways in which the different levels interact. The model does not address the internationalization of public life and how communicative power can be transformed into political power in a transnational or global perspective.

Habermas (1997: 444) himself acknowledges the need to "go beyond our limited focus on national societies and ... broaden our view to take in the international order of the world society". The German thinker was not unaware of trends towards the dissolution of the sovereignty of the nation-state and towards the emergence of a global public sphere. He was impressed by the historical processes of

the late 1980s in Eastern and Central Europe and of the Gulf War. These led him to comment that worldwide protests cannot be ignored even by the superpowers, as events are instantaneously relayed by electronic media, before a "ubiquitous" public sphere. In the wake of these events, Habermas (1997: 514 [orig. 1990]) argued that a world public sphere was "becoming political reality for the first time in a cosmopolitan matrix of communication".

Other authors have also called attention to important transformations in public life taking place at a global level, beyond the space of nation-states and speeded up by the new technologies of communication. The main changes observed were, on the one hand, an increase in economic control by corporate powers in the global market and in the political power of dominant countries, which undermined the nation-state and destroyed embryos of the international public sphere (Garnham, 1995a). On the other hand, changes were brought about by the growing impact of supranational legal and political organization (Keane, 1992) and the increase in direct (Mattleart & Mattleart, 1992 [orig. 1986]; Mattleart, 1994) or virtual (Ferry, 1995 [orig. 1989]) exchanges between civil societies across borders, which indicated the emergence of an international civil society (Keane, 1991; Serra, 1993).

These new configurations call for the rethinking of the nature of citizenship and theories of the press, which have traditionally been posed within the framework of single nation states (Garnham, 1990, 1992; Keane 1991, 1992; Thompson, 1995). For some scholars, developing an international public sphere becomes not only a theoretical but a practical and urgent challenge, in order to catch up with the globalization of the economy and prevent private power from eclipsing the democratic process (Garnham, 1995a; Hallin, 1994). However, this project has encountered some scepticism. For instance, Tomlinson (1996) points to the absence of truly global structures and a global ethics. Ortiz (1994) stresses that large conglomerates have disproportionate power as political actors in the context of a 'world civil society', surpassing political parties, unions, public administrations or social movements because, in his view, the latter are confined to the limits of national conflicts, while the former have transnational organization. Robbins (1993: xxiii) doubts the possibility of an international public sphere by raising the question: Can the notion of the public sphere be internationalized? To offer a more satisfactory

answer to this question and offer counter-arguments to the comments above, the next section will discuss the changes in the public space as related to globalization.

1.5 Globalization and the international public sphere

These significant transformations which transcend the scope of nation-states have been referred to as processes of globalization. Although for many authors the term will be mainly associated with the economy, other definitions refer to changes in social relations, time and space. McGrew (1992: 65), for instance, stresses that globalization is a complex condition in which "patterns of human interaction, interconnectedness and awareness are reconstituting the world as a single social space". For Robertson (1992: 8), it is both "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole". Giddens (1990: 64) argues that globalization means "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa".

The first question in the theoretical debate on the issue is usually whether these are really new conditions and processes (Curran & Seaton, 1997; see Thompson, 1995 for a historical account). Against the idea of newness it can be said, as Habermas (1997: 514 [orig.1990]) comments, that in the context of the French revolution, Kant already identified the development of a world public sphere. Historical research can indeed show how this event influenced revolutionary movements in distant places such as Brazil, as flows of people, letters, books and news across large geographic distances were already a reality in past centuries. The same can be said of the anti-slavery, labour or women's movements, which were in many ways "profoundly transnational, even transcontinental" (Markoff, 1997: 67).

In fact, notions of world citizenship and concerns with cosmopolitanism were defended by ancient Greek philosophers living in city-states such as Epictetus, and were differently embraced by Christian ideas of universal brotherhood. Similar concerns and views of the world as a single place and inhabited by universal

humankind in this century were institutionalized by the creation of the United Nations in 1945. This being the case, what is new about globalization?

The first answer to this question refers to the impact of technological changes, especially in the communication media, in geographic, social and political processes. There are indeed paradoxical conditions in contemporary societies that cannot be minimized. Whereas what constitutes the outside world has expanded greatly since the period of city-states and even since the creation of the United Nations, which in its inception had around fifty countries participating, and today has nearly two hundred; it has also increasingly shrunk, as it becomes closer in time and space through the speed and intensity of developments in transport, information and communication media. Radio, satellite television, cable systems and newspapers delivered by aeroplanes, fax machines, and computers make public news from anywhere more accessible around the world within seconds or hours.

The spread of global media and the new technologies of communication, which serve to promote the compression of time and space should not only be seen in terms of the increase in the number of outlets, or of people who get information through international media. More importantly, the technological advances account for some qualitative changes. For instance, they enable a situation in which world-wide responses to news of events taking place at a distance can be made, received and watched simultaneously by the different protagonists while the events are still unfolding, most especially through the medium of satellite television. Moreover, this happens under the gaze of governments, civil societies and public opinion, nationally and internationally. Television world systems such as CNN provide an immediate avenue for governments to respond, and a critical yardstick for citizens to assess the coverage of their own broadcasting systems (Friedland, 1992). As a consequence, there is a significant difference from previous situations to be observed not only in the manner that external reactions are generated, but also in the national and international repercussions and impact of these reactions to domestic events. These interactions can influence the outcome in a way that is much more direct, wide-reaching and instantaneous. Of course it must be noted that this immediate global visibility and publicity may not necessarily lead to happy endings, and this also

means that media interest in such issues dies as quickly as they are raised (Curran & Seaton, 1997).

Historical examples of such events on an unprecedented scale that have called the attention of several commentators include: the conflicts in Tianamen Square between Chinese students and authorities (Thompson, 1995; Keane, 1995a; Garnham, 1992; Toffler, 1993); the fall of the Berlin Wall and the velvet revolutions in Eastern Europe (Curran & Seaton, 1997; Habermas, 1992a), the Gulf War and the Palestinian *intifada* (Wolsfeld, 1997), the Soviet coup attempt in 1991 (Friedland, 1992) and the Arab suicide bombing of a bus in Israel (Curran & Seaton, 1997). In 1940, even before the advent of global media, Robert Park (1970) had already observed that the expansion of communication media, which meant that anyone in any part of the world could participate instantly in events happening in other parts of the globe "if not as spectators, as listeners", had radically altered the character of international politics and would necessarily bring unforeseeable consequences. Examples cited by Park included Americans listening to Mussolini addressing his fascist followers in Rome, or Hitler talking in Berlin not only for the President but also for the people of the United States. In these recent cases, the issue of media interfering in diplomacy and official foreign relations policies has been raised and some evidence for this has been produced. Although this is not a new phenomenon and was observed by early analysts of the press such as Lipmann, or by nineteenth century critics complaining of the influence of newspapers in world diplomacy (Friedland, 1992), the scope, intensity and velocity may again make this a difference not only of degree, but of kind.

The second answer refers to the dramatic increase in the number, scope and role of international non-government organizations (NGOs) and social movements (Archer, 1992; Luard, 1990; Willets, 1982) serving to invigorate civil society at a world level. While previously these organizations, based mostly in Northern countries, aimed to provide emergency or development aid to countries in the South, a large number of them later acquired a more political profile and became important pressure groups in the fields of human rights, social justice and ecology. Also, similar organizations were formed in the South, such that they articulated with their counterparts in the developed countries.

These transnational networks exchange resources, knowledge, information and ideas which, in turn, enhance their legitimacy and effectiveness (Mainwaring & Viola, 1984; Scherer-Warren & Krischke, 1987). Their grassroots bonds facilitate their role as warning sensors for social problems. Their capacity and resources for building alliances, lobbying parliaments, dramatizing issues to sensitize the media and public opinion and pressurizing governments, empower them to raise new issues on the political agenda and influence the public debate.

Together with their expert knowledge, these enable such networks to promote shifts in policies, for although they do not have the power to issue binding decisions, they can nevertheless influence intergovernmental bodies (Hamelink, 1994). They have been recognized by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and acquired representation and consultative status in interstate agencies such as the United Nations. Furthermore, there are proposals to grant them a more effective role in global structures (Commission on Global Governance, 1998 [orig 1995]). As Fernandes (1995) notes, NGOs are key elements for 'planetary citizenship' because of their dual characteristic of local insertion and international connection. They have also counteracted actions of transnational corporations in a way that has led some of them to change their policies and adhere to more welfare-related values.

The basic value of non-government organizations is multinational solidarity, but they also face practical constraints of money and administrative power, double-standards, competition and co-optation. For the most part, they have been responsible for positive achievements, new standards and humanitarian values. However, one cannot ignore the emergence of undemocratic social movements driven by racist, xenophobic, fascist, or fundamentalist ideologies which, conversely, represent a threat to the international public sphere.

Their significant difference from previous social movements, then, is that although the latter have had transnational links and influence, their "arenas for effective action were largely, and their possibilities for institutionalizing gains were wholly, at the level of national states" (Markoff, 1997: 67). The new NGOs have become more important political actors on the world stage, thereby contributing to institutional changes in international standards and policies. Social movements and

INGOs are international watchdogs and opinion-shapers and they recreate the public sphere at a world level.

The third answer to the question of what is new about globalization is the increase in supranational organization at the level of the global political system in relation to intergovernmental bodies and international law. There is also an increase in regionalization in terms of economic and political blocks. In past decades, the international conferences of the United Nations Social Chapter have helped to place issues on the international agenda, achieving effects in the public debate nationally and internationally. They have great visibility, relative transparency and extensive participation (Leis, 1995; Alves, 1996). These intergovernmental debates have been big events, attended by a large number of heads of state, and have entailed the active participation of NGOs in the preparatory discussions and during the event. They have attracted wide media coverage, which nevertheless is very selective and differentiated in its presentation of both the actors and the concerns of developed or developing countries (Giffard, 1996).

In addition, more international conventions and regulations have been enforced, with more universal compliance, and there are proposals for the creation of an international criminal court. These changes and trends respond to the intensification of global problems such as poverty, migration, the burden of foreign debt, the trade in drugs, international crime and terrorism, and ecological disasters - all of which indicate that all societies are inseparable parts of a community of shared risks, demanding political cooperation (Morin, 1986; Habermas, 1995: 43). In this sense, Nancy Fraser (1993: 26) asks: "with a single planetary biosphere does it make sense to understand the nation-state as the appropriate unit of sovereignty?"

These observations raise a number of other important questions in the debate, some of which can only be mentioned and therefore not fully pursued here. For example: Is this the end of the sovereign national state? What are the consequences for democracy? How do these transformations affect issues of access and representation in the public space? How global is globalization? How are centre-periphery relations affected? What is the role of the media in this global public sphere? These considerations also provoke evaluative questions, such as: Are these

changes good or bad? Or, as another important point for discussion: What is new in the theoretical debate about the internationalization of communication?

1.6 Global media, global governance, networking: good or bad?

While some scholars rightly stress the survival of the national state and point to its resilience and adaptability (Curran & Seaton, 1997; Golding & Harris, 1997; Goldblath, 1997), other commentators also rightly indicate the challenges to national state sovereignty both from above and below (Held, 1995; Castels, 1997). It is argued that the sovereignty of individual nation states has been increasingly undermined by the growing importance of supranational organizations such as the United Nations, regional interstate economic blocks and political and military unions, and by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF. (This has been an old problem for countries in the South, but now the process is becoming more intense and widespread). Castells (1997) argues that to restore legitimacy, nation-states not only create super nation-states but also decentralize power at the regional and local levels, but this increases citizens' aloofness toward them. There are also many concerns about threats to national sovereignty arising from the transnationalization of capital and centralization of corporate power, especially in the form of the global finance markets. As demonstrated, the challenges also come from transnational media conglomerates, and states often find it difficult to regulate their operation or prevent their citizens from gaining access to their messages (Mattelart & Mattelart, 1992; Curran & Seaton, 1997).

From below, the rise of new social movements and the spread of networks of international non-government organizations challenges national state sovereignty. As cited, international NGOs bring pressure to bear on states and call for their international accountability. In addition, they represent the privatization of humanitarianism, thus undermining one of the reasons for nation-state's existence (Castells, 1997). As a whole, however, pressures from international actors on states include both forms of contagion and consent and control and conditionality (Przervorsky, 1995). There are also more violent pressures arising from the under-

world, with the global economy of crime, drug-trafficking, and terrorism (Castels, 1998).

Unquestionably, significant spheres of decision have been moved away from the institutional responsibility of national states, in many cases with their complicity (Mattelart & Mattelart, 1992). Also, in fields such as human rights, security or ecology, it is becoming increasingly accepted that international surveillance should prevail over individual nation-state interests. However, this does not mean the end of nation states, but rather represents certain limits to their sovereignty in exchange for their durability (Castels, 1997). And if there are positive signs of the nurturing of a global ethics, there are also contradictory tendencies in terms of the revival of nationalisms. The media can foster both (Held, 1995; Curran & Seaton, 1997). Thus we may ask: What is the impact of these changes on a conception of democracy based on notions of popular sovereignty and a public sphere conceived in terms of the limits of a national space? For instance, Frank (1993) posits that sovereign democracy in a global economy is a contradiction in terms, as he claims that the global free market undermines liberal representative democracy.

Two concepts recently brought to the fore of debate encapsulate the changes in the configuration of the global scenario, although they may arouse divergent views: 'global governance' and 'networking'. Global governance, which must not be equated with global government, indicates a process of managing world affairs and achieving global decision-making through both formal and informal arrangements. While previously it was only regarded as a matter for inter-state relationships, it now increasingly involves a larger array of actors, including non-government organizations and social movements. In some definitions, multinational corporations are also included, as well as the global mass media (Commission on Global Governance, 1998). The inclusion of these non-state transnational actors in international relations challenges the monopoly of representation based on nation-states and transverses top-down relations.

Networking suggests flows and forms of horizontal and diagonal exchanges and articulations. For Castels (1997), the 'network society' originated from the confluence of three interrelated processes taking place in the late 1960s: the information technology revolution, the economic crisis and later restructuring of

capitalism and statism, and the flourishing of new social movements. He argues that the logic of networking transforms all domains of social and economic life, including the network-state. Networking is also a basic concept for commentators who believe that new technologies and the Net "offer the opportunity for the creation of a public sphere or public spheres genuinely outside of the bounds of any single nation-state or organizational entity" (Braman 1996: 36). It has been argued that these technologies foster the emergence of a global civil society, increase participation, and enable civic electronic networking with effective political impact (Frederick 1992).

The democratic potential of new technologies of communication and information and the internet stimulates the imagination, but has not yet been completely explored. However, other negative possibilities have also been pointed out, as such technologies may serve to increase the disparities between info-poor and info-rich populations, or facilitate the local or international integration of such non-democratic movements, alongside the widespread diffusion of undesirable values and socially detrimental issues such as pornography. Castells (1997) demonstrates how these systems were decisive for amplifying the impact of two completely ideologically opposed movements on public opinion: populist conservatism in the US and the Zapatistas in Mexico. But he also shows that they did so by their feeding of the media.

This leads us to the question of whether globalization is good or bad. Although the answers are widely divergent (Mohammadi, 1997), many authors point to the ambivalent nature of globalization and its dual effects (Theheranian & Theheranian, 1997; McGrew, 1997), as both bottom-up as well as top-down forms of globalization can be distinguished (Santos, 1997). These processes encompass many contradictory features: homogenization and heterogenization, solidarity and competition, politicization and alienation, disempowerment and emancipation, centralization and decentralization. Not surprisingly, globalization has stimulated both pessimistic as well as optimistic visions of the present and future.

Global media trends of conglomeratization and commercialization have been mostly regarded as undemocratic, disempowering and responsible for the erosion of the public sphere and its transformation into a simulacrum, as the commodification of media outputs and the employment of marketing strategies are designed to serve

the market and not to respond to citizenship needs. Thus, some commentators argue that they further contribute to homogenizing trends and the reduction of available discourses. (Herman & McChesney 1997; Garnham, 1990; Entman, 1989; Rubin, 1995).

However, other commentaries stress that these can be counteracted by trends such as professionalism or the active audience, and short-term effects are said to be complex, variable, and by no means entirely negative. Even authors who adopt a rather pessimistic stance concede that they have not prevented successful alternative community efforts and global struggles for democratization (Herman & McChesney, 1997).

Moreover, others argue that the new global media, despite being basically profit-oriented, are unwittingly increasing the level of political action beyond borders (Toffler, 1993; Keane, 1995a). As cited, global images have fostered a "global public opinion" and have had a positive impact, as is evident in the history of human rights, which contains many cases of political prisoners saved by global protests or in political developments in Eastern Europe over the last decades. This supports the belief that the global media can promote dramatic public discussions at a world level, with decisive influence, if with less happy outcomes, as in the case of the massacre of students in China in 1989, who had deliberately organized the protest for an international audience and even carried placards written in English (Keane, 1995a). The student uprising in China is also an example of how informal networks of citizens, not only nationally but also in other countries, provided support to the movement. As Ferry (1995) notes, in the 'media society', the public is no longer confined to the electoral body of a nation but virtually to humanity as a whole.

In these and other events involving internal political turmoil or external crisis, the global media, and especially satellite television, have been seen to create a global audience that positively influences the role of the protagonists and mobilizes others to get involved. In this way they can be understood to construct world public opinion, since the media act as diplomatic channels of communication and international political brokers (Gurevitch, Levy & Roeh, 1991). Studies on the coverage of disasters such as famines discuss the potential role of the international

media in "galvanizing international response and in pressing governments" (Philo, 1993: 105).

A further question is that of how global is globalization? As many have noted, "globalization" is not a unitary phenomenon (e.g. Giddens, 1995), but rather a multifaceted, multidimensional and multidirectional process. It affects all people in all parts of the world, but in different ways and with different effects (Waterman 1996; Tomlinson, 1997). For Thompson (1995), there is globalized diffusion but localized appropriation. Straubhaar (1997: 288) draws on the local global dialectic of production by showing how the global form of soap opera is localized in Brazil "both for purposes of global capitalist development and for expression of local identity". Reeves (1993: 192), drawing on Mattelart and Mattelart (1987:17), stresses that as "the *telenovela* consolidated its position in Brazilian network television, Brazilian writers increasingly affirmed their autonomy and began to distance themselves from imported scenarios in order to explore locally produced ones".

Undoubtedly, asymmetry and stratification remain significant, and in some respects, growing, features of the global order, affecting access, participation and representation in every one of its components. This can be confirmed by numerical data. The small group of powerful countries in the G7, which set standards and policies for the world economy and politics and control agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank represent only 12% of the world population. They are also among the few countries with the veto power in the UN Security Council. Less than 15% of the NGOs registered with the United Nations are from developing countries (see Commission on Global Governance, 1998), although some of them should be seen as international in scope. In addition, most media conglomerates are situated in a few countries, so that some argue that the term global media is in fact misleading (Croteau & Hoynes, 1997).

In the light of such disparities, Mowlana (1996: 199) claims that globalization creates a "structurally oligarchic" world and argues that "political issues have become global in their impact, but the agenda setters for those problems can hardly be considered global, let alone universal". However Sreberny-Mohammadi (1996: 4) contends that, to some extent, the critique of globalization processes on the grounds of their being neither uniform nor truly global "misses the

conceptual point that central tendencies of modern societies have a pronounced global reach." There is also a case for the argument put forward by Pieterse that the meaning of globalization is the "*increase in the available modes of organization: transnational, international, macro-regional, national, micro-regional, municipal, local*", despite the increasing importance of the global level (cited in Straubhaar, 1997: 286, emphasis in original).

The positive or negative answer to globalization then depends on direction in which one directs one's gaze. This can result in an attention to infrastructures or superstructures, to change or permanence, or to structure or agency. More negative evaluations come from scholars taking a political economy perspective, who rightly stress the persistence of stark inequalities (Golding & Harris, 1996). More positive assessments come from political scientists or critical thinkers who believe that it is possible to reform democracy (Held, 1995; Habermas, 1994), or from some cultural theorists. Examining changes in patterns of cultural production, Tomlinson (1997), while still sceptical about the existence of global politics and global ethics, nevertheless seems to be less sceptical when he posits that the distribution of power is unstable and is shifting, and globalization can be a decentering process.

The trends addressed in this section are complex and contradictory. The consequences for the future of democracy are still difficult to foresee (see McGrew, 1997 for different models), but issues of responsibility, accountability, publicity, and representation must be recast in international terms, including media regulation. This should not lead to apathy but to action based on sound knowledge. As Mohammadi (1997) argues, most of the studies on globalization are the result of "arm-chair speculation pitched at a universal level of generality on the basis of secondary sources". Thus, even scholars who argue that in certain respects globalization theory might be more of a "hindrance than a help" in the essential task of understanding present developments, nevertheless call for more empirical evidence to support the debate (Curran & Seaton, 1997).

Some points, however, stand very clear. First, crucial problems in most societies increasingly require global solutions. Secondly, the stage for political action increasingly crosses over nation-state borders, although this is connected to local agency. Thirdly, the media, and especially the global media, are increasingly being

framed as the space for political struggles. Fourthly, increasingly international non-state actors, and not just corporate ones, are key players in the debate. But the plot depends on their active interplay, and the finale is historically determined and therefore must be observed more carefully. In any case, the new theoretical paradigm, as the rationale for the concepts which head this section suggest, is represented by the call for transversality (Mattelart & Mattelart, 1992).

1.7 Reversing centres-peripheries relations in global times

The theoretical debate on the transnationalization of communication has undergone three main phases (Golding & Harris 1996; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1996). In the first, the dominant paradigm centred on ideas of modernization, development and diffusion. The media were regarded as agents of social transformation and had the positive functions of showing new ways of life and raising expectations, teaching new values while breaking old ones, facilitating the diffusion of technical skills and promoting innovations and improvements in formal education in developing countries (Schramm, 1970; Lerner, 1973a, 1973b; Rogers, 1971). At the same time, the First World was transferring and experimenting with new technologies (see Boyd-Barret, 1982, for a critique of these objectives). Also, within the framework of the Cold War, the Western model communicated to the developing societies in the East "an image of their possible future" (Lerner, 1973b :137). The paradigm thus implied a view of the centre saving the periphery from the evils of backwardness, or the red threat of communism.

The second phase was marked by a critical reaction against this ethnocentric model and protests about the exporting of foreign cultural and ideological models, together with capital and technology. This took different forms in different locations. 'Dependency' theory, born in Brazil and Chile was the first indigenous attempt to understand the underdevelopment of the Third World as a consequence of the development of the First World, and vice versa (Mattleart & Mattleart, 1992). Also, in Brazil, Paulo Freire developed the "pedagogy of the oppressed" for the literacy campaigns of the *Movimento de Cultura Popular*, which gathered students, lecturers

and the Catholic left in the early 1960s. It firmly opposed ideas of modernization and diffusion based on the power of the sender, and was based instead on ideals of self-reliance and autonomous development (Mattleart & Mattleart, 1992; Mattelart, 1994; Lima, 1981).

In Brazil, dependency theory provided the framework for studies denouncing the transnational structure of information and the negative effects of foreign capital and foreign models of production and consumption in the national cultural industry (e.g. Amaral Vieira, 1978). Elsewhere, the rise of multinational firms and systems of communication deemed as "ideological apparatuses of imperialism" was also denounced (Mattelart, 1976). Some theoreticians of dependency theory, criticized for focusing only on the international actors and dimensions of transnationalization, later turned to analysing them in relation to the state, social classes and social movements in the national context.

'Cultural imperialism' (Schiller, 1976) and 'media imperialism' (Boyd-Barret, 1977) theories, developed in Northern countries in the same phase, supported the debate on the imbalance in the flows of information, communication and cultural products between the First and the Third World. They also influenced the perspective of the "other development", which proposed alternative models within the framework of the right to access to information (Bulik, 1990, Reyes-Matta, 1980). Under the inspiration of the Cuban revolution, the liberation movements of the late 1960s and intellectual concern with the Third World, the main paradigm of this phase was the domination and exploitation of the periphery by the centre. The role of the media was to reinforce this domination and to contribute to the international subjection of the Third World. These theories, especially 'cultural imperialism' have also recently been the focus of sustained attack (Tomlinson, 1997, Golding & Harris, 1997).

With the erosion of the Second World, the constitution of highly developed areas in the Third World and the emergence of areas of extreme poverty in the First World, the metaphors of the three worlds became obsolete. The multipolar globe, although still divided by unequal and asymmetric relations, became a single planetary space (Melluci, 1996). The third main phase, then, was marked by the metaphor of globalization. Between the second and third moments, the debate

shifted from concerns with cultural penetration and domination to resistance, professionalism, new technologies, and views of interdependency and cultural interchange (Martin-Barbero, 1984). The role of the media in international communication in this phase becomes more ambivalent. Studies of the active audience are more supportive of the view of a powerless media having little effect. On the other hand, studies of media coverage of wars or revolutions stress powerful media effects, although the media can either be seen as tools of government propaganda (Herman & Chomsky, 1988), or as active professionals doing their job and influencing foreign policy. Other studies which discuss the contribution of the international media to the third wave of democratization based on 'demonstration effects' and 'snow-balling' (Huntington, 1991) resemble the works of the first phase. Some recent studies take a less media-centric approach and look at the role of supplier groups, such as civil society organizations and NGOs in relation to the global media.

However, most of these studies are still unable to break with the earlier bipolar paradigm of the relation between dominant and dependent countries. Moreover, they adopt a uni-directional flow from the centre to the periphery. This is very clear even in a recent study by an author who previously announced the emergence of the global civil society: "In particular I wanted to see how far institutions of civil society in the west, the centre of the global system, were able to *represent* society in the crisis zones, which were mainly peripheral" (Shaw 1996: vi). These studies completely neglect the role of the domestic media and national civil society and reproduce the traditional paternalistic view.

The inadequacy of the monolithic centre-periphery model present in previous theories has been pointed out by Latin American scholars (Martin-Barbero, 1993) and recent studies on globalization. These studies, although identifying the persistence of old forms of domination by the core, focus on new pluralizing and decentering trends and argue for a more dialectical relation between the centre and the periphery from a transnational perspective (e.g. Tomlinson, 1997; Sinclair, 1996). In a similar vein, Fornas (1995: 30) argues that "modernization is not a one-way process from a given centre to the retarded margins".

1.8 Publicness beyond nation-states

The rise of the international public sphere calls for a new framework, embedded in the relationship between media institutions and politics at national and international levels, which can better account for these new forms of representation and mediation. In this context, the role of the international media, which have tended to be viewed either through the positive lens of developmentalism or the negative frames of dependency theory and media and cultural imperialism, requires reassessing. Media sociology also needs to address how these local global interactions affect the production of news. Can the revised notion of Habermas's concept of the public sphere be extended to account for the developments discussed above? What are the advantages of this framework in relation to other concepts available in the field of media studies? How does it illuminate the analysis of a study of the rise of the killing of street children in Brazil as an issue on the public agenda?

It is widely recognized that Habermas's notion of the public sphere has at least three main strengths: its normative appeal for enhancing democracy (Peter, 1993), its historical approach, which "illuminates the debate about the role of the media in society" (Curran, 1991a: 38) and the way it links democratic politics and public communication, as mutually constitutive dimensions (Garnham, 1992). In contrast to classical liberal theories of the press and following the radical tradition, in the revised notion of the public sphere, the media is positioned in a "complex articulation of vertical, horizontal and diagonal channels of communication between individuals, groups and power structures" (Curran, 1991a :31). This vision enables a better understanding of the limits, as well as the conditions, enabling groups distant from the structures of power to be represented in the public sphere and to influence the definition of issues which are to be dealt with by the political system. The centre-periphery model offered by Habermas, as applied to the international dimension, can also escape the simple one-way direction of previous theories. The metaphor of spheres admits the existence of more than one centre and multiple peripheries and embodies the hierarchical differences between cores and margins. (For the concept of spheres see Fornas, 1995).

In the literature on the dynamics of the public sphere in contemporary societies, two main approaches can be found. The first one, in line with Habermas's discursive model exposed in his more recent works, examines the several constituents of the public sphere besides the media, such as civil society organizations, spaces for interpersonal communication and informal networks. Another approach, which regards the public sphere as a simulacrum and bears semblance to Habermas's early account of the erosion of the public sphere, but in the context of systems theory, is usually more media-centric (see Costa 1994, 1997b, for a characterization of these models).

While the first approach places emphasis on the content of the alternatives, and envisages the possibility of discursive forms of communication based on arguments, thus relativizing the manipulative action of the media (Costa, 1997b), the second denies the possibility of communicative agreement in the public sphere, which is regarded as the site where disputes for the control of public attention take place simply through the effective manipulation of symbolic resources. Thus, the success of social movements and other media sources is first and foremost related to their ability to stage spectacular actions and to develop news management techniques to occupy media spaces and produce news events, irrespective of the argumentative power of their proposals and their correspondence with society's demands.

As already stated, the discursive model does not ignore the importance of such strategies. Already in *Structural Transformations*, Habermas (1984 [orig 1962]: 268) claimed that the public sphere of capitalist constitutional social democracies was marked by two divergent and competing trends: critical publicity and publicity organized with merely manipulative aims. However, this revised model holds that "beyond the public space transformed into a market, there remains a diversified array of communicative structures and corresponding social processes (of reception and reinterpretation of the messages, and of interactions between the different micro-fields of the public sphere), whose very existence confers consistence, resonance, and meaning on the spectacle, anchoring it again in the everyday life of the actors" (Costa, 1997b: 124).

Habermas has been criticized for focusing too much on political aspects of the public sphere and serious issues (Fornas, 1995; Peters, 1993). This is not a major

problem for this work, which mostly focuses on news, policies and grave issues, and to a certain extent could be attacked on the same grounds. Without neglecting the importance of culture and entertainment to democracy, it is argued here that news remains a basic resource for political action (Schudson, 1998). Moreover, Brazilian songs and plays on social issues such as the plight of street children (e.g. Chico Buarque's *O Meu Guri*; Caetano Veloso's *Fora da Ordem*) during the period are not just entertainment forms, but also platforms for social protests and ways of raising consciousness. They are obviously important elements for, and indices of, public opinion's perceptions.

However, the question of the applicability of the concept of the public sphere in this revised form to contemporary societies, and especially its extension beyond nation-states, including its potentials and limitations, is an empirical matter. This study, whose original design was based on inductive investigation, and which later adopted this framework for the analysis, may go some way towards providing the answer.

1.9 Brazilian street children in the international public sphere

There has been very little published about the operation of the international public sphere as distinct from largely unsubstantiated conjectures. What little there has been rarely attempts to look at the multi-lingual international public sphere and to relate this to the operation of national media and national political processes. Here, this study again seeks to fill the gap. It investigates the inter-media relations between domestic and foreign journalists, influenced by networking strategies and the public relations efforts of Brazilian NGOs, assisted by transnational agencies such as the Catholic Church, Amnesty International and UNICEF. The study shows how these relations and efforts activated the political system and were catalysts of significant changes in press coverage and public policy (see Serra, 1996, for a preliminary study).

The period researched, from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s, corresponds to the moment of the rebirth of the public sphere in Brazil, with the rebuilding of civil

society and the reorganization of the constitutional state, following the crisis of the military regime that governed the country for twenty years. This provides a fitting context for the analysis. The historical and contextual background presented in the next chapter sets the scene for the struggle of the street children's movement against cultural prejudices and repressive policies for poor children and adolescents developed at least since the nineteenth century. The description of the failure of the early attempts by emergent voluntary organizations to reverse a moral panic against street children, and the normal policy-making cycle during the authoritarian period, enables a comparison with the operation of the public sphere in the next phase, with more democratic contours and transnational articulations.

The story of the up-hill battle to make the issue of the killing of street children a matter for public concern, in parallel with the legislative campaign for children's rights, covers a period of five years and unfolds over four subsequent chapters. It starts with the local protests of the poor communities against the extra-legal killings by the police and death squads, continues by describing the local and national mobilization of civil society to raise awareness of the issue up until the time of the international media scandal, and its repercussions in the national and international spheres, to the point at which the problem finally reaches the public agenda.

The narrative focuses on the press coverage, relating it to the conflict between human rights organizations, law and order sectors and criminal groups, and to the wider context in society, including the international agenda. The campaign against the killing of 'street children' is a fascinating drama which constructs heroes and victims both in real life and in symbolic wars. Here, the story-line is constructed around the activities of the key players in the dispute, and the stage changes accordingly, from the police raids in slums, street protests and public demonstrations, to palaces and cabinet meetings. The script includes discursive talks and flamboyant gestures.

Although the rise of the issue on the agenda is not a unilinear process, and is marked by countervailing pressures and setbacks, each chapter corresponds to a phase in the development of the issue, as defined by changes in the media, outcomes in the policy agenda, the balance of forces and the state of public opinion in the

period. Each supports the elaboration of a set of arguments. The concluding chapter seeks to pull the threads together. It relates the findings of the historical narrative and press content analysis to interpretations of the main protagonists, as well as to theoretical references that enable us to understand the production of news in these local global interactions. This brings the arguments full-circle.

The main strength of this study is that it is built on sound primary evidence. The analysis is based mainly on the press coverage of Brazilian newspapers and weeklies and that of influential outlets in the international press such as the *New York Times*, *Le Monde*, the *Guardian*, *El Pais*, *Time* and *Newsweek*. This is informed by interviews with: a) national journalists and correspondents of the foreign newspapers and the main international news agencies: *Reuters*, *France Press*, *Associated Press* and *UPI*; b) representatives of Brazilian and international NGOs and religious organizations; c) Parliamentarians, judges and state officials. The research is also based on first-hand examination of speeches in the Chamber of Deputies, and of the archives of organizations such as ANDI, MNMMR, São Martinho Foundation, Projeto Axé, NEV-USP and NEPI in Brazil, and Amnesty International and Child Hope in Britain. The secondary evidence is provided by a large collection of documents and bibliographical materials. Communication and globalization studies require transdisciplinary approaches and a study about the international public sphere needs to look at the multi-lingual debate as well as the Anglo-Saxon literature. The contextual chapter has also demanded readings in other fields.

This study also draws on other important concepts in the field of communication studies, particularly the notion of 'primary definition' advanced by Hall and associates (1978) and its related conception of 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1972). These are of value for an understanding of the initial authoritarian phase, examined in chapter two. They are less significant in a later stage when counter-voices are more easily raised in a more pluralistic public sphere. This is a reminder that concepts need always to be bound to issues, and grounded in space and time.

This thesis discusses the press representation of subordinate groups and the processes of policy making, as influenced by inter-media relations and the mediation of sources within the wider framework of the international public sphere, but

focusing on the national civil society. In short, this is an attempt to provide a glimpse of the ways in which the international public sphere operates.

CHAPTER 2: THE PROBLEM OF THE MINOR

2.1. A threat to society

'Minors' have long been defined as a 'problem', something that has required a punitive response to what has been signified as a threat to society. The first legislative initiatives for minors in Brazil were aimed at the social control of poor children and adolescents, regulating their work and criminal behaviour.

After the abolition of slavery, which had existed for nearly four centuries, the first bill presented in Parliament aimed to "repress idleness" and control the "guilty infancy". The parliamentary debate reflected the spirit of the time, according to which every person had a duty not to become a burden to the social body. The subsequent criminalization of social marginality did not exclude the children: "If he transgress [such duty], leading an idle and indolent life; if, without resources, he despises the law of work, there will be in him not only a dangerous predisposition, but a kind of immorality, punished by society." (Parlamento e a Evolução Nacional. Documentos 1887-1979, reproduced in Leite, 1991: 64).

For the historian Boris Fausto (1984) the integration of these minors into Brazilian society simply meant converting them into a non-qualified work-force. Indeed even the Penal Code of 1890 established disciplinary penalties for minors to be served in industrial establishments. At that time, education was a privilege for the upper classes and poor children went to work very early in life. For the ones who could not be nurtured by the family or controlled by the factory, locking them up was the basic policy.

In the terms of the Penal Statute of 1890, young offenders under 9 years old were not considered legally responsible. However, for children between 9 and 14, the judge was required to verify whether the minor had acted with discernment and to assess his ability to distinguish between good and evil. Depending on such a capability, the magistrate could consider minors to be criminals with full penal responsibility (Bicudo, 1978).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the presence of a large number of "neglected and abandoned" children, ragged and squalid, wandering in the streets,

begging or snatching things, was a matter of concern for the police (Leite, 1991). According to Sevckenko (1983, quoted in Alvim & Valadares, 1988), the rise in juvenile delinquency in the urban chaos of Rio de Janeiro at the time was also the most prominent matter for journalists, intellectuals and politicians. Public outrage about the presence of vagrant minors in the streets was reflected in newspaper columns such as the *Jornal do Brasil's* "Queixas do Povo" (Claims of the people) (Silva, 1988, cited in Alvim & Valadares, 1988).

In the 1920s, a special form of justice for minors was established. The first juvenile courts were set up and in 1927 the first Minors' Code was enforced. The law, which was designed to address 'abandoned' and 'delinquent' minors under eighteen years old, made evident the socially discriminatory nature of the legislation and policies for the children of the poor. From then on, the term entered the public discourse, denoting poor children who had committed or were likely to commit an offence. The judicial sphere thus became the main arena in which knowledge about minors was produced.

After the 1920s, the problem of the "minors" began to lose its status as a matter exclusively for the police, and began to be considered as a problem for social policy as well. Constitutional rights for the children began to be established after 1930, first to regulate their conditions of work, and later to establish compulsory primary schooling between the ages of 7 to 14 (Passeti, 1991). However, throughout these years, the basic feature of the state response to the "minors" was to take them off the streets and out of the sight of society and lock them up in correctional schools or houses. As Adorno (1991: 181) notes: "Isolating the deviant in educational and correctional spaces was considered the best strategy to preserve the 'healthy' part of society".

During the dictatorship of the *Estado Novo*, which lasted from 1937 till 1945, official boarding institutions for "abandoned", "needy" and "delinquent" children began to be established in some states. In Rio, the SAM "Service of Assistance and Protection to the Abandoned Infancy" was inaugurated in 1940 (Londono, 1991). In this context, the reform schools became notable as "schools of crime". Extremely repressive in their approach to the children, they lacked the minimum conditions to provide for their assistance, education or regeneration. Young children interned just

because they were found wandering on the streets sometimes ended up together with older ones who had robbed, raped or even killed. Minors routinely escaped, only to be caught again by the police. As highlighted by the press, famous bandits were former inmates of such institutions. The failure of this policy served to increase public fear and anger towards the "minors".

In the climate of the late 1930s, children living in the streets of Salvador, already regarded as a public calamity, inspired the romance *Capitães de Areia* by Jorge Amado - an early example of a dissenting discourse. Mixing fiction and reality, the then Communist party member tried to challenge their stereotypical image by narrating the story of the leader of a gang of street boys who later became a militant member of the proletariat and organized strikes. Amado's book criticized the reformatories, and reported on the actual campaign of the press in Bahia, which called for the rounding up of the gangs of children, and the internment of the "early criminals" in reform schools or prisons so that citizens could sleep in peace. Published during the dictatorship, the first edition was apprehended and burned on the square. The writer had not only committed the crime of calling attention to a serious social problem, but had also presented the street as a space for political socialization in a manner that threatened the regime (Alvim, R and Valladares, L, 1988).

The democratic changes in the political regime after the Second World War positively influenced the discourses and the implementation of social policies. These changes had some effect on the life conditions of poor children and adolescents, but did not result in effective reforms to the juridical framework for minors. Especially after the military coup of the 1960s, and supported by the government of the United States, who aborted the social reforms in debate in both civil society and the state, the "problem of the abandoned minors" took on a new dimension. Acceleration of processes of urbanization, industrialization and capital accumulation resulted in changes in the lives of working-class families, which appeared to be related to a rise in the statistics of juvenile crime (Queiroz, 1984). There were also important changes in the ideological framework, as I shall demonstrate below.

2.2.A national security issue

A national policy concerning minors was first established in 1964, soon after the military take-over. To this end, a national foundation called FUNABEM was instituted in law, with responsibility for formulating and executing the National Policy for the Welfare of Minors. With regional agencies in each state known as FEBEMs, this foundation centralized policies for minors and administered the boarding institutions. The creation of FUNABEM indicated that the "problem of the minor" had gained political status and entered the arena of State affairs (Ministerio Da Previdencia e Assistencia Social, 1984).

According to Bierrenbach (quoted in Arruda, 1983), the setting up of the national foundation was part of a strategy of social planning that operated as a mechanism for social control. Like everything else in the military regime, its conceptualization of "the problem of the minors" was framed within the ideology of national security. Within this framework, it was acknowledged that the poor social conditions of some families were related to processes of immigration, urbanization and industrialization, and were the price paid for development in Brazil. But the main cause of the problem was said to be the disruption of the family, and particularly the father's authority, in tandem with the general process of moral relaxation typical of modern societies. Minors were thus characterized as victims of modernity, of community and of family neglect. By doing this, the foundation also proffered a humanitarian discourse, emphasizing the ideas of prevention and protection (Arruda, 1983).

Despite this appearance of humanitarianism, practices inside the large state institutions set up to contain the youths were characterized by extreme violence and repression. Discipline was sought through indoctrination as well as through severe punishment, including torture. By the late 1970s, "unexplained deaths" inside these institutions were to come to public attention.

The period between 1968 and 1973 in Brazil became known as the "economic miracle". It was characterized by rapid economic growth and extreme

political repression, linked through the philosophy of "development with security". Political dissent was contained by press censorship, suppression of political and civil rights, control of political organizations and unions, and police repression. During this period, the state military police forces were reorganized under army control to combat opponents of the regime known as "subversives". Death squads - which had police officers among them - persecuted, abducted, and killed "terrorists" and "marginals". The new economic success granted the military the support of business elites and sectors of the middle-class, while promoting high income concentration and marginalizing the masses. The situation of the minimum wage earner declined by almost 50 percent (Alves, 1985: 112). This had obvious consequences for the situation of deprived children who were forced onto the streets to supplement the family income.

The growing number of minors transforming the public spaces of streets in metropolitan areas into private spaces for survival by selling fruit or sweets, shining shoes, begging, snatching things, and even sleeping, was widely condemned by the press, who pressed for their internment in correction centres. The installation of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI) to investigate the situation of the minors, requested by a deputy from the government's party in 1975, revealed the concern of the political elites with juvenile delinquency. It also demonstrated an understanding that the previous legislation was out of touch with the new reality of the young offender. The dominant concern here was youth violence. Violence against these youths was not the object of consideration for this CPI, as issues of human rights were not part of the conceptual framework adopted by the committee (Câmara dos Deputados, 1992: 2). Instead, the CPI report published in the following year produced an alarming diagnosis of the situation, revealing the existence of 13,542,508 children whose parents could not provide for their subsistence, and 1,909,570 children who did not have parents. It estimated that the total number of needy and abandoned children would be around 25 million. Moreover, it stated that in 1975, 11,812 offences had been committed by minors (Alvim & Valladares, 1988).

The CPI concluded that juvenile delinquency was linked to poverty and social marginality. As scholars have remarked, this correlation serves to put all poor

youngsters under suspicion. Although the official statistics about the social profile of crime in Brazil in the period could support an association between social marginality and criminality as suggested by social theories of urbanization, it is important to note that this association is not unproblematic. Studies have shown how figures based on crime officially detected can over-represent transgressions committed by the lower classes, leading to distortions in the social representation of crime. This can also vary according to the concerns of particular moral crusades, as surveillance is biased against groups previously defined as potential criminals (e.g. Benevides and Ferreira, 1991; Paixão, 1983). For instance, official statistics showed a 116% rise in the number of young offenders taken to the main reformatory in São Paulo between 1975 and 1980. According to Arruda (1983), these figures were misleading and did not represent an actual rise in youth crime, rather they were aimed at sustaining official statements about the increase in the number of young offenders which alarmed the population. It was in this context that a review of the legislation for minors was conducted. The new code was enforced at a time when the "problem of the minor" seemed to be out of control. Brazilian society had become afraid of the alarming number of needy children and adolescents on the streets, who were regarded as potential bandits, and thus considered itself oppressed by the "sudden rise of juvenile crime". Consequently, the judicial apparatus reinforced its mechanisms to punish the poor offender (Alvim & Valladares, 1988).

2.3. *Trombadinhas*, urban violence and moral panic

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or groups of persons emerge to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in stylized and stereo-typical fashion by the mass media, the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or more often, resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object

of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something that has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic is passed over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and longlasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself (Cohen, 1972: 28).

As I have demonstrated above, the "abandoned minors" had been a matter for public concern in Brazil at least since the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, poor children and adolescents in Brazil became the subject of a kind of moral panic. *Pivetes* and *trombadinhas*, as young pick pockets were then labelled, became a central focus in the debate about the rise of urban violence, and were more prominent on the political agenda as a threat to society as never before.

In 1978, a proposal to reform the Minors' Code was put forward by a deputy from the Opposition, with the aim of introducing a section on the rights of children. However, a corporation of magistrates with the support of government ministers eliminated these concerns from the bill. In this same period, statements of the Secretary of Public Security in São Paulo about the increasing numbers of children between 10 and 16 years old involved in criminal activities prompted law and order speeches in the Chamber of Deputies and in the press.

According to Ferreira (1980), there was an increase in the number of homicides committed by minors in São Paulo in 1978. In this year there were 121 homicides committed by youths under 18 years old, whereas in 1977 there were only 40. Although this figure was not unusual, and even represented a decline when compared to previous years (in 1973, for instance, 126 people were killed by minors), this jump could have helped to trigger a moral panic. The decision to release figures about the rise in youth crime was one way of contributing to such a moral panic, and some analysts have argued that the propaganda and fear had increased much more than violent crime itself (Benevides, 1983). And as a consequence, judges responsible for minors were pressurized by newspaper journalists to take the minors off the streets (Alvim & Valladares, 1988). Furthermore, some authorities and commentators, including a right-wing bishop,

advised people to resist potential assaults and even buy guns (Benevides, 1983). Such recommendations not only enhanced the feeling of insecurity among a population now held responsible for their own safety, but also stimulated and reinforced the tendency towards private justice. Indeed, the surge of lynchings committed against street children is indicative of the attitude of the population towards them.

The moral panics of the late 1970s and early 1980s served to fix in the public imagination a stereotypical character of the "trombadinha", representative of all poor children and adolescents. The public anger against these youths, shown by the lynching, for example, was completely out of proportion with the level of offences committed. The fear generated by the high visibility of the criminal behaviour of a minority of these youths was also translated into public support for tougher sentencing and even police violence and extra-legal killings. The following story illustrates the level of popular anger and prejudices against minors.

Rio de Janeiro's Central District. Passerby, seeing a poorly dressed young boy standing "suspiciously near a bicycle", grabbed the luckless fellow and tied him to a tree. The police arrived in time to stop the lynching: they proved the suspect's innocence - the bicycle was his own. (JB 25.08.80, reproduced in Benevides and Ferreira, 1991: 39).

Another emblematic example that demonstrates the lasting consequences of the moral panics is the case of a boy killed in 1983, in plain daylight in the centre of São Paulo. Joilson de Jesus, a former inmate of FUNABEM, who was assisted by the Catholic Church and worked on the streets to help his family, snatched a gold chain from a woman's neck and ran. He was caught by a public prosecutor, who stamped and kicked him to death, while the crowd watched and instigated him to lynch the boy. Only two girls protested. The lawyer was later absolved and the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* blamed the Archbishop of São Paulo for supporting violence and marginals (Silva, 1987).

For a long time, official historiography neglected the study of violence in Brazilian society and instead promoted a myth of pacifism and cordiality as innate traits of Brazilian identity. In the period of military government, the existence of

participants in the armed struggle opposing the regime did not challenge this view, as they were regarded as a minority corrupted by foreign ideologies. Nonetheless, Benevides' study (1983: 19-20) pointed out that "the presumed rise in violent criminality turned into a *national problem* and as such was analyzed in congresses and seminars of several origins and 'reproduced' in the press, especially between the second half of 1979 and early 1982". This study provides evidence for the agenda-setting power of the state at the time. Some months after the Minister of Justice constituted a work group of social scientists and jurists to study crime and violence in Brazil, the issue of violence gained the front pages of the most important newspapers in the country. The research found that there was a considerable increase in the space dedicated to this issue in the serious press, which had always relegated this theme to the secondary pages of police news (Benevides, 1983).

It was in this context that, in October 1979, the revised draft for the Minors' Code was approved by Congress without debate (Moraes, 1989). Minors in an 'irregular situation'- that is needy, abandoned or offenders - were denied basic citizenship rights. Among other things, the law enabled the indiscriminate arrest of youngsters, who could be forced to stay in police stations for five days for investigation, before being brought to a Juvenile Judge and interned in the state large institutions. In some respects, the code was more severe than the legislation for adults. But even after the approval of the code, a campaign to introduce tougher measures such as the reduction of the age for criminal responsibility, established in the code as 18 years old, continued.

A few participants in the debate at the time doubted the notion of a wave of violent crime and offered distinct explanations for the sudden rise in crime stories in the Brazilian press. One perspective was that this reflected not a real increase in violent crime rates, but shifts in their placement and consequent visibility. Robbery, thefts and mugging, which had always been part of daily life in the lower classes, had begun to reach the middle-class in the cities. A jurist claimed that it was just propaganda designed to promote more changes in legislation such as the shift of the age limit of penal responsibility from 18 to 16, or 14 years old, or tougher sentences such as the death penalty (see Helio Bicudo interview in *Jornal do Brasil* 25.04.80, reproduced in Benevides, 1983). Some scholars later suggested that the rise in urban

violence was a campaign by the mass media, promoted by the deliberate action of the military regime, and aimed at finding a scapegoat for the economic and political difficulties in the years after the "economic miracle". (see e.g. Zaluar, 1983; MNMMR, IBASE, NEV/USP, 1991). Rubem Oliven's (1986) description of the rise of the problem on the political agenda is similar to Hall et al.'s (1978) analysis of mugging in Britain.

In *Policing the Crisis*, Hall and his colleagues (1978) contest the common sense explanation for the rise of 'mugging' in the public arena and related policy changes. This explanation suggested that there was a sudden dramatic rise in this type of crime, perceived by a vigilant press. The real problem and its publicity provoked public anxiety and outrage against the muggers, which led to dutiful responses from the apparatuses of social control which took the form of tougher policing and sentencing. The authors argue that this was in fact a 'moral panic' preceded by a war between the police and the 'muggers' in the context of deteriorating relations between the law and order groups and the black communities in Britain. They state that 'mugging' was not a novel problem, but that the panic was the result of a new definition of the situation. The campaign involved skilled handling of the media by the police and a concerted response by the courts in terms of a discourse of law and order and sentences imposed as deterrents. As a result of this, prominent press coverage and an outrage in public opinion, also formed through informal networks, were used by the control agencies and the media to justify the changes in policy.

Hall et al. further state that this . . . belonged to a succession of moral panics in Britain in the political climate of the rise of the Exceptional State in the early 1970s, which served to change the balance of forces so that the state tutored civil society. The judges' consensus was more persuasive due to the lack of alternative definitions. At the time, black associations and liberal leaders who contested the campaign were not strong or articulate enough to provide countervailing definitions. Hall et al. argue that the response of the media was also influenced by organizational and cultural constraints which "combine to produce a systematically structured *over-accessing* to the media of those in powerful and privileged institutional positions", who become *primary definers* of topics (1978:58).

For Oliven, urban violence in Brazil was elevated to the status of a "national issue" at exactly the moment when the economic and political model reached crisis point, and the military needed new elements to claim legitimacy. The discourse of national security previously used against the "terrorists" lost weight with the defeat of the urban guerrillas, so a new scapegoat had to be found. The new figure was the "marginal", a character used to exorcise the ghosts of the middle-class, now afraid of loss of status, rising inflation and unemployment.

In the debate of the time, socio-economic reasons appeared as the main cause of the increase in violence, and the correlation between violent crime and misery was a recurrent theme. It is certainly true that the stigmatization of the poor at a moment when the government was very much concerned with the threat represented by the organization of the working class in the new unionism could serve "national security" purposes. Furthermore, it could provide public support for police operations in the *favelas* and the intimidation of the lower classes, at a time when the strikes by metal workers were heavily repressed. The relationship between the press and the military regime in Brazil requires further investigation, particularly in respect of the role of different outlets assessing the impact of the alternative press. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, a 'conspiratorial' perspective does not seem out of place in the context of an authoritarian regime inspired by *National Security* ideology, at a time when organizations in civil society were still powerless.

2.4. Reversing the moral panic: the production of a counter-discourse

As we have seen, this authoritarian model of government in Brazil, highly dependent on foreign capital, was in crisis in the late 1970s to the extent that the consensus was just starting to break. The 'problem of the minor' was not initially on the agenda of a slow and limited liberalising process that included the abolition of previous censorship of the press, political amnesty for middle-class dissidents and less state control of the economy. However, with the reorganization of civil society and the opening of new spaces in the press, the moral panic about the street children

was not uncontested. Writing in an oppositional newspaper, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, a political scientist and human rights activist, criticized the new code in the following words:

The hysteria against the children and unemployed minors... is the path to a policy of veiled extermination: arbitrary arrests facilitating "accidental" deaths and police domination in the FEBEM centres... The official policy of repression intends to eliminate (now physically), the multitude of children and youngsters without food, education and jobs, generated by the economic policy.

He further commented that it was time to refuse the terms of the current debate about urban violence (*Jornal da Republica* 29.12.79, reproduced in Pinheiro, 1984: 21).

The declaration of 1979 as the International Year of the Child by the United Nations also helped to make concern for children's rights an important issue on the agenda of some organizations, especially the progressive sectors of the Catholic Church. In Brazil, the issue started to be linked with the general struggle for citizenship rights curtailed during the military regime. The problem of violence against minors in state institutions in Brazil even received some international attention in the early eighties, mainly through films such as Babenco's award-winning *Pixote*, based on the book *A Infância dos Mortos*, written by the Brazilian journalist José Louzeiro.

Such an exacerbation of the 'problem of the minor' had the positive effect of arousing the interest of radical journalists and citizens, leading to the emergence of organizations concerned with the children's defence. Another important development was the involvement of social scientists in a problem that had previously been mainly defined by the judicial sphere. The social scientists sought to reverse the terms of the debate, presenting the poor children and adolescents as victims of the state and society. In the counter discourse of the time, the minors were portrayed as victims of "savage capitalism", and the authoritarian state policies were deemed responsible for their criminal behaviour. The new vocabulary and frames of reference produced by the academy would later be transferred to the press. The new

term *meninos de rua*, literally, street boys, was meant to replace the more pejorative word 'minors'. It is gendered in the masculine because most of them were, in fact, male. Later the number of street girls would also increase. (In this study I mostly refer to street children because it reads better in English).

Even before the political opening in 1977, the Archdiocese of São Paulo had issued a document - *Violência contra os humildes* - denouncing state violence against the poor. Concerned especially with police violence against 'minors' in the streets, and repressive attitudes in the official boarding institutions, this called for a general mobilization of the public to change the situation. The charges in the document were based on press reports that had escaped the censors' veto, and additionally books published by journalists who also published their investigative reports as literature to escape censorship. These were further facilitated by the Church's close contacts with the poor communities.

It was not only in Brazil that the Catholic Church pioneered work to highlight the problems of children, and particularly street-children. As Agnelli (1996: 105) notes: "before being adopted by the United Nations system, the idea of asking governments to make a special effort for children had originally been proposed by the International Catholic Children's Bureau (ICCB), acting as a forum for the discussion of current child-related issues". And in 1979, the ICCB promoted the establishment of an Inter-NGO Programme on Street Children and Street Youth, which was launched in 1982 in recognition of the absence of programmes to deal with street-children among the 60 non-governmental organizations which took part in the International Year. It is important to note that the aforementioned Archbishop of São Paulo, Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, was an active member of the ICCB.

In 1964, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Brazil supported the military take-over that ousted the populist president João Goulart, who was undertaking social reforms. But later the leadership of the bishops gathered in the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) took a leading role in the opposition to the military regime, criticizing its economic and political model and especially the violations of human rights. During the seventies, important sectors of the Catholic Church, such as the Archdiocese of São Paulo and the leadership of the CNBB had played an important role in organizing grass-roots movements and supporting the

groups who fought against the military regime. For some time, the Church was the only viable channel for opposition, and it played a remarkable role during the reorganization of social and political movements in Brazil (see e.g. Lehman, 1990). From the late seventies, the 'problem of the minor' became one of its main concerns.

As a contribution to the International Year of the Child, the Catholic Church's *Comissão Justiça e Paz* (Justice and Peace Commission) and the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo commissioned an exploratory study about the poor children and adolescents who worked and lived on the streets, to be presented at a special seminar (Ferreira, 1980). The university then constituted an interdisciplinary work group about minors who produced a research project and inspired academic theses on the subject. These initial studies highlighted the problems of the official child agencies, and stressed the need to change the political system and economic model responsible for their maintenance. Based on interviews or participant observation with children on the streets and in the boarding institutions, the group analyzed the conditions of the street children's everyday life, which led many of them to delinquency, and also attempted to reveal their interior world, values and representations.

One of the aims of the work group on poor children and adolescents was to explain the context that produced the 'trombadinhas', and to break with some common-sense views about them. They therefore offered a different framework, which characterized the offences committed by the poor children and adolescents in the streets as 'strategies of survival'. The 'minors' were presented as workers, but the scholars conceded that the distinction between their activities in the informal and illegal sector could easily have been blurred. Nonetheless, the social scientists concluded that the state agencies of control and assistance were the very bodies responsible for transforming these youths into criminals. These studies showed that the behaviour of the institutionalized young offender did not differ in principle from the conduct of the majority of low income children in terms of their struggle to survive. What led them to a delinquent life was the experience of being caught by the repressive agencies and the circuit Police, Juvenile Courts and FEBEM (Arruda, 1983). The researchers argued that the social stigma which marked the street-

children not only justified official violence against them, but contributed to their entry into crime, making their reality a vicious cycle (Ferreira, 1980).

Another mainstream argument challenged by the social scientific research, was the idea that the children on the streets or the offenders in the institutions were abandoned as a result of family disintegration. The research showed instead that most were members of poor families, and were on the streets to provide for their maintenance, as the needy minor did not belong to an irregular minority, but constituted the majority of the Brazilian population under 18 years old.

In addition, the researchers argued that while many of these families were mother-centred, to call them disorganised was to ignore that this was a basic pattern of the family in the lower classes (Arruda, 1983; Violante, 1983). Against the official discourse, it was also suggested that it was not poverty itself that was responsible for the disintegration of the family which led to juvenile crime, but rather the capitalist mode of production, which not only disorganized the family but also created the phenomenon of deprivation (Queiroz, 1984).

Paradoxically, such studies confirmed the fatalist social prejudices which regarded the minors as "future criminals", and especially the inmates of the reform schools. However, they also posited that the "problem of the minor" was a consequence of policies that had privileged economic growth and accumulation of wealth to the detriment of equity and welfare, and thus that it was not insoluble. Moreover, the academic research was quite important in scientifically establishing the negative effects of internment and providing important knowledge about the minors that would also lead to the search for alternative ways of dealing with them.

2.5. A new social movement

Before the late seventies, the majority of religious or other voluntary groups created to care for poor children and adolescents were directed towards providing services and assistance. From the late 1970s onwards, new organizations were formed and joined other institutions involved in the defence of children's rights. The "problem of the minor" was the beginning of an important social movement that

struggled to transform the public and self image of "street children" and to propose alternative solutions to their plight.

One of the first groups to develop more explicit political objectives was the Movement for the Defence of Minors, set up in São Paulo in 1979. This was a voluntary organization that aimed to place the rights of minors at the forefront of the national agenda and to act in the children's defence (Luppi, 1981). The first activities of the organization consisted of revealing maltreatment of children and adolescents in the state institutions and exposing their killings by the police.

Among the founding members of this movement was a journalist who conducted investigative reports about the minors in official institutions. Carlos Luppi, a special reporter of the *Folha de São Paulo* reported about the violence committed against these minors both inside the FEBEM, and by the police. By the first half of 1979, the previous censorship of the press was abolished as part of the process of controlled liberalization conducted by the military. The newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* published lists of minors who had disappeared or had been killed by the police in the state. The first of these had 44 names (FSP 22.04.79), and the second had 35 (FSP 16.05.79). The hypothesis of the existence of a death squad interested in the murder of young offenders was put forward by the paper, but this was dismissed by the authorities questioned and no serious investigations were undertaken (Luppi, 1981). Only the president of FEBEM commented on the story at a press conference, but he said he was not aware of the problem. Nonetheless, a parliamentary investigation about violence against minors in the State Legislative Assembly of São Paulo was set up and members of the Movement for the Defence of Minors took part in the hearings.

Sensitized by such revelations, the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) formed the *Pastoral do Menor* (Minors' Pastoral). It was initially set up to assist the minors, but later became an important pressure group, campaigning for human rights for children and bringing cases of violence against them to public light (Personal interview with Sister Maria do Rosário Cintra). In 1980, ASEAF - an association of former students of the state agency FUNABEM was set up in Rio. In the North of the country, Father Bruno Secchi founded the Republic of Small Vendors, experimenting with new approaches in work with street children, including

developing their social consciousness and staging demonstrations against police violence. In Recife, in the North East, Father Ramiro also developed alternative work with street children that had similar objectives (Allsebrook & Swift, 1989). Other charities linked to the Catholic Church such as the Organization of Fraternity Help in Bahia (OAF) and the São Martinho Foundation in Rio, which began giving religious and charitable assistance to poor children, were also to acquire a more political profile, working in line with the *Pastoral do Menor* (Personal interviews with Father Piazza and Roberto Santos).

Another important organization to become involved with political advocacy for street children in the 1980s was the United Nations Children's Fund. UNICEF had been present in Brazil since its first years. However, at the beginning it was mostly concerned with health programmes to reduce infant mortality, and only later did it begin to broaden its mandate to combine political advocacy, social mobilization and technical support within several programmes. During the period of military rule, this intergovernmental organization was identified as an "imperialist" agency by the groups opposing the regime. In 1979, UNICEF was co-operating with the military government in the review of policies which led to the Minors' Code, and their "proposed programme of assistance was repudiated by the popular organizations" (Swift, 1991 :17).

But by the early eighties, as part of the slow transition from authoritarian rule to democratic government, the return of direct elections for the state governments enabled opposition candidates to be elected in important states such as São Paulo, Rio and Pernambuco. This meant that the rigid social control framework of the state welfare institutions and law enforcement agencies started to be challenged. People who contested the repressive philosophy and practices prevailing in the state foundations for needy, abandoned and delinquent children began to occupy positions in such institutions, and tried to implement new policies. An agreement between the Ministry of Social Action and UNICEF brought together these state officials and UNICEF's advisers on abandoned children, resulting in a decision to contact church groups and other community organizations who had different ways of dealing with street children.

The setting up of a project called "Alternatives for Street Children" marked the beginning of a collaboration between officials, UNICEF representatives and NGOs, including the Minors' Pastoral and other religious groups, inspired by Liberation Theology. Following the civic campaigns for reforms and direct elections in 1984, and the inauguration of a civilian President in 1985, there was more debate about deprived children and increased mobilization of organizations working with them.

In 1985, the National Movement of Street Boys and Girls (MNMMR) was set up to fight for citizenship rights of street children and to help organize them, with the support of the Catholic Church and UNICEF. The MNMMR was the result of links established between technicians and the several non-governmental organizations brought together by the Alternatives for Street Children Project, who were dissatisfied with the State programmes. The aim of this collaboration was to change laws and policies concerned with minors, and to challenge the previous negative image of children living in institutions or on the street, portraying them instead as citizens (Swift, 1991). In May 1986, this movement staged its first national conference in Rio, gathering street children and child advocates from different regions in Brazil to debate their problems in relation to education, work, family, health and violence. The movement denounced the violence embedded in the social structure and characterized by the omissions of the State's basic social policies, and also the violence committed by the state apparatus of repression and control (MNMMR, IBASE, NEV/USP, 1991).

The first congress of the street children generated a lot of publicity in the national media and was even reported by the French daily *Le Monde* (30.5.86). At the time, UNICEF's communications staff played a decisive role in preparing for the meeting and guaranteeing media coverage. They also secured the support of the National Advertising Council, and thus received free advertising for the campaign for constitutional rights for children. Because many people regarded street children as petty criminals, Salvador Herencia, UNICEF's Communications Officer, recalled that they anticipated considerable public alarm at the idea of five hundred of them convening in Brasilia. "We held several meetings with journalists and explained that, with their support, the problem of street children could be shown in a new light, one

that would admit new ways of dealing with it" (Swift, 1993:59-60). Herencia believed that while the extraordinary nature of the event in itself made it newsworthy, its positive coverage was in part related to UNICEF's intervention, which encouraged journalists to approach it in a more favourable frame of mind. To stimulate more positive stories on the issue, UNICEF inaugurated a National Press Award for Children. In the last six months of 1986, almost 3000 articles and 72 television programmes drew on children's rights issues in Brazil (UNICEF, 1993).

The organizations comprising the street children's movement joined forces with other groups in civil society and even more liberal government sectors in order to campaign for change in the legislation concerning children and adolescents, now considered paternalistic and repressive. A National Front in Defence of the Rights of Children, which gathered people from different social sectors, occupations, political and religious affiliations, was set up to campaign for children's rights in the debates for the redrafting of a new Constitution for the country (Swift, 1991). Preceding the work of the Constitution Assembly, several meetings were conducted to discuss proposals concerning the rights of the children at municipal, state and federal levels. But it was not only the specialized private and governmental institutions assisting minors that took part in this debate. Some of such meetings gathered representatives of institutions such as the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), the Justice and Peace Service for Latin America, and black movement groups, in addition to some political parties (CEDI, 1986).

Between 1986 and mid 1988, with the process of redrafting a new constitution under way, UNICEF and the other institutions interested in defending children were engaged in the reframing of policies and legislation to consolidate the democratic transition. The process included public hearings, and enabled any citizen to propose a popular amendment bearing signatures of at least 30.000 registered voters and to defend it in the respective commission. At first, the Catholic Church and the MNMMR did not want to participate in the National Committee, composed of seven government ministries and seven national NGOs responsible for receiving the proposals for the Constitution and elaborating on them, although they later did. While UNICEF and government officials in favour of the reforms were engaged in

the campaign for 'children's rights', the Minors' Pastorate and the MNMMR, more closely related to the Worker's Party, organized another campaign: "Justice, Peace and Non-Violence" (Swift, 1991).

The Catholic Church also selected minors as the theme for the 1987 annual Lenten Campaign (Campanha da Fraternidade). Since 1973, the Confederation of the Brazilian Bishops had selected political issues for the attention of Catholics. In 1987, the campaign aimed to change public feelings about street children with the banner "Fraternity and the Minor: who shelters a minor, shelters me". The idea was launched in October 1986, during the sixth Ecumenical Week of the Minor, which gathered eight hundred people from the ecclesiastical base communities, mainly organized by the Catholic Church groups involved with Liberation Theology. In the meeting, participants drew up a list of 151 children murdered in their communities in São Paulo. In an 'indictment and commitment' letter they repudiated the murders of street children, who were said to be victims of police and street violence and of an unjust and alienating social order.

2.6. Democracy and the killing of young bandits

In this same year, Emir Sader (1986), a member of the Teotonio Vilela Commission, (a group which would later establish an influential NGO in the form of the Centre for the Study of Violence at the University of São Paulo (NEV-USP)), published an academic article assessing the problem of police violence during the first year of the New Republic. Drawing on press accounts, Sader estimated that, in 1985, one minor was killed daily in São Paulo as a result of police action. In Rio, statistics provided by the Secretary of the Civil Police three years later indicated that in 1986 there were 204 murders of minors. The figures were probably underestimated as some cases were not reported, especially in the case of extra-legal killings in which the bodies were dumped in deserted places or buried in secret cemeteries, meaning that some were never found. The figures nonetheless showed an increase of 18% as compared to the previous year, and indicated a growing trend.

For example, during 1987, 227 such killings were registered by the police, a figure that was 32% higher than 1985.

Although violence against minors was not yet a public issue, by mid 1986 it had become evident for a few human rights activists, religious groups, social workers and other organizations having direct contact with street children or low income communities, that social violence, maltreatment of children in the state institutions, and the extra-legal murders of minors had not stopped with the end of the military regime. Political liberalization had seen the end of the arbitrary arrests, torture and murders for political reasons, and also the attacks on press freedom that had so outraged middle-class activists. However, it did not change the state's relationship to the poor classes in many respects. Some authors believe that there was a large degree of continuity between the "New Republic" and the military regime in terms of controlling the poor sectors, since institutions such as the police and judiciary proved to be very resistant to change, thus hindering attempts by the democratic governments to reform and control them (Paixão, 1991; Pinheiro, 1991; Souza, 1989). In addition, the law remained the same for some time.

During the 1980s, attempts to reform the police, and campaigns for human rights, especially those of common prisoners, held little middle-class appeal and were opposed by a discourse which emphasized social disorder, relating it to democratic government. At the same time, support for private ways of combatting and preventing crime grew considerably (Caldeira, 1991). Despite the inauguration of a more progressive governor in 1983, the Military Police in São Paulo still killed 500 people in 1985, while only 31 policemen were killed. These figures are higher than those for 1982, when 286 killings by the police and 26 deaths of police officers were reported. Self defence and gun battles with criminals were the alleged motives for these killings, and only 11 cases resulted in expulsions for police violence (FSP 01.01.86). During this administration, an investigation of death-squad style killings concluded that most were committed by police officers. In the same period, a commission charged with investigating similar murders in Rio also found evidence of involvement by the Military Police. It is important to note that despite the term and some of its methods and ideology, the Military Police is not under the jurisdiction of the Armed Forces. In Brazil, the state governments control two police

forces. The Military Police is mostly responsible for patrolling the streets, while the Civil Police do most of the investigations and run the police stations.

Sociologists believe that the economic crisis, together with the political and psychological climate of the time thus contributed to an increase in urban violence, summary executions and parallel justice, all of which victimized marginals and poor youths. The chaotic process of urbanization that had started in past decades reached crisis point in the mid eighties. While in 1950 there were 18 million people living in the Brazilian cities, representing 36% of the total population, in 1986 this number had risen to 98 million, or 70% of the total population. This resulted in the concentration of large numbers of migrants and other low income workers living in slums on the peripheries or hillsides of the metropolitan areas. Especially in Rio, some of these areas which, in turn were very poorly served by the state, became dominated by drug lords and violent crime.

In the mid 1980s, following a recession dating from the beginning of the decade and aggravated by the service of the enormous foreign debt and the uncertainties of the democratic transition, there seemed to be a new upsurge of juvenile crime. This increase was even reported in the foreign press (see e.g. Brazil's Children of the Streets: Crime by Minors Has Surged as Millions Fight for Survival (IHT 25.10.85). Government figures mentioned the existence of 36 million needy children, representing nearly 60 % of the total of the population under the age of 18. In addition, one third of all children between 7 and 14 were out of school. With this new crisis, the 'abandoned minors' in the street increasingly became seen as the dangerous *pivetes* in the public eyes, sniffing glue, stealing from shops and mugging people. On the peripheries and in the slums of large cities, where organized crime controlled areas abandoned by state neglect, some became the work force of the drug traffickers. Carrying weapons, children as young as twelve appeared as prominent bandits in the press, and were seen as dangerous role models in their communities.

However, with the transition to a civilian government there had been a marked change in the discourse and philosophy of the new heads of FUNABEM. Commenting on the alleged increase in offences by minors, the President of the national child welfare foundation declared to a foreign journalist that this was a political problem, and the result of the failure of land, agricultural, educational,

labour and health policies. He added: "The child has a legitimate right to defend himself against a hostile society" (IHT 25.10.85). But, the political and human rights philosophies which inspired the policies of the representatives of the centre-left coalition in power in some states since 1983 and in the federal government agencies from 1985, were strongly rejected by police chiefs, Minors' judges and some old-guard officials in the child welfare agencies. In many of the overcrowded correction centres for minors, the old repressive attitudes remained.

This situation was exacerbated by the fact that the police called on the population to react to the reformist policies, spreading panic. For instance, on 4 October 1985, a manifesto of the Association of Police Chiefs of the state of São Paulo read:

Present times are of total anxiety for you and total tranquillity for those who kill, rob, and rape. Your family is devastated and your patrimony acquired with much sacrifice is taken away...How many crimes have occurred in your neighbourhood, and how many criminals were found responsible for them...the bandits are protected by so called human rights, something that the government considers that you, an honest and hard working citizen, do not deserve (Cited in Caldeira, 1991 :169).

Adding to this pressure, surveys on youth violence made headlines: "The participation of minors in crimes increases" (FSP 3.02.86). The findings were described as "terrifying". They showed that between January 1983 and October 1985 there had been an increase of 113% in the register of crimes committed by minors in the area. In 1985, a steady increase in the number of children aged 10 and 11 involved in "anti-social acts" was also observed. At the same time, there were 1217 youths between 16 and 18 years old in the two boarding schools for young offenders in the state. The majority (60%) were there for theft, while 20% had been remanded for gang robbery and 5% had committed homicide.

Two months later, the police intervention to control a rebellion during which more than a hundred minors escaped from the FEBEM unit in São Paulo resulted in the resignation of the social worker who had directed the institution since 1983. A

director who had defended less repressive measures and alternative policies for the minors was now substituted by a lawyer and former director of the State Prison, committed to more conventional and rigid ways of controlling the young offenders (*Afinal*, 01.04.86). This action shows how the "problem of the minor" remained a pressing issue on the national agenda. Even after democratic changes in the political regime, "conservative" sectors retained the upper hand over "progressive" reformers.

Some press reports and popular radio and television programmes of the time exacerbated the fear and anger against outlaws and street children, claiming for tougher sentencing and even inciting the public and the police to take justice into their own hands. These reports heavily criticized human rights activists for defending "bandits". The programmes had high audience ratings and even turned radio commentators into deputies.

During the 1986 elections for state government and legislatures, public security became a very prominent issue, and candidates made promises to reform law and order in order to win votes. A 'security group' was elected for the Legislative Assembly in São Paulo, including among its number a captain from the special police force who had been responsible for hundreds of killings, and the radio presenter Afanasio Jazadji, who supported the introduction of the death penalty and campaigned against criminals, minors and human rights policies. Jazadji was elected with the highest ever number of votes for the post (Dimenstein, 1991). This security group would press for tougher policing and legislation.

According to Martins (1991) there were 50 percent more lynchings during the first four years of democratic regime under the "New Republic" than during the last four years of dictatorship. Martins relates this increase to the social crisis, but it must be noted that his findings were based on reports in the national press, and the rise should therefore be attributed in part to the larger visibility of the problem in the democratic period. The phenomenon of lynchings was highlighted by the Brazilian press, and even reached the headlines of foreign newspapers. "Lynchings: A Brazilian 'sport'", commented the French *Le Monde* (12.01.87), quoting the *Folha de São Paulo*. The American daily *The New York Times* linked the killings to crime

growth: "A crime rise spurs Brazil lynch mobs" (21.01.87). Drawing on a *Veja* story, the Spanish *El Pais* (15.02.87) reported on "The Brazilian fever of lynchings".

Different explanations were provided for the resort to private justice. Some law and order groups related this to the transportation of backward practices from rural areas, as a result of the invasion of the cities by migrants, or the poor classes' authoritarian conceptions. Others justified the existence of parallel justice on the grounds of the incompetence in the face of the increase in crime. Human rights groups, in turn, contested the impunity of the killers and commented on the responsibility of the official justice system and arbitrary policing, which resulted in public distrust in a system in crisis.

Some studies confirmed that for many poor people retaliation was the expected punishment for criminals. Extra-legal killing of bandits was an accepted social practice in certain areas in Brazil, and was even approved of by offenders' relatives and neighbours. Research conducted in some extremely poor and violent places concluded that the death of the bandit is seen by many people as a relief, and is then legitimated by the majority, who support extermination squads or the official death penalty (Drska and Heringer, 1990). In so far as they affected the poor, the deaths were regarded with social indifference by other sectors, and in many cases were incited, applauded or justified by the police.

Especially on the social periphery, an informal justice system developed both as a result of the relative absence of the state, and a consequence of the perceived discriminatory nature of the presence of the authorities in such communities, who did not appear to provide protection or grant rights, but rather repressed people and made demands. For this reason, groups of bandits, including youngsters, performed a strategic role in establishing "order" in these communities, where the police were indeed perceived as contributing to disorder.

This alternative police operated according to local codes and rules, becoming more legitimate than the state official in the eyes of some dwellers, despite their illegal activities. This was the case even though it involved high costs for the community, including payments (tolls for protection), the obligation to shelter the bandits, exposure to the revenge of the police and competing gangs, death in shootings, and negative role models for their children (Paixão, 1991; Zaluar, 1983).

Some scholars argued that these incidents of parallel justice had their origins in earlier historical, political and cultural processes as a legacy of a colonial state and authoritarian regimes. For Roberto da Matta (1987), the conflict between the traditional relational, personal and clientelistic order and the modern ethic of individualistic rights was not easily resolved during the rebirth of the public sphere in Brazil. These practices revealed the tensions between hierarchy and democratic equity in the period and also explained the distance between facts and norms. There was conflict between modern notions of universal citizenship developed on the streets, by the state and in markets, and old practices of traditional mediation such as clientelism, which emerged from the private sphere of the household, but were still applied to public relationships. This resulted in forms of differentiated citizenship, in which first-class citizens of reputation or with social influence were protected, while the others were considered a danger to the public order and left alone to solve their own problems, providing a "breeding ground for *justiceiros*" (Fernandes, 1991).

In the early 1980s, Maria Célia Paoli (1982) argued that it was the absence of a civil space where problems such as those involving abandoned minors could be politicized through the formation of a critical public opinion in Brazil that led either to the privatization or the repression of daily conflicts. In the context of the political opening, she had, then, already considered the importance of the emergence of social movements and the return of publicity and debate to collectivize hidden issues.

However, social historians describe the period in Brazil from late 1986 until early 1988 as a time of "political disenchantment" (Diniz, 1989). The people were tired of successive defeats, which in turn had been preceded by peaks of excessive hope. In 1984, millions of Brazilians were on the streets marching and shouting, demanding direct elections to end two decades of military rule. The campaign galvanized society to the extent that even the mainstream conservative media adhered to it. Nevertheless, the first civilian President after the dictatorship was still elected indirectly by Congress.

Despite this, the people put their trust in Tancredo Neves, who was supported by a centre-left coalition, and defeated the candidate of the military. But this was not to last. In early 1985 the country mourned the charismatic elected President, who died before his inauguration. His Vice President took office amid general discontent,

as he was identified with the previous regime. Notwithstanding, he was able to gain popularity and again bring hope to the people by launching an audacious economic plan, which froze prices, along with public surveillance and reduced inflation in the first months of 1986. After a short period of "social peace", the failure of this plan in late 1986 brought profound scepticism, accompanied by increased loss of sentiments of social responsibility and solidarity (Sallum Junior, 1988; Diniz, 1989). The people who had supported the plan felt betrayed by the democratic transition, and a deep crisis of credibility in the government and distrust of authorities and institutions ensued.

In late 1986 and 1987, government forces tried to contain all sorts of explosions of popular protest that followed the crisis, using severe repression. At the time, police violence against the poor communities where bandits and workers coexisted reached extraordinary levels and suggested a form of social control (Chevigny, 1991: 213). Rebellions in the correction centres for minors were also severely repressed (e.g. JB 13.1.87). In this context, what was the reaction to deaths of minors at the hands of the police or death squads?

2.7. Primary definitions of the killing of minors

In the mid 1980s, relatively few of the so-called street children were involved in crime. Of all the children and adolescents assisted by FUNABEM throughout the country, only 3% were offenders, but the alarmed middle-class perceived these minors as potential assailants (IHT 25.10.85). The reaction to actual incidents of street crime involving children was usually much more violent than the crime itself, and the population also responded by putting more pressure on the police to get tougher. The press contributed to increased public anxiety as the criminal careers of a few youngsters, some as young as 13, were highlighted in the papers. These reports provided a profile of what may become of each "minor", thereby promoting all poor children to the category of dangerous suspects. In early 1986, the murder of a famous young bandit, Naldinho, a former ward of FEBEM who had constantly escaped the reform schools to rob banks and had also killed people, gained prominence in the

press. This case gave more ammunition to the counter-attack mounted by sectors against the human rights policies and reforms proposed by the children's rights advocates: "Naldinho, the end of a life of violence"; "Ironic, dangerous, cruel". Under this headline, the *O Estado de São Paulo* narrated the life of the 16 year old youth, who was found dead in a locked car. The paper carried the police claim that he had been shot by drug dealers (OE 26.03.86). According to Emir Sader (1986), the exploitation of the escape of Naldinho by authoritarian sectors of the press in line with the police resulted in a proposal to create the Police Division to Protect the Minor, with the announced objective of "cleaning up the streets at any cost". He assessed that this proposed division was in fact an instrument for the defence of society against the minor.

In the case of extra-legal violence against poor youths, the primary definition was provided by police sources and the courts who fed journalists with terrifying stories of 'bandit minors', such as Naldinho. The killings of minors by on-duty policemen were attributed to self-defence or shoot-outs, and justified by the victims' involvement in crime, making them responsible for their own expected deaths. The same happened in the case of anonymous murders, which went on without investigation, and were automatically attributed to justice makers or drug gangs. This again suggested that the criminal behaviour of the youths had led to their deaths. The popular press gave prominence to the deaths of young bandits, mostly represented as the culprits of their own destinies. Headlines such as: "Kidnapped and killed the drug-trafficker boy" (OD 19.5.96); "Thirty bullets fired at the bandit boy : victims celebrated the execution" (OD 21.7.86) were common in newspapers such as *O Dia*.

The following example demonstrates further how the "'ready-made' interpretations of the phenomenon" (Chibnall, 1982) were to be incorporated in the news reporting of such events in both popular and 'quality' newspapers:

Three Minors tortured and executed in Belford Roxo - The bodies of three boys, aged between 15 and 17, wearing only shorts, were found yesterday floating on the Sarapui River, near the Baixada Reservoir in Umarim District, Belford Roxo, Nova Iguaçu. They had been beaten and strangled before being shot to death. According to neighbours three other bodies had

also been thrown in the river during the night, but were not found until yesterday afternoon. These crimes have been blamed on the Death Squad, which has apparently restarted its activities in the area to kill young delinquents involved in mugging and drug dealing... (O *Dia* 02.02.87 reproduced in CEAP).

Representations of minors such as these found resonance in popular imagery by playing on a set of pre-existing fears, themselves constructed in part by the Brazilian press. They also secured the vested interest of the police in times of crisis. Sometimes cases of absurd killings of minors undoubtedly caused by active policemen were reported in serious newspapers, but they warranted just a small mention in the crime pages. For example, the *Jornal do Brasil* reported the following story in December 1986: "On Christmas Eve, saying that "A bandit has got to die" while threatening a teenager with his gun inside a police station in São Paulo, a military police soldier killed the youth, who had been arrested just for stealing a watch" (JB 27.12.86).

One case nonetheless received prominence in the press, because the families of the victims, teenagers who were not street children and had no criminal records, pressurized the police to investigate their disappearance in late January 1986. The families contacted a human rights centre, which handed a petition signed by 50 organizations to the Secretary of Public Security. In March, the bodies of Teodoro Hoffman and his friend Dirley Matos were found, and it was discovered that they had been killed by members of a special military police force in São Paulo, after being detained in a nearby shantytown. Witnesses told the media covering the case that São Paulo military policemen routinely killed minors in the slums and dumped their bodies on waste ground. In June, the killers were sentenced to 32 years imprisonment.

One of the repercussions of this murder was to call the attention of the English newspaper the *Guardian* (GD 20.8.86) and international human rights organizations to the issue of police killings. The case was mentioned in Amnesty International's Annual Report. The organization visited Brazil to investigate the torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, and their report concluded that "the frequent

use of lethal force by police in certain urban areas suggested a pattern of deliberate killings of criminal suspects, who were often unarmed and many of whom were juveniles" (Amnesty International, 1987: 139). The *Guardian* story, reported by Jan Rocha, remarked that one out of every three people killed by police was believed to be a minor, and that street children knew they were marked.

However, this coverage related to an exceptional case. At the time, the issue of extra-legal killings of minors did not concern society at large, and did not provoke editorial responses in the press. It was not even the main theme of the campaigns of the welfare agencies and child advocacy groups in Brazil, which were mostly concerned with transforming the public image of the children and changing social policies and legislation as a way of preventing or reducing violence. These organizations believed that the moment of the rewriting of the Constitution was a timely opportunity to promote a public debate about children's rights and state policies for children.

The positive response to the campaign among the media and entrepreneurs was to a large extent the result of a massive advertising and skilled public relations campaign, coordinated in large part by UNICEF. Nonetheless, its general idea of 'children's rights' was much easier to absorb than was the campaign conducted by the CNBB. For example, the banner of the Lenten Campaign read: "Who shelters the **minor**, shelters me". This associated the idea of the love of Christ for children uneasily with the dangerous image of the 'minors'. Whereas children were associated with 'normal', rich, clean, mainly white boys and girls, minors normally meant children in 'irregular situation', ragged, dirty, menacing, mainly male and black. The Bishops' campaign, which was launched in March 1987, wanted to raise awareness about the causes of the problem and break with views that informed the stereotypical production of news.

A few stories, especially in the more liberal quality papers like *Jornal do Brasil*, expressed suspicion about the primary definitions of killings of minors from time to time, as the police were also regarded as corrupt, inefficient and extremely violent. These stories gave heed to the claims of dwellers who accused the police of firing at random in the slums, or being criminals themselves, extracting money from drug dealers or middle-class youths who climbed the hills to buy drugs. Examples of

this are headlines from *Jornal do Brasil* such as: "Police kill five in the morro do Alemão and say it is drug war" (JB 19.6.86) and: "Minors indict policemen for the killing of boy in the morro " (JB 23.7.86). But these were nevertheless crime stories, and the killings of deprived minors, considered inevitable owing to the violent situation in which they lived, did not provoke major public concern.

Concerned journalists occasionally found space in the quality press to put the deaths of the young bandits in context. They did this by inserting in the stories the children's life histories, which revealed family violence and social abandonment, parents without jobs and poor environments. However, this was still not the dominant frame. Press accounts of the police versions of events, which explained the killings as the fault of individuals, contributed to the construction of the murders as natural phenomena, rather than as a social problem which could be linked to more structural causes.

Despite this, the 1980s saw the problem of street children beginning to reach the attention of the academy and concerned officials. The street children's movement that also wanted to challenge these definitions was just starting to get organized. As Hall et al. (1978: 64) remarked, a fundamental factor in preventing a "perfect closure"- that is, a situation where "the free passage of the dominant ideologies is permanently secured"- is the generation of a counter-tendency, which depends on "the existence of organised and articulate sources which generate counter-definitions of the situation". According to Hall et.al.(1978: 64), this depends to some degree on "whether the collectivity which generates counter-ideologies and explanations is a powerful countervailing force in society, whether it represents an organised majority or substantial minority; and whether or not it has a degree of legitimacy within the system or can win such a position through struggle".

Poor youths, who lost their lives in urban violence, came from families that represented a large majority of the Brazilian population, but nevertheless had no public voice. Some groups mobilized by the community-based associations and inspired by Liberation Theology, established links with a powerful multi-national institution - the Catholic Church. Organized in the street children's movement, youths and child advocates also counted on the support of a prestigious international organization - UNICEF. Nonetheless, as I have demonstrated, the issue of the killing

of minors was not the focus of the United Nations agency campaign, defined under the children's rights banner, which granted it more passage in the media. And, as an intergovernmental institution, the UN was cautious in dealing with certain issues.

The Catholic Church was an important force in the Brazilian public sphere but its "progressive" sector, mainly organized in the CNBB, faced a delegitimizing campaign by conservative sectors of society and the media. As Souza (1989) commented, the Church was a favourite target of these sectors and its relationship with civil society organizations and social movements was continually denounced. The media campaign gained strength when the Pope John Paul II imposed a vow of silence on the main theoretician of Liberation Theology in Brazil, Friar Leonardo Boff (Souza, 1989: 365-366).

The radical discourse of some priests who instigated land invasions and blessed the street children who robbed in their sermons, outraged conservative sectors (Scheper-Hughes, 1992). Popular radio programmes denounced the priests as accomplices of outlaws, and in conservative quality papers such as *O Estado de São Paulo*, reporters believed that comments by the Archbishop of São Paulo, Dom Evaristo Arns, or his followers, were not accepted by the directors (Personal interview with Renato Lombardi, 1994). In order to draw attention to the killing of minors, to change the terms of the debate and to make it a matter of public concern, the communities and advocacy groups faced a long and difficult struggle, and had to seek alliance with other legitimate or powerful pressure groups.

The role of the media in framing issues and creating public and policy agendas has been discussed in several studies (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Brewer and McCombs, 1996). The importance of the Brazilian press in the formation of public opinion at the time is suggested by a survey conducted in 1987 in the main capital cities in Brazil, which revealed that television, radio and the print media were regarded as the three most prestigious institutions (cited in Souza, 1989). In a country with a presidential system in which political parties with ephemeral existences had been traditionally secondary actors, and civil society organizations weak, two decades of authoritarianism followed by a deep crisis of legitimacy in government meant that media institutions, including centenary newspapers, tended to

acquire a "disproportionate power" in the public sphere (Mainwaring, 1988; Arnt, 1991).

For this reason, acquiring the support of the press in the battle for definition of the problem became a fundamental task for reformers who wanted to produce policy changes and push the government into action to counter the problem of violence against poor children and adolescents. The narrative of this process is the objective of the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3: LOCAL PROTESTS

3.1 Rioting communities, police violence and death squads

As the figures in chapter two indicate, killings of minors by the police or death squads were on the increase in 1987. But as I have suggested above, such crimes did not provoke much outrage outside the communities who suffered directly, and continued unpunished. Police officers usually alleged exchange of fire as the cause of death, and the victims of the justice-makers, described as deserving bandits, usually had low social status. It is in this context that this chapter begins the narrative of how the issue of the murder of street children gained a place on the public agenda. It takes as its initial focus the protests of poor communities aiming to draw attention to police brutality, and the relatives' interactions in their fight for justice. It then shows how they resonated in the public sphere via the mobilization of civil society, and how the efforts of the street children's movement to influence the press and the political system involved seeking the support of international organizations and media. The chapter also comments on the responses of the national and international press to the 'problem of the minors' in the late 1980s, describing some of these earlier stories in detail to reveal how the terms of the debate were initially set up.

A case which was to have particular repercussions was that of Marcellus Gordilho Ribas, who was flogged to death by police officers in mid March, after he was stopped and searched for drugs in Cidade de Deus, a violent area in Rio. Marcellus was not a street child. He was a swimming instructor who had no criminal record and he came from a wealthy family. However, despite this, the policemen were not punished. His mother, Regina Gordilho, went on to engage in a prolonged struggle for justice. In so doing, she joined mothers of minors who had been killed at the hands of the Law. As a result, the police officers guilty of this murder were tried by a military court. Although they were still given only an 18-month suspended sentence for "abuse of authority", the persistent campaigning of this middle-class housewife against police violence was one that would later lead her into the

presidency of the Rio Municipal Council and on to the Chamber of Deputies (See NYT 25.12.88; Amnesty International, 1988).

Two months after the killing of Marcellus Ribas, also in Cidade de Deus, police officers killed two minors who were hunting birds, and tried to simulate a shoot-out. This provoked a strong protest among the dwellers, who blocked the road shouting for justice. During the burial of the boys, they expressed their revolt by throwing stones at the police. Relatives of the victims of police officers in the area, including Regina Gordilho, came together and staged a demonstration against the killings (JB 22.05.87).

Other cases of irregular killings of poor youths by the Military Police outraged local communities all over the country. However, in the context of concerns about social unrest in Brazil, and the persistent representation of these communities as breeding grounds of vice and crime, the occasions when the action and protests of the poor did catch the attention of the press were frequently made newsworthy not because of the absurdity of police brutality, but as a result of the social disturbance that followed. For instance, *Jornal do Brasil* (31.03.87) carried a report about the killing of a youth, who was beaten to death in a police station in a distant town in the state of Para, in the Amazon. The article carried the headline: "Crowd Reacts to Police Killing Minor and Starts Rioting", and described how the boy had been arrested on the simple charge of stealing a paint-brush. However, this had resulted in 40 people being arrested and 16 injured after the dwellers set fire to the police station, police residences, and the City Hall.

Alongside this violent policing, summary executions by 'extermination groups' also escalated, especially in the poverty-stricken towns in the Baixada Fluminense, a very dangerous area on the outskirts of Rio. Growing numbers of bullet-riddled bodies of minors and adults were dumped in isolated places. Figures showed that from November 1986 to April 1987, 1135 people were killed in the area (FSP 01.06.87). In May, some cases in which whole families were slaughtered and parents killed in front of their young children came to public attention. Following this, the authorities announced that the police were going to wage war against the "extermination groups".

The theme of the return of the death squads that killed "criminals" occupied the national press and interested the foreign media for a while (See e.g. JB 26.05.87, NYT 31.05.87; GD 04.06.87; EP 07.06.87). Violence in the Baixada Fluminense thus became the subject of special reports by foreign television companies such as the English BBC, the American Univision and the French TF-1. Brazilian papers such as *O Globo* (05.06.87), the largest selling paper in Rio, and the most critical of foreign interest in these issues, alleged that the foreign reporters were only attracted by images of misery and violence, and were excited by scenes of the police in action, showing officers posing for the cameras during the raids. A *Guardian* story by Jan Rocha, on the other hand, held the Rio press responsible for encouraging the death squads, as a result of their "selective reporting which treats crime in the wealthy Copacabana region as front-page news, but relegates the Baixada Fluminense murders to bottom-of-the-page footnotes" (GD 04.06.87: 10).

But, after ten days of spectacular police operations in the Baixada, no extermination groups were dismantled and some press reports commented on the failure of the action. Nonetheless, the governor promised to face crime with more rigour, and the police raids continued in the shantytowns. These actions, allegedly implemented to stamp down on the extermination groups, resulted in yet more violence against slum dwellers. Stray bullets even killed a few children. From the press reports on one of the raids it can be noticed that the majority of people arrested were minors. In another raid, four minors were shot during a police operation to arrest a drug- trafficker (JB 28.06.87).

Jornal do Brasil (28.6.87) covered the public protest against the police that followed the killings of the four minors. The paper quoted the president of the association of the dwellers who said it seemed that the intention of the police was extermination, as the officers shot as if they were machines and as if they themselves did not have families. But the story also quoted a minor who explained that they were throwing stones at the police officers, as they did not want the drug dealer to be arrested.

3.2 The war against pixotes and little drug soldiers

From mid 1987, the "war" between the poor communities, dominated by drug lords, and the military police, became a prominent theme on the public agenda (see e.g. OG 12.07.87), and framed the protests of the dwellers against the violent police who killed their children. The issue was followed by stories on drug gangs' battles in the slums, which were picked up by the foreign press (LM 26.08.87 and 19.10.87; EP 30.08.87). In such stories, children and youngsters linked to the gangs figured prominently. For instance, on 25 August the picture of a young girl in a defiant pose with a pistol in her hand, was published on the front page of *Jornal do Brasil*. A few days later (30.08.87), the same picture illustrated a story in the Spanish paper, *El Pais*.

At this time there was little concern for the fact that many of the victims of police violence or of the death squads, usually suspected to be criminals, were youngsters or even children. According to the prevailing thinking in law and order sectors, a bandit was a bandit, no matter what age, and the released statistics of the murders did not focus on the age of the dead. On the contrary, from this time on, the involvement of poor youths with drug dealing and organized crime was to become a pressing issue, which increasingly triggered large features in the press.

Newspapers reported that children, especially, had been mobilized by the drug dealers against the police, through threats or promises of protection. They were thus being recruited by the drug traffickers as "olheiros", sentinels watching the movements of the police or "aviões", couriers, taking the drugs to clients. It was a serious problem in localized areas, especially in Rio, and also resulted in studies by social scientists (see e.g. Zaluar, 1983), as well as concerns from community members, who explained that as the children's parents had no jobs, drug dealing appeared to be the only career open to them, and certainly the most profitable (cited in NEPI, 1989).

Nonetheless, the focus on this problem contributed to justify arbitrary policing in the slums and extra-legal killings. It thus worked to silence the protests of the poor communities and to downplay the issue of violence against minors, which increased considerably. The majority of the press editors at the time were more

concerned with the problem of organized crime and the support offered to drug dealers by the poor neighbourhoods. Yet, for a sector of the population, the fact that the police disrespected and acted violently towards them, but still did not protect them from bandits, was worse than the activity of the drug lords, who, nonetheless, imposed order on the shanty towns (see JB 23.06.87).

In late August and early September, two other cases of killings of minors attracted some press attention due to the prominence of the victim or the large number of deaths, but they provoked distinct reactions. On 25 August, a petty thief was killed in Diadema on the outskirts of São Paulo. This routine incident received extensive coverage because the victim had played the role of a young offender in the film "Pixote". The killing of Pixote, as Fernando da Silva Ramos, became known, was also reported abroad. In the sample of foreign newspapers examined, *Le Monde* (28.08.87) and *El Pais* (01.09.87) carried stories about his death, thereby calling attention to the extra-legal killings of youths.

Some time later it would be revealed that Pixote was killed by bullets shot from above, which proved that he was either lying or kneeling when shot. However at the time, even the more liberal newspapers such as *Jornal do Brasil* (10.09.87) carried the police version of events - that he died in an exchange of fire, as opposed to the charges of execution made by his relatives. Following the death of Pixote, dozens of shop owners in Diadema closed their doors for half an hour, in protest over the sacking of the three policemen accused of the crime, and a group of shopkeepers manifested their support by throwing flower petals at the police officers (JB 10.09.87).

However, in São Bernardo, a town in the industrial area of São Paulo, six youngsters, who were assisted by a community program for street youths, were killed by the security guards of the Community Association in early September, 1987. The victims were also offenders, but this time the slaughter provoked revolt in the town and the killers were arrested and nearly lynched by their cell mates (JB 06.09.87). Members of the Association, together with other organizations in the area, organized a street march and handed a letter to the Secretary for Minors, alerting her to the activities of *justiceiros*. The coordinator of the project for street children run by the voluntary association was also the source of reports in newspapers such as

Jornal do Brasil (04.09.87) and *Folha de São Paulo* (04.09.87) (see also OG, OD, UH, 04.9.87). *Jornal do Brasil* (06.09.87) followed the story and covered the ecumenical religious act which was held for the victims, and which was attended by a few officials, such as the Secretary for the Minor of the São Paulo government and left-wing politicians, including the president of the Workers Party (PT). The paper reported that the Bishop and members of the Community Association suspected that the murders were related to the activities of justice-makers, but that the suspicion was dismissed by the police chief in charge of the case.

3.3 Civil society mobilizes against the killings

As demonstrated above, families and neighbours who worked to call attention to the killings of youths in early 1987 had to resort to acts of civil disturbance such as blocking roads, burning police stations, or throwing stones at police officers. These had counter-effective results, as the protesters were portrayed as the root of the problem. However, these cries from the periphery were echoed by voluntary organizations and religious groups working with poor children and adolescents. Bishops and members of organizations linked to the radical sectors of the Catholic Church, left-wing politicians, academics, other groups from the street children's movement and civil society, and even some concerned officials, all joined the relatives of victims and the local communities in the fight to call public attention to the violence against poor youths committed by the police and death squads. Other forms of protest and demonstrations ensued.

One such protest occurred in Terezina in May, when the local section of the MNMMR together with other associations, promoted the First Tribunal of the Minors, to try crimes committed against minors symbolically (MNMMR/IBASE/NEV-USP, 1991). Also in May, a seminar organized by the MNMMR and supported by the state welfare agency in Recife gathered 2.500 children and adolescents, who demanded professional schools and the end of racial prejudice and police violence (JB 02.05.87). As a consequence, the President of the FEBEM in Pernambuco exposed the fact that extermination groups were responsible

for the disappearance of several minors in July. According to him, seventy youths who had attended the boarding school were later found dead and the police did not charge the culprits. He related the murders instead to police negligence and said they were acting in the same way as they had during the military regime. The indictment was the subject of a short story in *Jornal do Brasil*, but there was no follow-up (JB 10.7.87).

Also in July, a meeting in the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB) was held in Rio to discuss the problem of violence in the state. It gathered progressive artists and intellectuals, opposition politicians, radical bishops and lawyers, representatives of community associations and other social and political movements, and relatives of victims. Regina Gordilho was also present. The participants decided to set up the "Assembly in Defence of Life" to alert society to police violence and to fight extermination groups. The group received complaints from dwellers of the areas where the minors were being massacred, and held meetings with a Centre for Minors in Volta Redonda, another town on the periphery, where people also wanted to expose the maltreatment and murder of adolescents in the area. *Jornal do Brasil* later reported that the Assembly was pressing the Rio governor to fulfil his promise of ending violence (JB 26.08.87).

In September, a succession of recent killings of youths in Duque de Caxias in the Baixada Fluminense motivated the Minors' Pastoral of the local Diocese to organize a rally against violence in the area, and to expose the fact that several youths assisted by the Pastoral had been killed during the year. The source of the story, which appeared in the local paper *O Municipio* (04.09.87), was Volmer do Nascimento, a social worker from the state reformatory who worked in conjunction with the Minors' Pastoral. Nascimento was to become a prominent leader of the street children's movement in the early 1990s. On Children's Day, (12 October), they organized another march to protest against the murders of youths. This, again, was reported by the local paper. The spokesman was again Volmer do Nascimento (*O Municipio*, 12.10.87).

University lecturers also started to investigate the problem of violence against minors. In São Paulo, a centre for the study of violence (NEV-USP) was set up in the State University in October (USP/NEV/CTV, 1993), which was to become

an important source of information on the issue. In Rio, a group of researchers of the Federal University dedicated to studies on infancy (NEPI) decided to carry out a survey of the crimes involving deaths, disappearances and rapes of minors registered in police stations in the *Baixada Fluminense*. This group had been alerted by press reports about the murder of poor youngsters in the peripheral areas, and by the complaints of families in the borough of Anchieta, who were troubled by a wave of murders of minors in their locality. According to the dwellers, thirty minors, mainly black, and aged between 15 and 17 years old had been killed in May 1987 (NEPI, 1989). The researchers also observed that only a few crimes with the capacity to shock public opinion had been registered by the press, who appeared to be more interested in the delinquent behaviour of minors.

The social scientists wanted to show that, contrary to the common sense view portrayed daily by the mass media, the violence exercised against the so-called minors was more extensive than the violence they committed, and the latter was in fact a consequence of the former. Such dissenting discourses were also formulated by members of the Church and a few intellectuals linked to human rights organizations. They wrote articles complaining about the persistence of arbitrary methods used by the police in combatting crime after the end of the military regime. These were published in columns in *Folha de São Paulo* in particular, since this was a paper which opened its pages to progressive writers during the transition to democracy (see e.g. the articles of Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro).

3.4 UNICEF and the campaign for children's rights

By late 1987, only the most radical groups were exposing police violence and extra-legal killings of street children. UNICEF and other reformist groups, including state officials, deputies and jurists, were engaged in the campaign to include children's rights in the constitution. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Minors' Pastoral and the leadership of the MNMMR were conducting a parallel campaign, emphasizing violence, and were also supported by other advocacy associations such as ASSEAF.

Later all these groups joined the constitutional reform process, negotiating their internal divisions and struggling against the opponents of the philosophy proposed - primarily some influential Minors' Judges and law and order groups. In March 1988, the MNMMR, The *Pastoral do Menor*, the National Front for the Defence of Children's Rights and the ASSEAF founded the Forum for the Defence of the Rights of Children and Adolescents (FORUM DCA) to co-ordinate the actions of non governmental organizations in the promotion and defence of the rights of children and youth.

The forum gathered organizations with different views, but an articulation of forces and discourses was considered essential for the common goal of influencing the policy-making process. Such action also included some division of labour. Reform-minded jurists engaged in juridical debates that found their way into the specialized pages of papers like *O Estado de São Paulo*. Some organizations were busy lobbying Congress, briefing journalists and promoting advertising campaigns to sensitize society to the issue. Others promoted debates with different sectors in civil society, organized street demonstrations and grass-roots activities, including the mobilization of the street children themselves. For instance, a group of street children linked to the MNMMR in Rio went to lobby Congress in April (JB 24.04.87). In June, street children from projects supported by UNICEF, the Minors' Pastoral and other voluntary organizations took part in a street march in one of the main avenues in Rio (JB 11.06.87). In December 1987, ASSEAF launched a report containing figures and analysis about the problems faced by street children, including that of police violence, and made public proposals for popular amendments to the redrafting of the constitution.

Prior to the vote on the constitution, sectors against the reforms also manifested their views, which were again channelled by the press. In São Paulo, law enforcement agencies and neighbours, who would rather have the children locked up in the traditional boarding schools, hotly contested the alternative programmes of open houses to educate street children established by the Secretary for the Minor - despite the fact that they had been awarded prizes by the United Nations (JT 04.04.88). In Rio, the Minors' Judge supported the offer made by the Association of Hotel Owners in which they agreed to donate five vans driven by the Military Police

to the Minors' Courts to round up abandoned minors in the city centre in Rio. Following the indignant protests of children's advocacy groups, the Military Police stated they would not take part in the scheme (JB 09.04.88).

As a means of encouraging the voting of the Chapter in May 1988, the Minors' Pastoral, the MNMMR and other groups staged more demonstrations in the largest cities all over the country. In São Paulo, more than a thousand children rallied in Sé Square in the city centre in a street march promoted by such bodies. As Sister Maria do Rosário from the Pastoral commented, the objective was also to show that the children knew their rights.

The Chapter on Children and Adolescents, which resulted from the amalgamation of two amendments - one from government officials and another from the NGOs, was approved by the National Constitution Assembly in May 1988, with a majority of four hundred and thirty five to eight (Swift, 1991). The constitutional change was to be followed by a campaign to reform ordinary legislation and basic policies at state levels too, and to approve a new Statute for Children and Adolescents. In this context, it is important to stress that the backing of an intergovernmental resourceful organization such as UNICEF was very important in securing press and policy-makers' approval. The issue of children's rights was an item on the international agenda because of the drafting of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The coincidence with the international debate also acted as a favourable pressure in this respect.

3.5 Differing campaigns in the press

The organizations believed that a fundamental prerequisite for the success of the reforms was support from the press. For instance, the favourable report of the conservative newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* (OE 25.05.88) on the rally in Sé Square indicates the support of mainstream media for the campaign for "children's rights". The National Federation of Journalists was part of the campaign, although initially critical of the proposals defended by the more radical NGOs. Some media organizations and several columnists and journalists had been drawn to the issue by

the NGOs and the academy, and especially by an efficient public relations effort conducted by UNICEF's officers. After 1986, journalists were constantly supplied with well-researched documents and themes and invited to take part in seminars and meetings.

As a consequence, newspapers such as *Jornal do Brasil* opened up spaces for large features, which departed from mainstream views about deprived youths, either regarded as aggressors or victims, and questioned the idea that these youths were unregenerate. For instance, an article entitled "Transforming an apprentice outcast into a professional" (JB 30.08.87) reported favourably on a project run by the University that was aimed at the rehabilitation of minors. Further examples of such reporting include the article: "Being a pivete" (JB 20.09.87), which proposed sociological explanations for street children's behaviour, and "Lessons from a street boy" (10.10.87), which carried an interview with a former ward of FEBEM. This feature concerned a 17 year-old boy who launched a book about his life, in which he denounced police violence and ill-treatment in the reformatories. In the same line, Tim Lopes' "The war of the boys" (JB 07.11.87), which drew on the panic of middle-class children of being assaulted by *pivetes* in Rio, tried to provide a less closed frame for the problem. *Jornal do Brasil* also tended to give favourable coverage to action among street children themselves. Such events generated reports on street children fighting for their rights and taking part in demonstrations and political meetings, which also helped to break with the view of these children as passive victims of society - the other side of the stigma applied to the "abandoned minors". Against this stigma, even the *New York Times* (11.05.87) favourably reported on a campaign to hire minors conducted by concerned officials.

The reformers were successful in approving some constitutional principles which called for new policies and legislation, and in influencing some stories in the liberal press, which drew on aspects of the street children's lives other than their delinquent behaviour. In this way, they succeeded in challenging the prevailing image of minors. However, in early 1988, the crime pages still portrayed poor children and adolescents for the most part as dangerous bandits. In popular newspapers and radio programmes, in particular, police versions of events continued to construe their lives.

As demonstrated above, since mid 1987, the theme of minors as the work force of drug traffickers was salient in the Brazilian press. Newspapers such as *O Globo* (27 11 87, 28.11.87) carried stories about the killing of a drug bandit by the police, and highlighted the officers' claims that he was training forty children to use guns and other heavy weapons to rob houses. *Jornal do Brasil* (04.01.88) reported on the escape of youths from a FEBEM unit rescued by six armed men supposed to be linked to drug dealers. In this case, the story also reported that in the unit a wooden bar used for punishment was found, and it had the phrase "human rights" carved into it. Questioned by the paper, the director of the official boarding school referred to the boys as "murderers of housewives and bread-winners".

The problem of the involvement of youths with drug trafficking in Rio, and the subsequent police raids on the shantytowns attracted international attention. In late March, for example, *El Pais* published a whole page on Rocinha - a large shantytown on a hill overlooking smart areas of Rio - that was inhabited by workers, but controlled by drug barons. The issue of slum children involved in crime and drug dealing was a prominent theme, and the same picture of a girl holding a pistol that was published by *Jornal do Brasil* and also used by the Spanish paper on August 1987 illustrated this story (EP, 27.03.88).

By mid 1988, the war on drugs justified the return of police raids to the slums in Rio, after mounting pressure from more conservative sectors on the human rights approach of the Secretary of the Civil Police. The security policies of Helio Saboya, described by these sectors as a former member of the radical left who "hated" the police and who had turned Rio into a "besieged city where only bandits had rights", prompted headlines in national papers such as *O Estado de São Paulo* (OE 01.05.88). As seen, youngsters and children, who lived alongside crime and poverty in the slums, were casualties in this war. In early June, *Jornal do Brasil* (030.6.88) reported on the burial of a 17-year-old drug lord named Buzunga, which was attended by more than a hundred people. They stated that they wanted to show that the youth was not the monster portrayed by the press, and that friends and relatives blamed the media for his death.

Some newspapers served as carriers of a moral panic against the involvement of these minors in organized crime and drug trafficking, thereby justifying police

repression. The headline of a whole page report in the largest selling paper in Rio, which read: "Minors, the incredible and tragic army of the drug dealers", was motivated by police alarm about the increase in children used by outlaws in robberies and drug dealing. The figures released pointed to 1039 infractions committed by minors in the first five months of 1988, as compared with 986 illicit acts in the same period in the previous year. The report also stressed that most of these young offenders came from the slum areas (OG, 17.07.88).

On the same day that this newspaper report was published in Rio (17 July), the police invaded the slum "Rocinha" in a long planned anti-drug operation, and shot dead 16 people. Among them was a fourteen-year old teenager nicknamed "Brasileirinho" (little Brazilian), whose story reached the headlines and became a symbol of children's involvement in drug trafficking, and of the fate of street children. The issue spread from the crime pages to political columns in the papers (see e. g. Athayde, CB 20.07.88; Gabeira, OD 22.07.88), in addition to being reported abroad (EP 19.07.88; LM 21.07.88).

On the other hand, from May 1988, after the approval of the Constitution, the Church and other street children's advocacy groups increased their efforts to expose violence against street children. In early May, Dom Mauro Morelli, the Bishop of Duque de Caxias in the Baixada Fluminense, promoted a 33 hour vigil to protest against the killing of 18 youths assisted by the Pastoral over the previous 15 months. The demonstration, staged in the main square of the town, opened with an ecumenical act and followed with theatre performances, dance performances and recreational activities for street children. The MNMMR was also taking part in the event together with workers unions, and dwellers' associations, which collected signatures for a petition to be handed to the state authorities and the Minister of Justice. The organizers put up banners and posters condemning the murders and handed the Press a list with names of the street children killed. The Minors' Pastoral blamed the Military Police for most of the deaths.

While the demonstration was being held, the Rio State Secretary of the Police went to the Baixada to meet all the heads of the police precincts in the region in order to declare another "war against the extermination groups", who were slaughtering whole families in the area. However, he did not want to comment on the

charges made by the Bishop. The commander of the Military Police in the region also did not confirm the figures provided by the Church. This act of protest was covered by all the main papers in Rio (JB 03.05.88; OG 05.05.88). The story in *Jornal do Brasil*, headlined "The killing of the offspring of the streets", had the Secretary of the Civil Police and the Minors' Pastoral as the main sources, and also carried the allegations of the minors themselves, who stated that the police usually beat them and stole their possessions. The newspaper transcribed the list of the minors shot dead, with their names, ages and the circumstances of the killings. In the article, the minors, who slept on the streets, were described as former dwellers of shanty towns and children of broken families. In this account, the children killed were not referred to as criminals or the perpetrators of their own deaths, whereas the extermination groups were portrayed as bandits who killed innocents, children, and whole families, and thereby defied the authorities.

On this occasion, the indictments of the Church motivated an editorial comment featured in the same paper three days later, which was headlined: "Limits". The killing of street children by the death squads was referred to as an extension of the activities of such groups, widening the limits of horror and impunity. The existence of an estimated 10 thousand homeless children wandering in the streets of Rio was described as one of the most painful facts of the life of a big city. The article explained that, in order to survive, they had to resort to legal or illegal activities, allowing them to be manipulated by adults. The indifference of society was another theme highlighted in this way. The editorial concluded that the resolution of the problem of the abandoned minor needed more than a paragraph in the Constitution, as the subject had to be viewed as a political problem, requiring a "top down solution". Otherwise it would continue to accelerate the imminent social crisis.

A few days later, Tim Lopes a special reporter from *Jornal do Brasil*, pretended to be an ex-prisoner by dressing in ragged and dirty clothing, and spent a few days and nights living with a group of street children in the city centre of Rio. He said that his aim was to investigate police violence and report on the conditions of life of these children (personal interview May 1994). This story occupied a whole page in the paper, and gave a humane portrayal of the street children, stressing that

they were regarded by society as 'social monsters' or simply ignored. However, the issue of the killings was not addressed in this feature (JB 10.05.88).

The violent life and death of abandoned children also motivated two stories in the English paper the *Guardian* (25.06.88). In the first, reported by Jan Rocha and headlined "Life in limbo for poor Brazilians", the paper described the situation of the Brazilian children: "unregistered and unschooled...[who were going to end up in institutional care, abandoned or delinquent", as a means of symbolising the contradictions of Brazilian development. The article was based on two recently released reports, one of which was prepared by Brazilian scholars for UNICEF, and the other, a World Bank report. Although the article acknowledged that there were other reasons, it nonetheless mostly related the problems to the World Bank findings, which presented the usual explanations proffered by central powers and foreign media - that the inefficiency of social programmes in developing countries were caused by poor administration, excessive bureaucracy and the interference of political criteria in a corrupt system.

The other story, which had the title "Hard times on the streets for discarded generations", was written by Anthony Smith, a journalist who has worked for international charities and written books about street children in Brazil. This reproduced a conversation between street children in Recife and the journalist, and the tone of the feature was sympathetic to the street children. Their hard lives and the issues of police violence and corruption were mentioned. The extra-legal killings were also exposed in the article, as the story revealed that "most of the 120 or so people killed in a year by "justice committees" or death squads in the northern city of Recife were under 21, and many were known to the police". But this concern came second in the narrative, which emphasized their delinquent lives, as they also assaulted women and killed tourists.

The stories in the British paper had the merit of calling attention to the issue as a problem requiring better social and economic policies as well as better policing. However, the way it was framed in these articles, which formed part of a "Third World" section, suggested stereotypical views about developing countries. Even the article, which gave a voice to the street children themselves, was not constructed in such a way as to prompt indignation about their murder, which came across as the

result of their criminal behaviour. Both were described as the inevitable outcome of the lives of deprived children in Brazil.

In order to sensitize international public opinion to the matter of killings of Brazilian street children, the ASSEAF approached the Defence for Children International (DCI) - a United Nations Consultative Body based in Geneva - in 1988, seeking assistance in organizing an exhibition of a hundred photographs of violence against children in Brazil abroad. The organization of ex-inmates of FUNABEM argued that the violations of children's rights in Brazil were no less serious than the violations of the rights of other groups, and that international concern could help to protect the children. In May 1988, the photographs were shown in a few European cities, and the exhibition was covered by local outlets (e.g. *La Liberté* (17.05.88), *Dienstag* (17.05.88), *La Gruyere* (19.05.88)). The trip had also been supported by Brazilian organizations, including the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*.

In early July 1988, ASSEAF and organizations linked to the Catholic Church, together with a children's advocacy group from Volta Redonda - an industrial town on the outskirts of Rio - organized another political meeting in the Brazilian Bar Association in Rio to condemn the murders of children in Caxias and Volta Redonda, which had not been resolved by the police. In the meeting they announced that the Defence for Children International had commissioned a survey on the killings of children in these areas. Ivanir dos Santos, the head of ASSEAF, had been appointed as representative of the DCI to investigate the problem, and to co-ordinate research to be conducted by a group of organizations that included the University Centre, NEPI, and the Minors' Pastoral of Duque de Caxias, as well as local human rights groups. Ivanir dos Santos stressed that the impunity of the crimes had brought the NGOs together to seek support from international organizations. They expected that the results of the survey would have international repercussions through the work of the United Nations, and the organizations hoped this would serve to put pressure on the Brazilian government (OD 0 7.07.88).

In an interview with a popular paper, the head of ASSEAF stated that the killings seemed to be intentional and organized: "There is a conservative thinking that believes these minors will be future bandits and so they prefer to cut the evil off at its roots" (OD 7.7.88). He complained that the murder of adults had always

received more attention than the slaughters of the children and adolescents executed by extermination groups. In fact, in mid 1987, when the press reported on the return of the death squads by commenting on 25 disappearances a day, it was stressed that 15 were adults, meaning that the fact that 10 were minors was not highlighted (JB 09.06.87).

During the General Assembly of the MNMMR, in August, the participants staged a protest to condemn the murder of 100 street children linked to the movement in the last two years. The Assembly decided to promote the fight against the killings as a priority, together with the pressure to guarantee constitutional rights (MNMMR/IBASE/NEV-USP, 1991). Following this, in September, the organizations held a public protest and a show in a central square of Rio, with the presence of intellectuals, artists and a representative of DCI to call attention to the problem of the killings of minors. They also made public the results of the ASSEAF/DCI survey. The investigation pointed to 306 murders of youngsters under 18 years old by death squads, between January 1987 to July 1988 in those peripheral areas in Rio.

On the same day, *O Estado de São Paulo* (28.09.88) ran a small news report entitled: "Report exposes killing of minors". It was a straightforward piece informing the public about the survey, and stating that the dossier had been handed to the representative of the DCI. The story mentioned that the representative was considering the most effective of three possible ways of using the report: publishing it immediately; waiting for suggestions from the Brazilian authorities; or presenting it at the United Nations' Commission for Human Rights. Ivanir was quoted as saying that the killings were a national phenomenon and that he intended to expand the investigation to other parts of the state and even the country in the later future. What is significant about this item is that the revelation of the killing of 306 minors by extermination groups pointed out in the report - that is, the fact and figures in themselves - did not make the headline, and were simply referred to in the second paragraph without any emphasis. Instead, what was considered more newsworthy was that the report was handed to an international organization and the possible consequences. There was no follow-up on the issue.

In late October, the Centre for the Study of Minors (NEAM) of the Catholic University in Rio promoted a three-day debate between middle-class youngsters and street children from the Minors' Pastoral to discuss violence. The event was favourably covered by *Jornal do Brasil* (27.10.88). On the same day, the paper carried a whole page feature about the use of drugs by street children. In this article, the concern with the problem took the standpoint of the effects of drugs such as shoemakers' glue on the health and safety of the children, and the paper condemned the fact that it was freely sold to minors. Despite this health risk and its prohibition in law, the police did not act.

By the end of 1988 and throughout 1989, the involvement of young bandits in drug trafficking in the slums, and in assaults on the streets, had become a pressing issue, also reported by foreign journalists (GD 26.11.88). During the year, a large number of inmates had been rescued from the reformatories by heavily armed men, and the supposition was that they were taken to be employed in drug dealing and robberies. In December, *Jornal do Brasil* (23.12.88) carried a long feature signed by Tim Lopes and headlined "The work force of drugs". It was based on interviews with the director of a FEBEM unit and minors. The situation was described as critical and frightening, as in many cases the relatives of the youths themselves brought guns for them to escape. This was done for the simple reason that the money earned in robberies and drug dealing represented a large part of the family income.

Cases of minors killed during police raids in the *favelas* were still routinely reported by the press. The police war in the slums killed youngsters suspected of belonging to drug gangs, but also shot dead a youth who was simply protesting against a power failure that lasted for 6 days (JB 21.11.88). Nevertheless, the growing violence of the police against youths and criminals still did not have major repercussions unless the victims were famous bandits or had a higher social position. This point was captured by a story in the *New York Times* (25.12.88) by Alan Riding, headlined "In Rio, one police killing refuses to die", about the case of Marcellus Ribas, killed the previous year, and his mother's struggle for justice.

Some other cases involving middle-class youths were reported in late 1988 and in early 1989. One of the cases that had more impact was the murder of Simone Cerqueira, (the niece of a Colonel) and Disney Rodrigues, who were killed after they

had accused police officers of extortion in relation to drugs. Eight hundred people attended the funeral in Rio. This case was followed by the Brazilian press (See e.g. JB 09, 10, 12, 15, 27.12.88). It also appeared in the 1989 Amnesty International Annual Report, which, referring to 1988, briefly acknowledged complaints of the involvement of policemen in death squads, which "were held responsible for hundreds of killings, mostly of criminal suspects, under 18 years of age, in Baixada Fluminense..." (Amnesty International, 1989: 110).

It is important to observe that, at the time, Amnesty International was mostly concerned with indictments over killings of peasants due to land conflicts when it came to violations of human rights in Brazil. Foreign reporting about Brazil also expressed ecological concerns about the rain forest or economic concerns about Brazil's policies related to foreign debt, in addition to violence. But in 1989, growing crime rates and urban violence in Rio became even more prominent in the foreign press. Such matters were reported with headlines such as: "Hold-ups of all kinds against tourists in plain daylight become the norm" (LM 06.02.89); "107 dead in a week in Rio" (EP 08.04.89); "War in Rio: urban violence more deadly than the conflict in Lebanon" (EP 14.04.89); "35 dead in Rio in drug gang fights and actions of extermination groups" (07.05.89); "Growing crime blamed on drug-trafficking war" (LM 10.05.89); "Death is a way of life in Rio killing fields" (Reuters 08.06.89); "Cariocas live for carnival, but live with crime" (NYT 26.10.89).

Violence in Rio, described by the police and some sectors of the press as a civil war that was killing more people than the war in Lebanon, was a great matter of concern for the national press, which had alerted the foreign newspapers. But, in contrast to the foreign press, which concentrated the stories in Rio (the most attractive Brazilian city for foreigners), homicides in São Paulo were also a theme for the national press. At this time it was reported that many murders here were committed by justice makers (*justiceiros*), in the destitute areas on the periphery where there was no policing. In the richest state of Brazil, migration and misery were the explanations provided for violence (JB 08.04.89). In Rio, most of the crimes were attributed to the war between drug lords and to extermination groups (JB 03.04.89).

Most of the stories in the foreign newspapers paid more attention to aspects of international concern such as the problem of drug trafficking and the safety of tourists. The murder of 'street children' routinely reported in the crime pages of Brazilian newspapers, sensationalized by more popular papers, and exposed by Bishops and NGOs attracted little attention from the international press. Rather, there had been just brief mentions of the problem in foreign newspapers. Indeed, John Maier, a stringer and later Time correspondent in Brazil recalls that in the late 1980s a foreign sensationalist outlet asked him for a story on the killing of street children and he replied that there was no such thing in Brazil (personal interview, May 1994).

On 1 May 1989, one year after the national NGOs had started to promote the killings abroad, a six-page special report in *Newsweek* highlighted the issue of the violent lives and deaths of street children. This feature, entitled "Children of the Gutter", is particularly significant for a number of reasons. First of all, it presented the issue of Brazilian street children as a global problem. In line with UNICEF's 1989 State of the World Children's report, the fate of street children was not framed simply as a problem of the wrongdoing of incompetent and corrupt governments in Third World countries, but as the tragic consequence of huge foreign debt irresponsibly borrowed, as well as lent by governments in poor and rich countries (see UNICEF, 1989). In relation to Brazil, the story also mentioned the surge of social services to help street children, and commented on how "Brazilian social workers have pioneered new methods for dealing with street kids", thus showing the efforts of Brazilian organizations to solve the problem.

Furthermore, it gave a voice to national civil society. The Brazilian sources for the feature included street boys and members of NGOs such as Maria Tereza Moura, the Rio co-ordinator of the MNMMR; Roberto Santos, the head of São Martinho - a street children's project linked to the Catholic Church - and other people who worked with child welfare groups.

The article also went so far as to expose the killings by stating that "bullet-riddled bodies of street youths occasionally turn up in vacant lots of poor Rio suburbs - the victims, it is believed, of vigilante groups, claiming to be restoring order to the streets". These, in turn, were related to the fact that "street kids" were "regular parties to petty and casual violent crime -both as assailants and as victims".

However, although the feature provided a larger framework to discuss the problems of street children, drawing on socio-economic causes and global policies, it mainly highlighted the effects of this problem for society at large, and did not depart much from certain concerns of foreign reporting. For instance, the story opened with a street boy demonstrating how he could rob tourists in Acapulco.

This feature reported by Mac Margollis in Rio was also reported by correspondents in Manila, Mexico City and Cairo and edited by the American news desk. It drew on sources in different countries and presented some ambivalence. Here, too, the underlying logic was that street children were being killed because they were criminals. And more than their deaths, their violent lives were the focus of the problem.

3.6 Naming the dead

The increase in homicides in Rio was interpreted within the frame of escalating violence, and led papers to state that this violence victimized young people and the elderly, rich and poor, criminals and innocent people alike (JB 06.04.89). However, a research study conducted by the Catholic oriented organization Caritas Diocesana, urged the press to look at violence against the poor, especially in the Baixada Fluminense. The survey revealed that in the first three months of the year, sensationalist papers and the local press had reported the murder of 334 people in the locality. Further checks indicated that these numbers represented only 50% of the murders registered in local police stations. The religious organization also pointed out that the existence of clandestine graveyards in the area suggested a much higher number of killings.

Therefore, on 2 May 1989, the *Jornal do Brasil* gave headline treatment to the issue. The journalists had been to the Baixada to interview parents of victims and other members of the communities and visited the graveyards. The stories covered a full page. The main picture was a strong image showing lots of crosses in the ground, and the caption stressed that the dead did not have names. Their identities were marked only by numbers painted on crosses made of concrete, with tin plates.

The anonymity of the dead was one of the aspects that most shocked the journalists. Talking to the grave digger, the reporters found out that the majority of the people buried there were youngsters, executed by extermination groups.

A separate article on the page, signed by a priest who was interviewed by the journalists, and was also a member of the black movement, provided the profile of the victims. They were mostly male, aged between 16 and 25 years old, lived in slums, were the children of broken families and had had little schooling. In addition, they had not joined voluntary associations or churches, and were looking for a job. A significant proportion had been involved in drug dealing or thefts in the neighbourhood. The killers were described as male chauvinist bandits who had their own moral code, believed in a vengeful God and regarded themselves as defenders of the people.

Such a description may well be an accurate portrait of the justice makers in the area, who usually tortured and seriously mutilated their victims. But it also must be added that many of them were simply killers hired by shopkeepers, who had decided to take the matter into their own hands, and killed simply for money. Some were also police officers who, by moonlighting to supplement their incomes, also dealt with troublesome youths using summary justice to avoid the legal constraints. Drug dealers were also responsible for many of the deaths, and frequently all these interests were mixed and represented in the 'extermination groups'.

However, some of these adolescents and children had not committed any offence and were killed because they had witnessed crimes, or were members of families persecuted by such groups, or were mistaken by others, or simply because they fitted the profile in all other respects, and thus were seen as potential criminals. Moreover, as these crimes were sometimes functional to the law and order system, and therefore did not have proper investigation, the bandits sometimes killed without bothering to check the identity of their victims because their aim was simply to assert their power in the community, or to defy authorities who did not accept their behaviour.

The headlines of the stories summarized the main frames in *Jornal do Brasil's* coverage of these events. A feature signed by Tim Lopes and Marceu Vieira was headed: "When life has no value". The article by the priest was entitled "A war

only against the poor", and the main story gave the "profile of the Baixada". This analyzed the social background of the problem, showed the heavy concentration of the population in the area, and the low level of services such as public hospitals and police stations, as compared to the situation of the state as a whole.

Accompanying features drew on other dramatic aspects of the problem: the fear of the local dwellers, since extermination groups also killed the witnesses of the crimes; the insensitivity of society at large to the lives of the people in that poor area; and the drama of the families. The story reproduced an emotional outburst of an elderly man, who had had two of his sons murdered by extermination groups, and said this was "a relief", as they had been in "the company of bad guys".

The coverage of the Caritas research by *Jornal do Brasil* contributed to raising awareness of the problem of the killings of poor youths by extermination groups in the periphery of Rio. It also helped to raise the attention of international organizations such as Amnesty International (personal interview with Alison Sutton in London, 1993). However, because of the low social value of both the area and the victims - the murders had long been taking place out of sight and mind of the public - it was not likely to arouse public outrage in the country.

On 25 May, the *Jornal do Brasil* gave front-page attention to the slaughter of 4 youngsters murdered four days previously in Barra da Tijuca, a middle-class borough in Rio. The youths, whose ages ranged from 14 to 19 years, had been detained by the police and were later found dead. The police had seen a group of around 15 youths returning from a party jump over the turnstile of a bus to avoid paying the fare. After being subjected to humiliation and violence, the majority was released, but four were arrested. Slaughters of youths for similar reasons had taken place before, with little objection. This time, however, the crime reporters of the newspaper pursued the story and found a witness willing to identify the policemen. They investigated the case not in journalistic terms, but by becoming directly involved with it.

The subsequent coverage provided the obituary of the dead, with full names, photographs, and their stories told by their frightened or disillusioned parents. They showed that three of the youngsters had lived with their families in a Rio suburb and helped to provide the family income, working as street vendors. The article also

stressed the government's neglect of the community. This was another case that showed that not only bandits, but also poor workers could be the victims of police violence or summary executions. Also, this revealed that this kind of violence could happen outside the Baixada.

The investigative work of the journalists of *Jornal do Brasil*, sensitized by religious organizations and children's advocacy groups, produced further important knowledge and awareness of the issue. However, this coverage was still constructed mainly through crime stories, and the sources named in the stories were the relatives or neighbours of the victims and police spokesmen. The street children's movement and other civil society sources were not called to comment on the issue, and there was no reference to the "extermination of children".

3.7 Different tunes for the boy from Ipanema

The killing of a nine-year-old black boy whose body was found in Ipanema, an upper-class renowned borough in Rio adjacent to the slums in Cantagalo hill, changed the course of events at this time. The boy, who used to sell fruits in the streets, was strangled, and his body was left in front of a smart building, wrapped up in a carpet. Over the body, the police found a note which read: "...I killed you because you did not study and did not produce anything, and I am going to kill those kids who do not study and do not respect nature. Government, I ask you a favour: do not let the streets of the city be invaded by *pivetes*." On 3 May, the murder was reported in the city news pages of *Jornal do Brasil* as a crime primary-news story. It appeared as a small news item headlined "Child murdered", with the sub headline: "Nine-year-old boy dies in Ipanema because of a fight in the *morro*". A quarrel between drug dealers and his family was the alleged cause of the death of Patricio Hilario.

However, the organizations working with street children, especially the local section of the MNMMR in Rio, then coordinated by Maria Tereza Moura, were to seize on his young age and the unusual circumstances of Patricio's death to promote the issue of the "extermination of children". Since the previous year, this body had

been condemning operations to clean-up the city of street children, shown through gestures such as the donation of six vans to the Minors' Courts proposed by the Association of Hotel Owners, to enable the round-up of children. It had also been exposing the existence of extermination groups on the periphery. In October 1988, *Ultima Hora*, a local paper in Rio, gave credit to Moura's claims that there was a "premeditated genocide of the adolescents of Baixada Fluminense", and carried her charge that further surveillance to reduce the crimes had been agreed after a meeting with the Head of the Civil Police, but there had been no results. On this occasion, Moura contacted foreign correspondents and offered an explanation for the boy's killing, which differed from that of the primary definitions. This attempt to get the international press and international organizations interested in the subject, as a way of drawing national attention to the killing of street children and promoting a political solution to the problem, was a strategy deliberately pursued by the street children's movement. Maria Tereza, who was the source of the first stories on the issue in the press, recalls that: "We got tired of crying out to the domestic press. After the killing of Patricio Hilario, we decided to cry to the outside world. We approached foreign correspondents and asked for external pressure" (personal interview, Rio, May 1994). According to Moura, only a small sector of the domestic press, particularly the popular local paper *O Dia* and a few journalists in the national press, were sensitized to the issue at that time. She mentioned Israel Taback, one of the editors of city-news stories in the *Jornal do Brasil* as one of those who first became involved with the campaign. Taback stated that the issue only got to be reported because of a "conspiracy" between national and international NGOs and some journalists (Personal interview, May 1994).

On 18 May 1989, *Le Monde* ran a large feature, written by Charles Vanhecke, the paper's then own correspondent, with the title: "Little dead without importance...". The upper headline located and framed the issue: "Brazil: hunting the urchins of Rio". The peg was the murder of the black boy in Ipanema, and the local co-ordinator of the MNMMR in Rio was the main source for the story.

Le Monde's description of the boy's murder highlighted that he was black and nine years old and came from a nearby slum. The police version of the boy's death, concerning the settling of scores between drug dealers, was discredited, and the

hypothesis of cleaning-up put forward by the street children's movement was upheld. The story, which drew on the issue of the unusual location of the incident and implied a political geographical framework, carried their claims that eliminating undesirable children because they stole or begged - a practice common in the peripheral towns of the state of Rio, where one minor a day was murdered - could now be happening in the smartest areas of Rio de Janeiro, the capital city.

It was reported that in those areas, the victims of the "extermination groups" were the children usually seen sleeping on the pavement at night, and doing anything to get money to assuage their hunger - from shining shoes to attacking passers by. The article further explained that the "*pivetes*" were a nightmare for hotel owners and other professionals in tourism, as they contributed to the negative image of the city and were considered as pests by ordinary citizens, who regarded them as a problem for the police. Challenging this view, the feature suggested that instead the problem was related to hunger, lack of schooling and early working. The figures quoted from the MNMMR coordinator indicated that one million families relied on children's work and that there were seven million abandoned children in Brazil. Such numbers were later to be contested as exaggerated, but they were not different from the ones released by UNICEF and Brazilian official sources at the time.

To support the idea of the "cleaning up", *Le Monde's* journalist also reported on other related news previously reported in the Brazilian press, and mentioned that *Jornal do Brasil* had recently published a story about a group of middle-class youths trained in martial arts, who patrolled the streets near the beaches to prevent the "*pivetes*" from robbing people (see JB 23.03.87). The story shows that the Rio paper was obviously an important source for the French correspondent, not only for facts, but also for frames. As the headline suggests, similar themes to the *Jornal do Brasil's* coverage of the killing of youths in the Baixada Fluminense were used.

An important point here is that these children were not usually presented as dangerous criminals; rather, their dual roles as workers and offenders were put in the context of social and economic conditions. The worst villain in the story was the system that failed to provide the children with education and jobs, as well as the police, businessmen and Brazilian society as a whole. Another breakthrough in the coverage was that the main concern regarding the street children was not the

violence they committed (although this was acknowledged), but the violence committed against them. But, as we shall see, other representations were still in play, put forward by more powerful sources.

The death of the black boy from Ipanema was also the peg for a two-page feature in the Brazilian news and current affairs weekly *Isto É Senhor*. In contrast to the previous example, here Patricio was described as a boy who earned his living through **stealing** fruits, and who was killed because he did not want to be trained by the drug-traffickers to deliver drugs. The main focus of the story, however, was not the issue of the killing of the slum boy, referred to as a common fact, but the young age of the child. Violence in Rio was the subject of the story headlined: "Rio at war a bankrupt city, misery, contrasts and the 'law of the devil': 500 homicides in a month". To produce this apocalyptic scenario, police spokesmen, slum dwellers, a Minors' Judge and a prominent intellectual were used as sources. The story mixed sociological analysis of the stark social disparities in Brazil and the economic crisis in a context of rising inflation that impoverished the population dangerously with the idea of the civil war between have and have-nots, captained by law and order sectors. This was set particularly in Rio where, it was said, the proximity between opulence and misery had become explosive, as the ragged watched the rich from their hills, inaccessible to the police.

The problem of drug trafficking and especially the theme of slum children as the work force of the drug industry were important topics for the article. The previous theme of the war between poor communities and the police, recast in the frame of escalating violence affecting rich and poor alike, worked to transfer the responsibility for the situation to the poor, absolving the police from the violence used against them. Unlike *Le Monde's* story, the villains here are slum dwellers and their children. Portrayed as furious, resented or desperate, and believing in violence as an act of social justice, they are said to be almost always organized and led by young drug dealers. The latter are described as wicked Robin Hoods who distribute favours, clothes and food in exchange for protection and services, and train younger children to carry weapons and deliver cocaine to the clients in the rich boroughs.

A vivid description of the situation of misery of a migrant family from the North East of the country, living in a shack in the morro overlooking the sugar-loaf

frequented by tourists, and the bay resplendent with the yachts of the rich, also sets the scene for the inevitable outcome. The salary of the father is not enough to support his wife and five children. The worker's son is out of school and the worker says the place is full of drug dealers. Nearby, a boy has a gun in his shorts. The feature then observes that children such as these climb down the hill to the streets of the middle-class boroughs to rob rich children on their way to their private schools, thus drawing on the other theme of middle class children's fear of *pivetes*.

Irrespective of the truths or falsities conveyed by the story, the obvious intention here is to create a moral panic. This is further advanced by the assertion that with the deepening of the crisis in the city, more and more needy youngsters are taking to the streets and "joining the ranks of future crime". This assessment is supported by the alarming and exaggerated figure of 200,000 abandoned minors living in Rio produced by Liborni Siqueira, the Rio Minors' judge, who deeply opposed the reforms proposed by the children's advocacy groups for the legislation and policies for minors.

Other elements in this savage situation are the inferiority of the police compared with the powerfully armed gangs, and police corruption excused by the economic crisis, which cut bullets and salaries, and led to the demise of the law. In fact, the idea of the social war in Rio exacerbated by some police sources provided justification for their demands for more weapons and better salaries, including help from other countries, such as the United States. It enabled them to gain support for the violence against slum dwellers committed during police operations on the international war on drugs.

The *Isto É Senhor* piece then reinforces the prevailing representation of the poor, and particularly their children, as potential criminals and a threat to society. The cruel murder of the young black boy, who had not himself committed any crime (besides possibly stealing or selling fruits to survive) but, according to the version given in this report, had been killed for refusing to become part of the work-force of drug-trafficking, is used to recreate a moral panic. Against the definition proposed by the street children's movement for the boy's murder (reported in *Le Monde*), in this account, the issue of the "extermination of children" is not on the agenda. Despite the campaigns of UNICEF, the Catholic Church and NGOs, the poor children, although

partly regarded as victims of a system that produces misery, crime and police corruption, are mainly perceived as the problem. Delinquent minors are still the alarming consequences to be feared and detained. Instead of structural changes and liberal policies, more policing is called for.

3.8 The villains dress in blue

Despite this closed interpretation offered by the main texts drawing on sources from the law and order establishment, the juxtaposition of a separate box and the illustration selected for this page enable completely different readings of this story.

The illustration is a sequence of three pictures by the *Globo* news agency. The first shows a boy trying to snatch the bag of a woman, who walks embraced by a man, while another child watches. The second shows the couple and the children sitting on the pavement talking, and in the third the woman is hugging one of the children. The caption under the first one reads: "Rio scene: tourists are assaulted by a minor...". On the opposite page, below the two other pictures is written: "Unexpected outcome: after the fright, the couple talk with the *trombadinhas* and everything ends in hugs. They are just children". At the bottom, occupying three columns in the middle of the two facing pages of the feature, a separate box is headed: "Dressed to kill". This item brings together cases of recent slaughters in Rio, where the involvement of the police in the executions was hinted at, and an official police operation to chase drug-dealers, which resulted in ten people killed, including a child who was hit by a stray bullet.

"They dress in blue and go out at dusk. To kill". The box narrates a slaughter of a family in a poor neighbourhood, whose only survivor, a five-year-old child, reported that of the three murderers, two were wearing blue uniforms. As the report explains, this is the colour of the uniforms of the Rio Military Police. It comments that, despite the description of the murderers, the police suspected that the motive for the crime was vengeance. The other event is the case of the four youngsters found

dead in Barra da Tijuca, after being detained by police soldiers, as investigated by *Jornal do Brasil*.

While in the larger feature the slum-dwellers and their drug-trafficking children are identified as folk-devils, the story in the box indicates that the police officers are the ones to be feared. Whereas the way the first article is constructed is likely to lead to a reaction of middle class readers against the street children, the second alerts them to the fact that the executions of minors, so common in the slums and poor suburbs, are reaching their dwelling places. No other sources are mentioned in the box, but the juxtaposition of the cases works to discredit the claims of the main sources of the larger feature, thus opening the possibility for another interpretation for the whole story. This reveals the tensions between different discourses and perspectives in play at the time, outside as well as inside, and between news organizations.

It is important to mention that the feature published in the Brazilian weekly was copyrighted to *The Wall Street Journal*. As I shall discuss in a later chapter, the United States government was also extremely concerned with the issue of drug trafficking in South America. A very different concern is expressed in an op-ed article written by the columnist, Moacir Werneck de Castro, in *Jornal do Brasil*, on 1 June. Headlined: "The daily bloodshed", the main subject of the article is the violence committed by the police in raids on slums during the "war on drugs". The article clearly condemns the repression of organized crime as a justification to "a brutal extermination" of the poor, and warns against attitudes of condescending passivity and fatalism in relation to the daily violence, as well as the belief in primitive remedies to combat it.

Commenting on the same slaughters referred to in the *Isto é Senhor* box, this article criticizes the Rio governor for judging the deaths occurring during a "legitimate police action", and the killing of the four youngsters in Barra da Tijuca, which suggested summary execution, differently. Castro argues that there was no intention of investigating the cause of the shooting, since killing 'bandits' has been turned into a routine job. He further laments that even when it involves children, the massacre of the poor does not provoke any crisis of conscience from society or public authority, since it uses the repression of drug-trafficking as a pretext. Here, it

is the authorities that are seen to be the real culprits, whereas the slum dwellers are described as innocent poor people, defenceless in the war between the police and gangs.

Another issue which this article brings to the fore, and which later gained increasing importance in the national coverage of the killing of street children, is the negative image of Brazil and especially Rio, abroad. In fact, the main peg of this article is the French coverage of the killing of children by death squads. The columnist quotes the main and supporting headlines of a recent feature by the French magazine *L'Express* on the Baixada Fluminense: "Here they kill us all the time: He is 14 years old and is one of the homeless children of the Rio suburbs. The death squads kill them by the hundreds. In the name of order." The columnist reveals that such a headline had initially prompted him either to "smile condescendingly at the poor information of the French journalist" or to be consumed by "a just patriotic indignation against the falsities of another hunter of exoticism". But he had then realised that the feature was "cruelly true". Apart from small exaggerations, it was well documented, containing interviews with street children, slum dwellers and government authorities.

This piece is especially significant for the purposes of this study because it reveals that the killing of the children in Brazil had caught the attention of the Brazilian columnist because of a feature in the French press. Nevertheless, by reporting on the foreign press interest in the issue, the columnist urged the Brazilian press to investigate the matter further.

By 1989, the long struggle of the poor communities and civil society organizations to make the issue of violence against 'street children' a matter of public concern had at least initiated a public controversy. For instance, a positive development as revealed in the *Newsweek* and *Le Monde* stories was the voicing of new sources defending the interests of these subordinate groups, and thus preventing a perfect closure around dominant concerns. Both in the national and foreign press coverage, there were continuities with the primary definitions, as well as emerging counter-discourses.

Another important aspect was the framing of the issue as a global problem, albeit within different discourses - something that called for the introduction of new

players, with more capacity to influence the debate in the international arena. But despite these important developments, the debate in civil society had still not been able to sensitize the political system to respond. In this sense, the street children's movement, which had alerted the foreign journalists, continued to publicize the issue of the "extermination of children", drawing on the death of the nine-year-old black slum boy found in Ipanema.

3.9 Entering the official arena

On 7 June 1989, Licia Caniné, a councillor from the Communist Party (PCB) and president of the human rights commission of the Rio Municipal Council, known as Ruça, denounced the killing of minors in the Baixada Fluminense during a plenary session. Her indictment was based on the report prepared by ASSEAF, the Minors' Pastoral and other organizations, funded by DCI. Ruça also set up a Committee in Defence of Minors and announced her intention to report the charges formally to the State Legislative Assembly. At the same time, Volmer do Nascimento made the charge that the majority of the killers were policemen paid by the Association of Trade and Industry of Duque de Caxias (UH 08.06.89).

The following day, the revelations of the murder of children by extermination groups formed by Civil and Military police officers in the Baixada Fluminense were on the front page of *O Dia*, a popular newspaper in Rio and other local newspapers (OD, UH 08.06.89). A few days later, the councillor met the Secretary of the Civil Police and handed him a copy of the report. The Secretary disputed the figures presented in the report, arguing that they had political motivation, as they only referred to the years of the present government, but promised to produce official figures since 1985 for a debate in the Municipal Chamber to be held in two weeks time. He said that he did not believe in the existence of groups specializing in killing minors, but ordered the constitution of a working group linked to the Commission that investigated crimes of extermination groups in order to examine the issue. The investigation of the slaughters of minors

by the Secretary of the Civil Police was the main headline on the front page of the popular newspaper *O Dia* on 14 June.

The street children's movement was determined to build on the unusual circumstances of Patricio's murder to push the charges of the killing of street children ahead. On 13 June, the *Jornal do Brasil* published a news item from the city news desk headlined: "Forum debates the violence against minors". It gave advance warning of a meeting organized by the MNMMR inviting representatives of popular movements, central unions, religious organizations and government departments to discuss, among other crimes, the murder of the young boy in Ipanema and the charge that "private companies were sponsoring the removal of street children from the seafront".

The only source for this item was the local co-ordinator of the MNMMR, Maria Teresa, the same source for *Le Monde's* feature. She claimed that, if discriminatory practices such as the removal of children from smart areas of the city (where the luxury hotels were situated) and their confinement in correction centres were not halted, the situation may escalate to the point of killing children as in the Baixada Fluminense and in other states. A week later, the same paper ran a small news report headed "Crimes against minors get more attention". The generating event was the establishment of the sub-commission linked to the Special Commission for Extermination Groups, already in operation since 1987, which was directed to investigate specifically crimes against minors. It reported that the decision about the deaths of adolescents in three towns in the periphery of Rio had been taken by Helio Saboya, on the basis of the dossier prepared by ASSEAF, The Minors' Pastoral, NEPI and local institutions.

This time the story was based on police sources, and it reported that, initially, the detective in charge of checking the data presented in the dossier had detected some cases of deaths that should not be included as examples of "extermination" of minors, such as the murders of 18 year olds and deaths caused by traffic accidents. Thus, on 3 July, the Secretary of the Civil Police contested the figures provided by the NGOs at a seminar in the Municipal Council. According to Helio Saboya, between 1986 and 1988 there were 153 murders of minors in the municipalities mentioned in the DCI survey, which had counted 347 cases from January 1987 to

June 1988 only. However, the Secretary promised that the sub-commission would act even in the cases with suspected participation of police officers. The next day, *Jornal do Brasil* covered the seminar and reported on statements of the Secretary (JB 04.07.89).

The establishment of the sub-commission in the police and a special committee in the local council, and the release of official figures, were the first victories of the street children's movement in Rio in its campaign to bring the issue of the killing of street children to the political agenda. More importantly, a member of the street children's movement joined the Commission, together with a representative of the state welfare agency for minors, thus securing the participation of civil society in the investigation of the crimes, conducted by a civil police chief.

In May 1989, a pool of voluntary organizations, the Permanent Committee for the Defence of Children and Adolescents was created, and they started to collect more data on the murders. The IBASE (the Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Action) - a non-governmental research organization that was formed by social scientists and militants returning from exile after the military regime - coordinated a first national survey on the issue, together with the local sections of the MNMMR in the states. The plight of street children had sensitized the organization before. In 1986, members of IBASE gathered friends to count the children sleeping at night in Rio streets. Now they joined children's defence groups in the campaign against their violent deaths.

Following the approval of the Constitution, the battle between reform-minded judges, public prosecutors, other government officials and child advocacy groups on the one side, and the traditional Minors' Judges and state officials and law enforcement agents, who wanted the maintenance of the old Minors' Code on the other, divided these sectors. This debate was carried by the press. The repressive philosophy of the Code and the more liberal orientation of the proposed Statute also motivated statements by intellectuals from different ideological affiliations involved with the campaign. Some supported the traditional moral conception of the 'abandoned minor' as a problem of the family and the fruit of "irresponsible parenthood", while others tried to challenge this conception, presenting the street children as a responsibility of the State, and the product of "social and economic

relations of disparity, exploitation and domination" (see e.g. OE 01.02.88; OE 26.06.88).

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, policies for minors had always been defined by top-down pressures from central institutions in the political system. To reverse this traditional circulation of power in the policy-making process and the normal communication flows in the public sphere, the street children's movement still faced an uphill struggle. As I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, to change the image and policies for minors and call attention to their murders, the movement had to engage in a process of national mobilization, which involved the staging of dramatic actions, as well as more discursive and interactional processes. They had to find new platforms and arenas to advance their campaign and further sensitize the media. For these, winning the support of more influential actors on the national and international stage was still a very important goal.

CHAPTER 4: NATIONAL MOBILIZATION

4.1. A code for 'minors' or a statute for children?

In mid 1989, the street children's movement was still engaged in the mobilization of action for children's rights. Shortly after the successful campaign to include these principles in Brazil's Constitution, thereby guaranteeing civil society's involvement in the formulation, execution and monitoring of policies, the organizations in the FORUM DCA (a national front of non-governmental organizations gathering the popular movements and children's welfare programmes) started working on the specific legislation to regulate the application of such rights. Alongside a group of Public Prosecutors from São Paulo, the DCA elaborated a draft for the Statute of the Child and Adolescent that received contributions from officials from the state welfare agencies and other organizations.

The favourable environment for children's rights campaigns during 1989 was largely due to the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Child, and the thirty years of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of the Child. This was also assisted by the pending vote on the International Convention on Child Rights by the General Assembly of the United Nations. In the specific case of Brazil, the approval of the 1988 Constitution also produced a political climate that was more favourable towards the pursuit of the campaign. Thus, in July, one year after the chapter on the rights of children and adolescents had been approved by the Constituent Assembly, the proposal for the Statute of Children and Adolescents, comprising 282 articles, was officially launched and submitted to both houses of Congress. To mark the launch, the CNBB promoted the first National Seminar of the Minors' Pastoral in Belo Horizonte in July, gathering 500 people from the church groups to discuss the theme "Violence and the Pedagogy of Rights". Commenting on the launching in his weekly column in the leading daily *Folha de São Paulo* (29.07.89), the Bishop Dom Luciano Mendes stressed the important innovations of the proposed law and called for its approval.

According to Dom Luciano Mendes, in the new Statute, children and adolescents were defined as subjects of rights and not as "mere objects of judicial

measures". Furthermore, the legislation addressed the whole of the population in this age group, and not only those stigmatized as 'minors' because of their low social position. The code encompassed the basic public policies as well as supplementary programmes for assistance, specific preventive services, and medical and psychological care for the victims of negligence, maltreatment, abuse, cruelty and oppression. In addition, judicial and social protection were to be guaranteed by organizations of civil society in defence of children and adolescents.

The new legislation for children and adolescents was later to become the target of widespread criticism. But during the initial period of parliamentary procedures, only interested parties in the social movement, the institutions of state welfare, the police and the Judiciary would take part in the discussions. Nonetheless, the press was an important arena for the debate.

4.2. In defence of the Brazilian family

The Statute was fiercely opposed by many jurists, including Minors' magistrates in the most important state capitals and the federal district, who wanted to see the previous Minors' Code maintained with only slight amendments. One of the most contentious issues here was the substitution of the informal process by which the Minors' Judges exercised discretionary powers over the internment of the children who had committed offences or were simply caught wandering on the streets, with a more formal trial with a lawyer representing the children. To fight against the Statute, the Children's magistrates also submitted another bill to Congress which maintained the previous Code and tried to mobilize public opinion against the reforms.

The São Paulo Minors' Court Judge was one of the most vociferous opposers of the reforms. He sought to provoke public antagonism against the Statute, and wrote lengthy articles criticizing the ideas advocated by the draft proposal. At first, his opposition to the proposed legislation presented it as a violation of the rights of the minors because of the legal process used to judge offences committed by children and adolescents. Subsequently, he argued that the advocates of the Statute

were in practice lowering the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years of age (Barreira, OE 16.05.89). In the mounting crusade that followed, several arguments were put forward against the new law. Contesting the argument about the importance of the international framework of the campaign, the judge stated that: "foreign models are not always the best solution for Brazilian problems" (Barreira, OE 27.09.89).

In this way, Barreira tried to sensitize the middle and upper classes to the issue, calling attention to the fact that the Statute concealed many 'surprises' for adolescents from higher socioeconomic levels, since the code did not only bring harm to "those minors labelled by society as needy, trombadinhas, abandoned, etc., but also to any child or adolescent, including those from the best families" who got involved in an offence. Even if this were not very serious, it could result in imprisonment, following an impartial judgement reached through a formal and solemn process. As an example of punishment "designed for adolescents of higher social economic status", he cited the possibility of internment for offences such as driving a car without a license. The judge further warned society that the eagerness of the Statute in applying sentences was such that not only the children but all the members of the Brazilian family, including their parents, teachers, doctors, headmasters, and even police detectives, judges and Ministers, could be subjected to them.

While the children's defence groups developed actions to raise the social conscience and lobbied Parliament for the approval of the new law, Barreira called for the public to join the "Movement in Defence of the Brazilian Family" as a way of manifesting their repudiation of the Statute (Barreira, OE 23.08.89). The Children's magistrates also tried to prevent action by the street children, meaning that in Salvador, the Minors' Judge refused permission for a delegation of 24 children to travel for the second meeting of the street children's movement to be held in the capital of the Republic. In an interview with the *Jornal do Brasil*, the Judge alleged that the organizers wanted to use the children to force Congress to approve measures supporting on their interests, rather than benefiting the children through street marches and demonstrations. He further commented that the Commission which

contacted him was composed of "a priest, a gay and a foreigner who claimed to be a former UNICEF official" (JB 27.09.89).

The pro-statute campaigners responded to the attack by arguing that such criticism reflected the "hidden agenda" of corporate interests and the excessive power of the judges threatened by the bill (Rivera, OE 22.09.89). In support of the reforms, a few jurists, (particularly members of the Public Ministry, academics such as Deodato Rivera and leaders of the MNMMR) also gained coverage in the newspapers by contesting the children's magistrates' arguments and campaigning for the approval of the Statute (see e.g. Moraes, JB 07.04.89; Silva, OE 31.12.89; Almeida, FSP 29.07.89; Santos, CB 04.07.89; Se, OD 14.11.89; Grajew, FSP 08.05.90).

4.3. Commotion outside the palace

In the process of organising the campaign against violence and in defence of children's rights, the street children's movement promoted more political demonstrations and meetings in some states, and also at a national level. Their protests were now stronger, and aimed increasingly at sensitizing the core of the political system to take effective measures to redress their problems. Hence, they physically occupied the political arena. The coverage of the mobilization of the street children reveals the different perspectives in play in society at the time, and way in which they were reproduced by the press. For this reason, it is worth describing these initial stories in some detail.

On 14 August 1989, around 300 street children organized by the local co-ordinators of the MNMMR, including a priest, marched from a central square in Recife, (where the state government palace is situated) to the State Legislative Assembly, carrying banners that denounced police violence and chanting slogans. They gained access to the galleries, where they shouted, sang, and threw paper planes, while other street children, leaders of the movement, were allowed to address speeches to the deputies. They presented amendments to the redrafting of the state constitution based on a petition bearing 2500 signatures, and demanded a response to

a letter drafted in May by the local co-ordinator of the MNMMR, which denounced the killing of 530 minors aged between 13 and 17 in the previous three years.

This event gained coverage in the national press, but was reported by the two national papers in the sample in strikingly different ways. The *Jornal do Brasil* story, published the next day, was headed "The Voice of the kids from the streets", and followed by the sub-header "300 minors march demanding support programmes". This was positioned beneath a picture of the march, which carried a caption reading: "With banners claiming their rights, the children went to the Legislative Assembly" (JB 15.08.89).

The topic of this item was the campaign for children's rights, but the issue of police violence and killings by death squads was the lead subject. The emotional statement of a youngster asking the deputies to read and take action on the document about the killings of street children was quoted and it was reported that according to the document, half of the crimes were attributed to the death squads.

The *Jornal do Brasil* item was clearly sympathetic to the movement. The street children's leaders were described as active citizens claiming their rights, and it was reported that they had chosen delegates for the national meeting scheduled for the following month. Despite mentioning the shouting and the paper aeroplanes, the story stressed the orderly nature of the demonstration. The item also stated that the regional section of the movement assisted three thousand street boys and girls out of the ten thousand in the state, and that there were 42 voluntary groups, the majority supported by the Minors' Pastoral and other Church groups. In this account, therefore, the movement was referred to as a national organization that was doing something to tackle the problem of street children. In addition, it was presented as having the support of a traditional institution - the Catholic Church.

The story in *O Estado de São Paulo* comprised just one paragraph entitled "Needy minors ask for protection". The words selected for the small item carried the traditional paternalistic view, resisting the language of citizenship conveyed by the movement that had been adopted by the Rio paper. The note also highlighted that the children were making a lot of noise. But even more significant is the fact that *O Estado* reported that the movement had handed a document to the deputies, while completely omitting the issue of the killing of street children.

As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, these examples did not provide the only ways of perceiving the street children's movement. The organization of street children also prompted more angry reactions in some sectors of society, as reflected in editorials in more conservative or provincial newspapers, which agreed with the Minors' Judges' views. The claims of the street children were further confirmed a week later by the killing of three minors in São Paulo. The murders were witnessed by a 13-year-old girl named Andrea, who survived by pretending to be dead, after being shot in the head. It is interesting to compare the reporting of this slaughter with one occurring in very similar circumstances in November 1991, when another girl, also called Andrea, survived in the same way. In contrast to the 1991 slaughter, the murders at this time did not produce major repercussions and the story in *Jornal do Brasil* (21.08.89) represented a very brief news item.

4.4 Citizens or bandits?

To further mobilize the approval of the Statute of the Children and Adolescents and to fight violence, a national conference of the MNMMR was organized for September 1989 in the capital of the Republic. The release of the survey jointly conducted by IBASE and the MNMMR, after the killing of the black boy in Ipanema in May, was also scheduled for the conference. A few commentators gave prior publicity to the event and announced the results of the investigation of the deaths. On the day the meeting was to start, (26 September), an article headlined "Silent Deaths" allowed Gilberto Dimenstein, a political columnist and the head of the bureau of the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* in the capital city Brasilia, to disclose the findings of the dossier of the MNMMR, announcing that every two days a child was murdered by the death squads.

The main argument of this article was that there was not a national commotion about the killings because the victims were street children. If, instead, the dead had been journalists, entrepreneurs or doctors, there would have been outrage, mobilization of the authorities, and hundreds of pages of coverage in newspapers and news magazines. The announcement of the meeting of the street children's

movement also motivated a story in the weekly *Isto É* (27.09.89), which is worth examining in detail as it carries the dominant middle-class view about the issue. Possibly because the article was written before the start of the event, or most likely because the weekly did not want to pursue the issue, the feature did not draw on the revelations about the murders. Instead, it focused on the legal battle about the Statute as the main issue to be addressed during the meeting.

This four-page feature was headed "Neither angels, nor devils", and the sub-headline expressed the magazine's own conclusion in relation to one of the points in contention: the right of defence. Here, the verdict was more favourable to the reformers, as they concluded that the judicial defence of young offenders would not make them innocents but would help to prevent abuse from the authorities. In this respect, even bandits should have the right to defence against the state.

The discussion about the policies and legislation was set in the context of an explosive territory similar to that of the May feature. The main concern was still the threat represented by "seven million abandoned children", now described as a "Cambodia within Brazil". The framework of the street children as dangerous and potential criminals was here made explicit. In spite of the title, the street children were still represented as folk devils.

Of eleven street children interviewed in the streets or in the reform schools for the purposes of this feature, seven were offenders and some quite dangerous. They were presented as unrepentant thieves, or killers boasting about being murderers, with no contextualization of their behaviour. The others, who were in state care for being "needy", or were working or begging in the street, were said to be part of the same reality, and as such, potential criminals. In this context, it was explained that there was a thin frontier between the street child who had not yet offended, and the one who was already a delinquent. However, no concern for their situation was shown. This feature criticized the failure of state policies to deal with the children, but took the view that these repressive structures had been unable to prevent them from turning to crime -that is, that it was concerned with protecting society against these minors. The issue of police violence was only mentioned briefly in a quotation from a street child.

In this magazine, an important difference from the previous story on drug-trafficking, (the latter being mainly based on sources from the police and judiciary, defending tougher measures to control street children's crime), was that here the sources in favour of more liberal reforms were over-represented, and even the national co-ordinator of the street children's movement was interviewed. The other sources were a scholar, the head of UNICEF in Brazil, two state attorneys in favour of the reforms, and a renowned judge, who was the vice-president of the International Association of Children's Judges. In this case, the article took the side of the reformers on one specific point of contention. This could suggest a balance when taken together with the previous story, but the overall result was clearly against the street children. The weight of the problem was achieved by allowing the sources in favour of the Statute to make their claims in relation to a formal liberal issue such as the right of defence, but presenting the children as dangerous. As regards the sector of the press represented by this news magazine, it is obvious that the children's advocacy groups had so far failed to convince the journalists of the need for one of their most important tasks: changing the image of the street children. The latter were still represented as mere objects of judicial measures, thus limiting the discussion around the new legislation proposed to the existing frame which was precisely that which the children's rights campaigners wanted to challenge.

An important theme which received a more favourable approach in the article was the international pressure exerted by the expected approval of the International Convention of the Rights of the Child by the United Nations. This would enable the international organization to monitor the human rights situation in the country. The pioneering role of Brazil in introducing constitutional rights for the children in advance of the United Nations vote was also stressed. The campaigners acknowledged international interest in the subject was an important factor in the appeal for the approval of the bill, and this aspect was highlighted by lobbyists such as Cesare de La Roca (personal interview, 1994).

A further event that occurred prior to the meeting was that Fernando Gabeira (the presidential candidate of the Green Party), writing in his column in the popular Rio paper *O Dia* (04.09.89), predicted that a report with "possibilities of international repercussions" was to be released during the meeting. Gabeira explained that this

was a report about the killing of street children, and argued that, for the most part, the official police and security guards acting in the poorest areas of Brazil were responsible for the murders. He further stated: "After the environment, the tragedy of the extermination of street children will be an issue of world importance".

4.5 Dramatic deaths, drugs and debt

The Second Meeting of the Street Children's Movement was a large event. Around seven hundred and fifty street children from several Brazilian states and some other countries in South America, plus two hundred street educators, took part in the conference. It was also a political event, and the Conference was scheduled to coincide with the campaign for the first direct presidential election in Brazil for thirty years. The plight of the street children was to be shown on television electoral broadcasts by left-wing and centre-left parties such as the Workers Party (PT) and Social Democratic Party (PSDB).

The Presidential candidates from the PSDB, the Green Party (PV) and the PT attended the conference. The first two were greeted with boos and hisses, while the third, himself a former street child, received a standing ovation. Most of the leaders of the movement were, in fact, linked to the PT, and this in part also explained the negative reaction of some sectors to the event.

At the opening of the national conference, the organizations staged a public protest to denounce the killings, with the participation of national human rights groups and activists of popular movements, representatives of some government agencies, parliamentarians and international organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization of American States, UNICEF and the DCI. In a dramatic act, the children unfurled a two hundred metre banner inscribed with the names of the youths who had been murdered. At the same time, they sang the national anthem and released more than a thousand balloons, one for each child killed (MNMMR/IBASE/NEV-USP, 1991).

During the meeting, the national survey of violent deaths of children and adolescents was released. The survey showed that at least 1347 children and

adolescents had been murdered since 1984 in some states, and also that 891 cases had been reported in newspapers. The murders registered in Forensic Institutes showed an increase of 157% in deaths during the period. This rate should not be taken to be very precise, as difficulties in the collection of the data generated some distortion of the figures in detailing the comparison between different years, but they nonetheless revealed a growing trend.

According to the survey, death squads were responsible for 65 (17.5%) out of the total of 379 violent deaths in 1988, and 82 (33.46%) out of 245 cases in the first half of 1989 (Nascimento, 1989). Due to the limitations of the research mentioned, the numbers were nonetheless lower than the figures later presented in a report produced by the special commission of the police to investigate crimes by death squads in Rio. On releasing the survey, the non government organizations stressed that the deaths reflected structural conditions which, in turn, explained the marginalization of the youths and the current crisis of the country said to be "subject to an external debt of US\$ 115 billion, combined with an adjustment programme imposed by the International Monetary Fund, which generated recession and led to an overall transfer of income of more than US\$ 12 billion per annum." (IBASE/MNMMR, 1989: 4).

The organizations called for radical solutions not only in the area of public security, but also in respect of changes to the unjust social and economic system. They also expressed the need to change the negative image of street children characterised as "undesirable" by the police, children's courts and the press. They demanded the approval of the Statute and the investigation of the violent deaths, including a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry to examine "the connection of the police and organized extermination groups" with the murders.

An important development in this respect is that the document, destined to be sent abroad, drew the attention of international organizations and foreign newspapers to the fact that the number of deaths resulting from land disputes, the present subject of concern as regards violations of human rights in Brazil, was much lower than the number of children and adolescents killed.

Hence, the meeting of the street children was covered by the international media. There were television crews from the Japanese RBS, the Italian RAI and the

state channel in Spain, news correspondents from Reuters, EFE and France-Press, as well as journalists from other countries such as Holland and Germany. The conference also received extensive coverage in the Brazilian press, and was reported by some foreign newspapers in the sample. However, this occurred in very distinct ways. The coverage also changed day by day according to the developments narrated above and below, and the angles varied depending on the location of the bureau where the news was produced.

For example, on the first day of the coverage (27 September 1989), *Jornal do Brasil* treated the issue as national news, and the report was produced by their desk in the capital, Brasilia. The story seemed to be based on reference materials about the objectives of the meeting previously produced by the main organizers of the event such as UNICEF officials, the national coordination of the MNMMR and IBASE. A Minors' Judge, who opposed the Statute, was quoted as delegitimizing the event and the organizers, and the article explained the divisions around the legislation for children.

The main frames for discussing the matter were citizenship for children, and the construction of a "more just society". The killings surveyed by IBASE were presented in the context of wider issues such as the misery of the children's families' situation, and no references were made to extermination groups or death squads. The burden of foreign debt was also an important theme and explanation for the crisis. According to the report, social justice, the suspension of the payment of the foreign debt, and schools for children were the demands that the street children wished to be taken to Congress and the President.

It is important to note here that while the meeting of the street children was taking place, Brazilian newspapers and politicians were concerned with the agenda of a scheduled meeting between President Sarney of Brazil and President Bush of the United States. Following a speech of the American President in the United Nations covering drugs, ecology and the foreign debt, pressure from the USA for Brazil to control drugs was expected to be on the agenda of the presidential meeting (OE 21 - 26.09.89). So when the street children were gathered in Brasilia to demand a new Statute and an end to violence, the war on drugs in Rio was on the front pages of newspapers such as *O Estado de São Paulo*. In the debate at the time, some sectors

were much more concerned with this issue than with the demands of the street children's movement.

As reported by some commentators, the launch of a new anti-drug program by the President of the United States, George Bush, in early September, had a significant impact on the press coverage and public opinion in that country, and also had major repercussions abroad. The announcement of Bush's speech on drugs and the speech itself accounted for a sharp rise in the press coverage, and a jump in public concern over the issue. In the States, opinion polls registered a rise of respondents electing drugs as the most important problem in the period from 22% to 64%. However, one year later, the issue was mentioned by only 10% of people (see "The Government and the Press and the War on Drugs" in NYT 06.09.90).

In Brazil, the expected meeting between Bush and Sarney again gave prominence to the themes of escalating violence in Rio and its connection with street children who were the work force of drug-traffickers. Commenting on the rise in crime in Rio, the Justice Minister advised the authorities to tackle the causes: unjust income distribution, misery and street children (OE 26.09.89).

In September 1989, this new international crusade against drug trafficking contributed to renewed repression of young drug soldiers and defenceless slum dwellers in Rio, who were again casualties in this war (see e.g. OE.21.9.89; OE 24.09.89). Drug-traffickers complained that Brazilian police officers were forging the results of drugs raids in the slums in order to justify weapons being sent from the United States. Such interpretations suggesting the reason for the return of violent police raids was discussed in opinion pages in the press (see e.g. OE 07.09.89).

The meeting of the street children provided occasion for the expression of divergent political views on these related themes of deaths, drugs, debt and ecology. The issue of foreign debt as being in some way related to the violent deaths of street children was a major theme in the subsequent article of Fernando Gabeira (OD 27.09.89). In his column in *O Dia*, the Green Party candidate predicted that this was going to become a major diplomatic embarrassment for Brazil after the environment. Gabeira also announced the proposal he was going to present at the meeting which connected international concern about the Amazon with the presence of children on

the streets, suggesting that part of the foreign debt should be used in projects for street children.

In addition, the columnist tried to persuade readers to change their image of the street children. He argued that they were struggling to overcome their status as victims by taking action and raising consciousness of an issue unknown to most readers: the extermination of children.

In the *O Estado de São Paulo* report, also from Brasilia, this time the "deaths of minors" made the headline, brought by an official source. The most important fact became the request made by the Justice Minister during a meeting of the National Public Security Council, that the state police forces should investigate the participation of death squads in the murder of minors. Despite the political angle of the story, and the official recognition of the issue of the killings, which made them newsworthy for the newspaper, the story was a secondary item on the crime page. The revelations about the thousands of murders of the "minors of the streets" in several states, and the charge that every two days the death squads or extermination groups killed one child were reported by the *O Estado de São Paulo*, but were considered less newsworthy than a rebellion in a jail in a small town on the periphery which resulted in one inmate being killed by a police officer. This was the main news on the page, despite the fact that after the DCI survey in 1988 the paper had not been reporting on the issue.

The article provided brief background information on the proposals for the reform of the legislation submitted to Congress, but the only source quoted was the local judge who was in favour of the maintenance of the old code for judicial matters, and who said that the Statute should only deal with health and education issues. Nonetheless, in this report, the street children gathered in Brasilia for the meeting were not described in such paternalistic terms as the previous piece in the paper, and they were simply portrayed as fighting for their legitimate interests.

The Guardian (27.09.89) also published a news report by Jan Rocha, the correspondent in São Paulo, with the title "Street children organise against Brazilian death squads". The lead was the operation of the death squads in the previous year, who had killed 65 youths under 18 years of age "in their self-attributed mission to clean up the cities, by executing 'marginals' - thieves, members of drug gangs,

witnesses to crimes, and many innocent people, including street children who might become criminals." Here the potential criminality of the street children was also a theme, although not framed in the same threatening way as in previous stories. The item briefly described the life of street children who had to beg, sniff glue, or steal food to assuage their hunger. But it also stressed that this led them to become involved with crime and drugs.

The focus of the story was human rights violations, and the explanation of these cited the impunity of the killings as the cause for such deaths. The paper did not give importance to the policy debate or the wider issues reviewed in the Rio daily, such as the connection between the violent deaths and the misery produced by the burden of foreign debt, which had been highlighted in the MNMMR/IBASE's report and in *Jornal do Brasil's* story.

The murders of street children also made the headline of a small dispatch by Reuters on 28 September, which focused on "more than 600 abandoned children murdered in 19 months of urban violence in Brazil" between January 1988 and July 1989. The story briefly reported on the conference of 750 street children sponsored by UNICEF and the study published by the MNMMR. It stressed that 24% of the murders were committed by death squads "composed of off-duty policemen hired by businessmen to kill their enemies." An educator of the street children's movement was mentioned in the context of linking violence to the poverty which surrounded children and their families.

On the second day of the coverage, *Jornal do Brasil* gave a page 7 (national news) headline to the killing of children in its local dimension as a rising issue. The novel element which made the lead and title was the release of the statistics prepared by the Secretary of the Civil Police at the request of the Municipal Council during the meeting.

The paper stressed that these figures showed that the number of children murdered in the first five months in Rio (184) was higher than in the previous year. It also commented that these numbers were higher than the ones published in IBASE's survey. The official figures on murders of children and adolescents registered 227 homicides in Rio in 1987, whereas the MNMMR/IBASE study found only 167. The

statistics of the Civil Police accounted for 1081 violent deaths of minors from 1985 to May 1989 in Rio only.

An IBASE researcher was interviewed giving background information about the charges brought after Patricio Hilario's death, linking businessmen in the tourist industry with extermination groups. At this point the Permanent Committee for Children and Adolescents was formed and this body began to collect data about the killings. The paper commented that, according to the conclusions of the Committee: "the existence of an extermination group, whose activities would mainly benefit tourist enterprises was highly probable", as the entrepreneurs had been demanding the expulsion of street children from their hotels and shops at the time of the young black boy's death. But at this point "nothing had been proved". This view was supported by the statements of a police spokesman from a special branch created to give protection to minors, who believed in the existence of extermination groups.

The other source interviewed for this feature was Herbert de Souza, known as Betinho - a charismatic intellectual formerly persecuted by the Military regime, then head of IBASE, who had taken part in the meeting of the MNMMR. He said that he cried during the opening of the meeting, which he described as the "most dramatic event he had ever seen in thirty three years of political militancy". He also made public his feelings about the collective guilt of "demagoguery" with the problem of the minor and his intention to give total support to the movement. He further commented on the shame for the country of having children protesting in the capital about being victims of genocide.

On the same page, the news item from the Brasilia bureau also reported on the meeting. The focus was on allegations of police torture and corruption, rather than the "extermination of children". In contrast to the articles produced in Rio, the reports from Brasilia seemed to resist the idea of genocide or extermination groups, and instead preferred to refer to maltreatment, torture, or persecution. As mentioned above, at the outset it was only the most radical groups in the street children's movement who campaigned against the "extermination of children", and UNICEF, for instance, only really started to campaign against the killings in 1990. The item also highlighted the disruptive behaviour of the "minors" by emphasizing how they interrupted the speeches of their peers by shouting and reacted by throwing paper

aeroplanes and balls, and even jeered at the addresses of the candidates from the PSDB and PV who attended the meeting.

The Spanish news agency EFE dispatched a story apparently based on the information of a *Jornal do Brasil* item described above. This was published as news in brief in *El Pais* (29.09.89). The Spanish paper did not cover the conference and the small item simply reported on the official statistics of 184 killings of homeless children in the first five months of the year in Rio, and the charges about the possible existence of an extermination group dedicated to murdering children, which particularly favoured the tourist industry - said to be the sector most affected by street delinquency, as exposed by the Permanent Commission for Children and Adolescents.

4.6 The periphery invades the centre

On 28 September, the second day of the meeting, more than 500 of the 750 children who had gathered in the capital invaded the National Congress to demand the approval of the Statute and to denounce violence against them. João de Deus, a street educator in a São Paulo suburb, and one of the organizers of the event, described the day the children occupied the Congress as one of the most important days of his life.

They ducked under the arms and between the legs of policemen who tried to stop them. The Senate security tried to keep them out but they got in every way they could. There was a session going on. The children made a statement denouncing the attitude of a judge who had tried to stop them meeting in Brasilia and denouncing the killings of children by justice committees in Recife. It was very strong. There were congressmen crying who gave up their seats to the children. (cited in Swift, 1991: 21).

However, in contrast to the emotional accounts of the organizers, or the tone of the speeches of the several deputies who greeted the children on the day of the invasion, (including the President of the Chamber of Deputies, who described the event as a "civic party of the Brazilian children" (JB 29.09.89)), some important

newspapers reacted in a very negative way to the event. The discomfort of sectors of society with the gathering of street children in the capital of the Republic, particularly after the invasion of the National Congress, was reflected in the coverage by the press.

The opening of the *Jornal do Brasil* story on this occasion, also issued from the bureau in the capital, called attention to the poor appearance and disrespectful behaviour of the children: "badly dressed, or untidy, noisy and doing somersaults". The story reported that they occupied the Chamber of Deputies "without invitation and without the garments required by the parliamentary tradition", transforming the national parliament into a "playground". Such an introduction naturally served to depoliticize the demands made by the movement as reported in the story, such as the dismantling of the repressive boarding schools, a better distribution of income, rights to education, housing and food, or the charge made by a street educator in Rio that "the hotel managers hired security guards to expel the children".

The invasion provoked an editorial in the newspaper *A Tarde*, the leading daily in the state of Bahia, headlined "Demagoguery with the children", which further reflects the reaction of some sectors of society towards such initiative described by the paper as a "clownish act", "an electoral game" and a "useless melodrama". The conservative paper did not denigrate the street children, but rather chose to attack the organizers of the meeting, identified as leftist politicians and sectors of the Catholic Church, who "claim[ed] to have made a preferential option for the poor and seek to derive electoral benefits from this". It further argued that the politicians and priests "who claim to be progressive" should instead deal with the root of the problem - family planning to counter the effects of irresponsible parenthood - and in the meantime should vote for concrete measures to "deter the marginalization of minors" (AT 01.10.89).

A Tarde explicitly supported the decision of the local judge to refuse permission for the children to travel to the meeting and completely ignored the issue of children's rights. It also downplayed the revelations of violence against street children, which were only indirectly mentioned. What provoked outrage was not the fact that the children were increasingly meeting violent deaths, including summary executions by the police or death squads, but their "electoral exploitation".

A similar perspective was adopted by a leader article published on the same day in the *Correio Brasiliense*, in the capital of the country, where the local minors' judge also opposed the Statute. The item was entitled "Street children in Brasilia manipulated by demagoguery" and, alongside criticism of the statute, it raised objections to revelations about the killings at the opening of the meeting. "The macabre episode must have been sponsored by a sensationalist organizer as nobody dared to recall how many people, bread-winners or promising youngsters were also murdered by the same street children in many Brazilian cities". The article also claimed that the meeting was received with indifference or distaste by the public.

However, the conservative *O Estado de São Paulo*, which shared similar ideological and political views to the papers mentioned above, abstained from criticizing the movement in this occasion. A small box on page 17 carried a photograph showing street children sitting clapping and deputies standing by their sides, with a short text headlined "The Chamber of the Children". It briefly reported that the street children who were participating in a meeting in Brasilia had been present at a session of the Chamber, which lasted more than one hour, with lively discussions and a symbolic vote to approve the Statute of the Children. There was no mention of the invasion of the Congress, nor of the killings already reported in the previous story.

The national conference of the street children's movement and the exposure of the killings had a crucial impact in so far as it called national attention to the killings, and affected the political system. The event provoked responses from some politicians and thus had some influence on the policy-making debate. The impact of the meeting and of the invasion of Parliament can be assessed by an examination of the plenary speeches in the Chamber of Deputies, before and after the event. In the period of more than a year that followed the approval of the chapter on the rights of the children in the 1988 constitution, and preceded the meeting, only three deputies had addressed the need to regulate such rights, despite the fact that a first draft of the Statute had been delivered to Congress during the first months of the year, and in July a project had been officially submitted.

Following the exposure of the killings of children and the announcement of the meeting in the Legislative Assembly of Pernambuco published by the press, three

other deputies called for approval of the Statute. After the occupation of Congress, more than twenty parliamentarians of all the major parties expressed concern about the matter, and demanded the urgent approval of the Bill. Moreover, Nelson Aguiar (PDT), the first head of the national children's welfare agency (FUNABEM) at the end of the military regime, and the author of the project of the Statute, called for the installation of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI) to investigate the extermination of children, in line with the demands of the movement. Another congressman, the influential Senator Fernando Henrique Cardoso (PSDB), also started the collection of signatures for a CPI.

At an administrative level, it was not only state authorities in the area of Public Security but also representatives of the federal government who reacted publicly to the indictments for the first time after the meeting. The Minister for Justice, Saulo Ramos, stated that he had sent a message to the Secretary for Public Security in every state demanding an investigation into the activities of the death squads (FSP 30.09.89). The Secretary for Public Security for São Paulo, Fleury Filho, requested information from the MNMMR. However, within two months, the issue was again absent from plenary discussions in Parliament, and no effective government action was registered to counter the problem. In spite of this, the Second Meeting of the Street Children's Movement did manage to sensitize more parliamentarians to the need to approve legislation to protect the children more adequately, and both prevent the causes which led to their violent deaths, and also secure proper punishment in cases of the violation of their rights. A few of them were later to engage in the campaign for children's rights and against violence.

4.7 Journalists in the cross-fire

Another important consequence of the mobilization of the street children in 1989, particularly following the Second Meeting, was to politicize the problem of violence against street children in the press. For a short period at least, the issue was promoted from the crime section to national news desks and political columns. The plight of the street children also attracted more reporters from city news.

This understanding that the killing of street children was a big issue also aroused the interest of more influential journalists such as Gilberto Dimenstein, a political columnist, and the editor-in chief of the bureau of *Folha de São Paulo*, the newspaper which won the circulation battle over the more conservative *O Estado de São Paulo* during the period following the redemocratization of the country. Dimenstein started commenting on the problem in his political column, and during the months of January and February he took leave of absence to carry out an investigation of the issue.

As shown in the previous chapter, the killing of minors had been the subject of some news stories in the national and even international press before the national mobilization of the street children, although this was initially concentrated mostly on the murder of youths in Rio, especially in the *Baixada Fluminense*, and later in middle-class neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, the framing of these deaths was usually not favourable to the victims. Apart from the routine crime stories of murders and slaughters, more or less newsworthy, such coverage was mainly characterized by reactive reporting in response to allegations made by religious groups or non-governmental organizations. The efforts of projects run by the Catholic Church and NGOs had also generated some positive stories, especially in newspapers such as *Jornal do Brasil*.

I have already shown that the investigative work of crime journalists or special reporters such as Tim Lopes (whose life histories partly explain their interest in these issues), also produced important stories on street children and killings of minors. In addition, a few other journalists who, for personal or political reasons, were more receptive or committed to the campaign against the killing of street children, had started to make room for representatives of the street children's movement to state their claims in stories on other issues (e.g. stories on the closing of a school for poor youths, JB.27.06.89; OD 18.06.89).

From the second half of 1989, more journalists in city news desks, including some women reporters, were moved by cases of violence against street children and the arguments put forward by the children's advocacy groups. Their stories increased knowledge and raised awareness of the issue. In some cases they intervened directly in the course of events, and this began increasingly to strain the relationship between

some journalists and less liberal sectors in the police. These stories discussed the children's delinquent behaviour in terms of their social background and society's debt to them, thus moving beyond the opposition workers/bandits/citizens. Further to this, the drama of these juveniles' families, marked by poverty, unemployment, alcoholism and violence was exposed. For instance, in one of these stories, a child was quoted challenging the assertion of the reporter that the children who were on the streets had parents. In reality, their own parents, who were very different from the loving parents of middle-class children they saw on television, smacked too much, drank too much, had no money to feed them or buy them clothes or gifts, so they subsequently ran away (JB 09.09.89).

Another theme of the reporting was the opposition of a part of society to the presence of these children on the streets or in open houses and other alternative programmes which did not involve locking them up, since some of them were a nuisance and a few were really dangerous. For instance, a social worker quoted in one story stated that at a meeting with the association of residents of a smart borough close to a commercial area where the street children roamed, some had advocated summary executions as a way of dealing with them, and one man had even offered to give free shooting lessons (JB 07.09.89).

The children who were given a voice in these stories enabled a more humane and less threatening portrayal of the folk devils and their naive dreams. Their complaints about how they were maltreated by the police were also highlighted, leading to clashes between journalists and policemen (see e.g. JB 07.09.89; JB 09.09.89).

For instance, in September, Cristiane Costa investigated charges made by a social worker from a municipal government project, that the police had refitted an abandoned building in a smart residential neighbourhood in Rio into a house to torture street children. Despite the denial of the Military Police Chief in the area, she went to visit the house and confirmed the allegations. Costa's story was given a whole page in *Jornal do Brasil*, and it included interviews with several street children who reported cases of torture, humiliation and rape; and also accused a police officer of making them steal for him. The reporter also interviewed social workers, who assisted the children in the project, and quoted one as saying: "If we

talk about a policy of extermination we are not exaggerating". Costa reported that since the beginning of this kind of alternative programme for street children in 1984, 350 murders of street children had been counted in Rio. The publication of the story prompted the Secretary of the Civil Police, Helio Saboya, to order the opening of an inquiry into this, and to call a press conference detailing the action to be taken.

As mentioned above, the issue of children's rights gained significantly more coverage as journalists and media outlets became increasingly involved in the campaign, which in turn had more middle-class appeal, as a result of UNICEF's public relations work in particular. After the Second Meeting of the MNMMR, the two campaigns were to become increasingly intertwined. Furthermore, this intergovernmental organization was to become more involved with investigation and exposure of the killings. The organization sponsored the investigation conducted by Dimenstein on the killings in other Brazilian states and the subsequent publication of his book, which was to have a strong impact.

In October 1989, the *Jornal do Brasil's* coverage of the issue of violence against street children and changes in the legislation on this matter were mostly generated by public demonstrations organized by the Church and the NGOs in Rio. Nevertheless, these should not be regarded as simply pseudo-events for the media. They were political facts which the organizers expected would attract media coverage, but they were also political manifestations in their own right, aimed at mobilizing people and raising consciousness not only among the general public, but also among the participants themselves.

One such event was a street march in the centre of Rio, going by the name "Walk for the Rights of Children and Adolescents". This was organized by the Catholic Church based São Martinho Foundation, as part of the campaign for the new Statute, but it gathered churches from different denominations, a wide range of NGOs and some representatives of the municipal government. The march was opposed by the Rio Minors' Judge, who wanted to maintain the old Minors' Code and tried to prevent the children from taking part in the demonstration, which he argued was a political movement. In spite of this, 2 thousand children attended. The other gathering on 31 October, also in Rio, was not a mass demonstration. This was a Popular Jury to conduct a symbolic trial of murders against children. The meeting

gathered 200 people, including representatives of 17 organizations in civil society. The two events were favourably reported by *Jornal do Brasil* (JB 08.10.89; JB 2.11.89).

A week after the Second Meeting, *Jornal do Brasil* dedicated a whole page on the national news desk to the debate about the changes in legislation for children, and particularly violence against street children, produced by five journalists. The main feature on the page was headed: "Children want to change their destiny with a new law". The initiating event was the street march scheduled for the following week, and this was favourably announced as part of the legitimate fight of the most interested people to change their situation - the children and adolescents who represented 43% of the population. The feature thus contested the idea of political exploitation conveyed by the judges and a sector of the press, and defended the new legislation, while also adopting the new terminology - children and adolescents - which did not stigmatize the poor minors.

This lead also brought together the two pressing issues that concerned the children defence groups: the killings and the legal change. This produced two sets of statistics that "portrayed the situation of the children and adolescents in Brazil". The first showed that one third of the youths between 18 and 21 years old locked in a local prison had previously attended the state reformatory schools or similar boarding institutions, while the second referred to the fact that in the Baixada Fluminense, "183 children were murdered, mainly by extermination groups" in the first six months of the year.

This latter piece gave background information about the legal debate, announcing that both sides in the dispute would be debating the issue in the Chamber of Deputies that coming week. It quoted three sources in favour of the Statute and the main sources against the Statute in Rio - the judges Liborni Siqueira and Alyrio Cavallieri. The article concluded by saying that the 36 million needy minors in Brazil expected Congress to make a reality of Article 227 of the Constitution, which, among other things considered that securing of right to life for children and adolescents was a duty of the family, society and the State.

In this same article, a separate box in the centre of the page, headed: "Two judges, two sentences", gave equal space to statements of one jurist in favour of the

new legislation and the other against. A table compared significant aspects of the old Code with the proposed new Statute. Although no opinion was proffered, the Statute was clearly presented as the more just and reasonable legislation.

At the bottom of the page, a third section gave voice to "the most interested". Equal space was given to each child alongside a posed photograph and a statement about their expectation in relation to a law for children. Five boys aged between 10 and 15 years of age were portrayed, most with a pleasant smile, or alternatively bearing a shy or sad face. The children's stories were very different from the ones in the *Isto É* piece. Only one admitted that he had once been caught trying to steal, because he did not have a father, and his mother had left. All the others were said to be workers. They all complained about the police and wanted a law to prevent policemen from beating them. As a whole, the coverage sought to show balance and to give a fair description of the legal dispute and a clear account of the main issues, as a means of bringing the matter to the public debate. However, it was clearly in favour of the reformers.

The page under consideration also carried a story produced by *Jornal do Brasil's* bureau in the capital of the country. This was entitled "Minors reveal torture and abuse in Brasilia". Although the title still resisted the idea of killings of street children, the story gave a dramatic account of a case of torture suffered by a 13 year old boy at the hands of the police in the capital. The item reported the charge made by an official from the Minors' Courts, that most children who wandered the streets were arrested by the police and, instead of being taken to the internment centres for minors, were placed in common cells together with adult criminals, where they suffered all kinds of abuse and violence.

The aforementioned piece also reproduced data from the IBASE survey, which showed that 138 children had been victims of violent deaths in Brasilia that year. This was presented within the wider social context, detailing the abandonment of the children on the outskirts of the capital, as opposed to the situation in the centre of the city, highly urbanized and renowned for its futuristic architecture. There, 50% of the schools were situated in the centre for a population of four hundred thousand inhabitants, while on the periphery, which homed some twenty million people, twenty thousand children had not found places in schools.

Problems with street children in the capital of Brazil were also reported by *O Estado de São Paulo* in the same period. An investigative feature produced by Brasilia's bureau presented a fresh angle on the plight of street children - the prostitution and exploitation of street boys, who slept in the main bus station in Brasilia. The story had positive repercussions, generating a speech in the Chamber of Deputies, and a request for its transcription in the minutes of the session.

The São Paulo paper did not return to the issue of the extermination of street children and did not produce features on the legal reforms in the period. Only a small news report about the Statute was found (OE 31.12.89). However, it continued to be a carrier for the legal debate by opening its specialized section - Courts - to the interested parties.

In late 1989, the international war on drugs justified police repression of youths. The police operations in the Rio slums continued to make victims, who included innocent slum dwellers and children killed by stray bullets without provoking much public outrage. Nonetheless, in line with organizations in civil society, a few journalists and columnists in sectors of the more liberal press did try to echo the protests of the dwellers, and thereby condemn the operations, something that angered the tough sectors in the police.

The rising police violence against minors in the last months of 1989 again sensitized the press, including more conservative newspapers, especially when it centred on middle-class youths. On October 19, the headline of the crime page of *O Estado de São Paulo* referred to the killing of a student by a police officer in the city centre. The article commented that police violence against innocents, especially middle-class youngsters, was increasing. This was a correct forecast, and in April 1990, after eight murders in a month whose victims were mostly other 'students', *O Estado de São Paulo* reported that the Secretary of the Civil Police had established new regulations to limit the use of weapons when pursuing pedestrians and motorists (OE 11.04.90).

In late 1989, cases of protests by middle-class families following killings that were the result of violent policing, were reported by the press. This enabled the protests of slum dwellers to gain more legitimacy. On 12 November, *Jornal do Brasil* reported on a rally of slum dwellers protesting against the killing of a "minor"

by a policeman in Rio. On 17 November, the story was about the protest of the family and friends of a "student" killed by the police after jumping traffic lights in Curitiba. The relatives sounded their car horns on the way to the burial as a way of drawing attention to the murder.

But the tough sectors of the police seized on the death of a woman engineer to create a new wave of public outrage against minors. The incident had the necessary ingredients to become newsworthy. It involved an elite person, happened in a publicly visible space, and had dramatic appeal. The woman was killed by a stray bullet in an exchange of fire on a Rio beach. She was walking on the beach with her small daughter, and died while protecting the little girl with her body.

A 13-year-old boy nicknamed Maguinho was accused of the murder. Like *Brasileirinho*, Maguinho became a symbol of child crime (JB 20.06.90). In fact, it was later revealed that the bullet that killed the engineer did not come from his gun. But at the time, the incident prompted calls for law and order, thus bringing the issue of child bandits back on to the agenda. Newspapers published letters from readers calling for the introduction of the death penalty and for the reduction of the age of criminal responsibility. These, in turn, pointed the finger at people who "defended bandits".

The coverage in *Jornal do Brasil* that following the crime reveals how a less closed sector of the press responded to the public controversy. It reflects the ambivalence present in the reporting of the issue, and it also shows that journalists were not simply neutral witnesses in the cross-fire. A significant element of this coverage is that it demonstrates that children's advocacy groups were starting to be used as sources to balance police definitions. To demonstrate this further, it is necessary to examine a few stories in some detail.

After the woman's death, the Military Police rounded up around fifty children who were wandering the streets of the area of whom eighteen were later returned to their families by the children's state welfare agency. On 17 November, *Jornal do Brasil* carried a large report on the issue. The main headline "Police arrests, FUNABEM releases: 18 minors detained by the Military Police will be back to the streets today", expressed the dominant anxiety about the presence of minors on the streets. Nonetheless, the initiating story was constructed with interviews by

representatives of the MNMMR (e.g. Volmer do Nascimento, Maria Tereza Moura and the new co-ordinator of the NGO in Rio, Regina Sento Sé) and the head of a unit of the official welfare agency for children. All of these criticized the police operation and the practice of rounding up children following a criminal event involving minors.

A second, subordinate story headed: "'Maguinho' is not an isolated case" drew on the issue of the involvement of minors with organized crime, drug trafficking and violence among themselves. It gave background information on other famous young bandits such as Brasileirinho and the girl who appeared in press pictures holding a pistol, whose stories had been "published by the main newspapers in the world". This, then, addressed the issue that concerned the general public.

The third accompanying story, however, reported on research with street children in Rio conducted by an American social worker. The research concluded that most of the children were workers and had families, and that their presence on the streets was only related to economic problems. He concluded that only a small minority were offenders. This provided the title: "Research: delinquents are a minority", which ran counter to the law and order campaign aimed to alleviate the public fear (JB 17.11.89).

The Rio-based national daily also reported on the slaughter of five youngsters, aged 16 and 18 in the *Parada de Lucas* slum, only 15 kilometres from the centre of Rio. The story ran on 16 December and made the headline of page 5 of the city news section. The crime had been committed in broad daylight and in the presence of several witnesses. The unsigned article highlighted the revolt and emotional distress of the families and neighbours of the victims, who attributed the murder to Military Policemen, although the killers were in plain clothes at the time and had their faces covered. It also stressed that, despite being informed about the incident, no civil or military policemen or forensic experts had arrived at the slum three hours later.

The paper quoted neighbours, who said that the youths were common people with no criminal record or involvement with gangs, and that the police would dismiss the crime as a gang fight or settling of scores. The item described the poor environment of the slum "where nearly 50 thousand people live in a climate of revolt

and terror". This was a recurrent theme in the story. Although police participation in the crime could not be assumed, their disregard for the fate of the slum dwellers was made evident, and the story related the crime to a previous murder of another youth killed in the same circumstances, which "the police had not even started to investigate". This item had the local inhabitants as its only sources.

However, in the follow-up coverage (JB 23.12.89) about the investigation of the slaughter, the newspaper investigated the other side of the story, probably as a result of pressure from the police and readers who accused them of unfairness. This time, police spokesmen were the sources, and the story carried their version of events. The slum was described as a very dangerous place and a police chief was quoted complaining that the press frequently accused policemen of belonging to extermination groups, and denying the charges.

Nonetheless, on the same day, the paper carried stories about police violence, not in Rio, but in São Paulo. One story was about a student killed because a policeman became angry about the noise he and his friends were making by riding their motorcycles in front of a school. Another story was about the police killing a 13-year-old boy "suspected of belonging to a gang of car thieves" during a raid in a slum. The family contested the police version and showed that the boy had no criminal record. The paper remarked that it was the third case in similar circumstances that had happened in São Paulo in the period (JB 23.11.89). On 28 November, the paper reported on the murder of another minor by the military police, also in São Paulo.

The coverage of police violence in newspapers such as *Jornal do Brasil* at the time shows the concern of this sector of the press with the issue, but also reveals that it was not a major concern for public opinion when it affected poor minors or bandits. The slaughter of five slum youths, although receiving a little more coverage in the news, was still limited to the crime page. In general, the occurrence satisfied news values criteria because of the number of youths killed and the circumstances of the killings. In this way, the piece was constructed as a crime human interest story, describing the incident in a dramatic light and giving voice to the slum dwellers. But in this case no connection was made to previous charges of the extermination of street children, and other sources in civil society offered no comment on the issue.

Even more significantly, it did not feed columns or editorial comments, and nor did it generate responses from authorities, with the exception of complaints from the police. The latter were given the last word in this specific case, although their claims could be discredited by other facts. Despite the growing violence against poor and even middle-class youths, and the children's rights campaigns, the dominant framework at the time remained the idea of minors and street children as a threat to society.

In the newspapers read by the lower classes, such as *O Povo*, in Rio or *Noticias Populares* in São Paulo, the minors' deaths were sensationalized and justified by their delinquent behaviour. Radio programmes with high audience ratings still called for tougher policing and even applauded summary executions. In addition to law and order crusades, editorial pressure on the press, and the violent action of the police in the slums and streets, some sectors tried to intimidate journalists, voluntary associations and street children in more direct ways. These were to come to public attention in stories and a book published by the influential political columnist Gilberto Dimenstein, sponsored by UNICEF and ABRINQ (an association of progressive toy manufacturers).

4.8 Marked to die

On 18 March 1990, Dimenstein's report on the murder of children was published by the largest selling paper in São Paulo, *Folha de São Paulo*, which had a circulation of 517.000 issues. The six page special report, with large photographs, was the cover story of a special supplement in a Sunday edition of the newspaper. The report was headlined "Marked to die", with the subheader: "Daily, minors are persecuted, tortured and killed in the country. There are more murders of children here than in Lebanon with the civil war".

The IBASE/MNMMR survey on violent deaths of children and adolescents that was released in September did not present data from at least two important cities where the problem was also acute: São Paulo and Salvador. Thus, Dimenstein proposed to travel to different regions of the country to investigate the issue. The

ensuing story summarized the findings, which were to be reported in a book to be launched the next month. The figures collected indicated that the situation was more serious than the previous survey had suggested. Now the journalist claimed that the estimated national average pointed to one child murdered by extermination groups every day during 1989.

One of the matters revealed by the report was that members of human rights and children's defence groups, such as the Rio co-ordinator of the MNMMR, were facing death threats. In fact, the campaigns against the killing of street children conducted by the Catholic Church or human rights organizations had angered supporters of death squads from the start. Intimidation and murders of witnesses were followed by kidnapping and death threats aimed at people who denounced the violence. A few journalists investigating the activities of death squads in some states were killed, or had to go into exile. The same happened to people who defended the street children.

For instance, in March 1989, the President of the Pernambuco Justice and Peace Commission, who demanded investigations into death squad murders, was kidnapped and tortured. In the same state, a radio presenter who called for investigations into the activities of the squads three months later was also kidnapped and received threats. In July, Dom Mauro Morelli, the Bishop of Duque de Caxias in Rio, received death threats after he denounced police involvement in "extermination groups" (Amnesty International, 1990b). Volmer do Nascimento, who worked in the Minors' Pastoral with the bishop was also intimidated by police officers. The participation of policemen in death squads in some states was so serious that on one occasion the governor of Amazonas disbanded the entire civil police force in the wake of evidence of substantial civil police involvement in death squads in the capital (Amnesty International, 1990b).

Dimenstein's article quoted a jurist who had investigated death squads in the 1970s, the Secretary of Justice of the State of Pernambuco, and members of children's advocacy groups. Volmer do Nascimento of the MNMMR featured prominently in the story, and was said to be the first to investigate the killings. He was shown in a large picture posing in front of a board with the names of boys and girls murdered from January 1987 to September 1988. The same picture, and

Nascimento's work in general, were later to be given more prominence by Amnesty International.

Also featured in the story were the main characters of the plot: street boys and girls. The 13- year- old boy whose story opened the report was described as a member of a gang of boys who committed petty thefts in stores. He was hiding from extermination groups, who persecuted real or suspected offenders. The report concluded that these groups were not specialized in the killing of street children. It related the increase in the deaths of minors to the growth of juvenile crime, caused by the inability of the state to maintain these children in schools or provide them with a minimum wage, which resulted in a life on the streets, theft and recruitment by drug-dealers. The report explained that the circuit of violence to which they were exposed, at the hands of police and inside the official institutions, alongside the contact with delinquents, enhanced their chances of turning into dangerous offenders.

The report did not challenge some dominant views about the murders of street children, but highlighted the issue of violence against them as a serious social problem to be examined as well as the violence committed by them. As demonstrated, it also called attention to the risk to which journalists, jurists and leaders of the street children's movement were exposed - a topic more likely to interest part of their politicized middle-class readership, and also international human rights organizations. The journalist expected that the issue would be newsworthy enough to attract foreign newspapers (personal interview with Dimenstein May 1994).

4.9 Key players on the battlefield

In March 1990, the clashes between law and order sectors and children's defence groups in Rio reached critical levels. The children's magistrate, Liborni Siqueira, determined the detention by the police of "abandoned and marginalized" children and their internment in the state institutions for minors - a measure strictly prohibited in the proposed Statute. In the Act, (published on 8 March and to be

enforced from the beginning of April), he argued that it was time to "stop the paternalism and political philanthropy" that used misery as an ideological motive aimed at discrediting the institutions and denigrating the authorities (JB 01.04.90). The magistrate had the support of the former Rio Juveniles' Court Judge, Alyrio Cavallieri - an eminent jurist and the vice-president of the World Association of Children's Magistrates.

On 25 March, *Jornal do Brasil* also gave heed to the complaints of shop owners in a Rio square, where petty thefts and burglaries were very frequent. It is worth looking at this coverage to see how the paper was responding to the increased public outrage against street children at the time. The stories illustrate the division between the sectors most concerned with offences committed by minors, and the ones who were more worried by the violence committed against them. As mentioned above, this sometimes resulted in a tense relationship between some journalists and the police. Hence, in *Jornal do Brasil*, a whole page was dedicated to the problems of the square. Policemen, shopkeepers and a shop security guard were the only sources for the main story. They protested that the street children were their worst problem. The headline ran accordingly: "Street children and street vendors bring violence to Saenz Pena".

Nonetheless, this page also carried a report about the case of a 12-year old street boy found in the tunnel of the underground, seriously injured. There were suspicions that he had been thrown there. Below the story, a signed article by Denise Assis, the reporter in charge of the investigation of the boy's accident, remarked that the boy was not the only victim of violence in the area. She reported that, when she arrived, a group of policemen were humiliating a youth and chopping off his hair. Revolted by the scene, she had contacted their superior, who promised that they would be punished. She narrated her argument with the officers who asked what was the reason for her hatred, and threatened her lest she should publish the story. A few days later, *Jornal do Brasil* (03.04.90) carried an op-ed article by the head of a unit of an important public hospital in Rio, who commented on this "brave report", and expressed his concern about the problems experienced by street children. This paediatrician later founded ABRAPIA, an NGO for the protection of children and adolescents.

At the end of the month, organizations in defence of street children and other human rights groups mobilized against the Act of the Minors' Judge, which determined the detention of minors found in the streets in a "state of abandon and marginalization". Twenty-five entities took legal action against the measure, which they regarded as unconstitutional. In the Legislative Assembly a deputy also protested, and sent an official request for information to the governor of the state. NGOs promoted a vigil in the centre of Rio to fight against the rounding up of the children.

Jornal do Brasil (01.04.90) dedicated a whole page to the issue, with two stories written by Tim Lopes, and a signed article by a political scientist engaged in the campaign for children's rights, Deodato Rivera. The main story described the anxiety of street children over the forthcoming measures, and the arguments and actions of groups against the act. Alongside representatives of children's advocacy groups, the deputy Heloneida Studart, who was a renowned feminist writer, was interviewed. The article was clearly in favour of the NGOs, but in order to balance the report, the journalist interviewed the vice-president of the World Association of Minors' Judges for a subordinate story, where he defended the measures and attacked the NGOs. The legal battle between the judges and the children's advocacy groups, (who entered habeas corpus) acting to free the children was also wired internationally by Reuters (05.04.90).

As these later stories reveal, sources for stories about violence against minors were not only street children's relatives, poor slum dwellers and voluntary associations for subordinate groups, radical Bishops or black priests in peripheral communities on the one hand, and police spokesmen on the other. More influential voices of deputies, doctors, and political columnists were also starting to resonate in the public sphere. The efforts initiated by children's advocacy groups and some radical politicians in closer contact with the peripheries were starting to produce the first, if still limited, results.

On 8 April, *Jornal do Brasil* publicized these results. In a large feature headlined "Rio has 200 inquests about extermination groups", written by Tim Lopes, the paper reported the previous and forthcoming stages of civil society's struggle to make the killing of children and adolescents a matter of public concern. The

precipitating event of the main story was a report detailing the results of the investigations of the Commission on Extermination Groups, which had been sent to the courts. The report was to have impact because it named 50 indicted members of extermination groups, including hired killers, drug dealers and military policemen. It reported that the leader of one of the most active extermination groups had been arrested, but that the leaders of other groups were still at large. The Commission had identified the killers of some of the children and adolescents in the NGOs' list produced two years ago, and according to the inspector in charge of the Commission, this proved that there were no specific groups to murder children, as those groups killed children and adults indiscriminately.

The inspector also mentioned that the majority of the crimes had taken place in the Baixada Fluminense. He concluded that, due to the precarious conditions of the area, violence had become a part of daily life. In that "primitive society", murders were accepted as normal by the inhabitants, and such a notion had been taken up by the local authorities. The Inspector's view was balanced by another item on the page, which contained statements by the councillor from the Communist Party, who had taken the matter to the Rio Council and handed the NGOs' dossier to the Head of the Civil Police in June 1989. She had requested information on the work of the Commission, and seemed to doubt some of the police conclusions.

As demonstrated, this newspaper had carried many stories about street children and had investigated killings of youths and police violence in its crime pages. It had made headlines of the violent deaths of minors and made IBASE's survey into national news, but it was the first major background feature run by the paper in the issue after that. But it did not report on Dimenstein's recent investigation, or campaigns by the MNMMR.

The article reported on some preliminary initiatives of NGOs designed to draw attention to the killings of minors. It cited the survey coordinated by ASSEAF and funded by the DCI in 1988. The source for the historical reconstruction was CEAP (Centre for Coordination of Marginalized Populations), linked to the black movement. This organization was headed by Ivanir dos Santos, the founder of ASSEAF. He had dissociated himself from the association of the former inmates of FUNABEM in early 1989 in order to launch this new organization (which had a

more politically active profile than the former entity), with the aim of establishing international links with other human rights organizations (Ivanir dos Santos and Ele Semog, personal interviews, 1994). The feature also announced the next steps in the organization's campaign, including the forthcoming launch of a report produced by CEAP entitled *Extermination of Children and Adolescents*. It further stated the organization's intention to send a petition to the constitution of a Congressional Commission of Inquiry asking them to investigate the crimes, supported by the deputy Benedita da Silva (PT).

Da Silva was the first black woman to be elected to the Chamber of Deputies in recent Brazilian history. A member of the Workers' Party, and herself a former street child, her election provoked even foreign press comment (NYT 19.02.87). She also became a subject for all the major foreign papers when she lost the election for Governor of Rio de Janeiro State by a narrow margin in 1990. She was to become an important player in the campaign against the extermination of children, and was linked to CEAP. The journalist Tim Lopes also became an important actor in the campaign, and too joined the CEAP.

The second story on this page was headlined: "UN surveyed the death of minors in 16 states ". It provided a table with the "sad statistics", combining data produced by the Civil Police with other figures on the problem (particularly IBASE's survey). The story was positioned below a large picture of a small child sleeping on the pavement, accompanied by the following caption: "The innocence of the street children is only revealed when they are sleeping. Awake, they use aggressiveness to survive". It must be explained that it is not always clear whether the pictures, titles, captions and sometimes leads selected for these stories are chosen by the journalists who write them. Usually they are not. The headlines, in particular, are chosen by editors, who are more concerned with the newspaper's editorial line and readers' interests. However, special reporters and feature-writers sometimes intervene in their selection.

This feature started by reflecting ambivalent ideas about the matter, mixing the two themes of street children as aggressors - that is, a threat to society - and street children as victims of society. The problem of the "army" of boys and girls who wandered the streets was described as a war in which there were many casualties

caused not only by hunger and misery, but also by aggression and bullets. But the journalist concluded that the children, who aroused both pity and fear, used violence in order to survive on account of their hunger. As I have argued above, this notion of strategies of survival was part of the counter-discourse of the NGOs, and was aimed at contextualizing their attitudes. Lopes further stated that the children's behaviour did not justify the indiscriminate violence to which they were subjected, thus contesting the common sense view that accepted their deaths as a natural consequence of their crimes.

Reinforcing the writer's position, a priest linked to the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Nova Iguaçu in Baixada Fluminense was also quoted. He contested the prevailing view held by most of the press and society at large, that the bodies found always belonged to deserving bandits. The priest lamented that even at grass-roots level (as expressed in discussions in the Ecclesiastic Base Communities), the belief was that if the youths died it was because they had 'a debt to pay'. The journalist also quoted the Priest saying that the street boys and girls had "the prophetic mission to be thorns in our bourgeois conscience".

The third item on this page was a box headed: "The tragedy that is routine in the streets". This was an emotional account of the life and death of a street boy, who was shot dead days before his birthday "without ever having received a birthday present". The boy was described as a calm child, who knew that he was following the wrong path but had no will to stop. The social worker who assisted him in an open house run by the Church justified his behaviour and that of other children on the streets by saying that they committed thefts and robberies to fulfil their dreams of having what children from upper classes received without any effort. The journalist seemed to agree with his source's explanation - that misery, lack of schooling, supporting families and solidarity were the reasons for their violent lives.

An important aspect of this small item is that, in this case, the killing of a petty thief was not reported as a crime story, and the sources were not police spokesmen. Deviating from the dominant definition, it offered a completely different framework through which to examine the murders of street children, which were mostly reported as police news. First, it tried to capture the reader's emotion; then it

presented the incident as a social problem. This was a deliberate journalistic strategy pursued by Tim Lopes (Personal interview).

The *Jornal do Brasil* story also shows that the struggle of groups who opposed the dominant definitions of killings of street children were occupying more space in the national press, at least in liberal newspapers. Nonetheless, the debate on the 'problem of the minor' was still dominated by public outcries, and the louder voices of eminent jurists, businessmen, conservative politicians, and media outlets, who highlighted the violence committed by these youths. This was particularly the case when these could be related to international campaigns against violence and drug-trafficking, promoted by foreign presidents and amplified by the vested interests of the police or the concerns of conservative pundits.

In April, the violence against the street children in Rio previously investigated with the support of the DCI, and now also with UNICEF funding, started to appear as a concern for another influential international human rights organization. . On 7 April, a day before Tim Lopes's feature, *Jornal do Brasil* ran a small news report entitled "Abandoned in the sight of Amnesty". The source of the story was the local co-ordinator of the MNMMR in Rio, Tiana Sento Se, who stated that they had been visited by a representative of Amnesty International, Tricia Feeney - who had come to Rio to gather information about abandoned minors.

The Amnesty official met the Secretary of the Civil Police and members of the Human Rights Commission of the local chapter of the Brazilian Bar Association. It was also reported that, on the occasion of the visit, the MNMMR co-ordinator had handed Amnesty's representative a dossier about the killing of minors in 1987 and 1988.

Amnesty's interest in the issue indicates that the national NGOs' efforts to interest more legitimate actors in the international public sphere in their campaign was starting to produce results. The reception and positive repercussions of the international human rights campaign is related to a certain extent to the new climate in the country and also to a change in the federal government.

4.10 A President looking at the First World in the sight of Amnesty

In March 1990, Collor de Melo took office as President of Brazil. He was the first civilian president directly elected in 30 years. Most of the media defended his neo-liberal program, and his victory was very much the result of a media campaign (Lattman-Weltman, Carneiro & Ramos, 1994). Collor defeated the candidate of the Workers' Party in the second round of the election in December. His victory was considered by the progressive sectors to be a setback in the process of redemocratization, which had gained momentum with the 1988 Constitution. Nevertheless, he had claimed to be the president of the *descamisados* (shirtless), and as the *Guardian's* correspondent observed, he was very concerned with his international image and with gesture politics (Rocha, 1991).

From the start, the President showed he was also concerned about Brazil's image abroad, which was scarred by issues of violence. He even considered creating a news agency with state funding, and determined that the material produced by the official broadcasting agency should be sent to all foreign correspondents in Brazil (OE 06.04.90).

As I have already mentioned, since the presidential campaign in 1989, the prospect of the killing of children in Brazil becoming an international issue had been already put to the fore. Moreover, the World Summit on the Child that had been scheduled for September 1990 guaranteed an international forum and stage for proposals and indictments concerned with children. Domestic and foreign NGOs and intergovernmental agencies such as the MNMMR, Amnesty International and UNICEF, as well as the Brazilian government, were well aware of that.

The President had been under pressure from both sectors concerning the public controversy about minors and violence. A document produced by members of the Superior War School (ESG), which foresaw a terrible future if the street children were not deterred, was discussed in the headquarters of his campaign. On the other hand, the President promised the sectors in defence of children's rights that he would review the National Child Welfare Policy and support the approval of the Statute.

On 12 April, Collor extinguished the much-criticized National foundation for Child Welfare (FUNBEM) and replaced it by another agency - the CBIA. In her

speech, the newly appointed head of the new Children's Welfare Foundation declared that they had endorsed UNICEF's policies for improving the reformatories, and that the abandoned minor was a government priority. In early March, a study by a government department (IPEA) in partnership with UNICEF revealed the existence of 30 million children and adolescents living in misery, and 16 million needy children (JB 14.03.90). According to data from 1987, 4.3 million children between 7 and 14 years old were out of school.

4.11 Amnesty: international publicity and transnational networks

The involvement of Amnesty International - one of the largest and most influential human rights organizations in the world - represented a turning point in the development of the campaign against the killing of street children (Serra, 1996), and later helped to place the issue on the international agenda. Its influence on the campaign for the Statute was also very significant, although in a rather indirect way.

Amnesty International's mandate is to protect, prevent and promote human rights, according to principles established in International Law and enforced by inter-governmental bodies such as the United Nations. Like other NGOs, the organization also helps to expand these rights by influencing policy and developing awareness of the issue. Campaigning against extra-judicial executions, the organization seeks to turn the spotlight on victims as well as authorities responsible for their predicament. Acting as a watchdog, Amnesty monitors violations of human rights and pressurizes governments to respect its principles.

The organization believes that public pressure resulting from an outrage in international public opinion is essential for improving human rights standards. To achieve this goal, the organization seeks to mobilize people worldwide to exert pressure over the authorities through delegations, letters of protest by ordinary people, the lobbying of relevant bodies and the staging of dramatic events. However, Amnesty knows that the effectiveness of each of these measures increases according to the extent to which they are publicized via the media.

As seen, the attempt to gain support from international organizations such as Amnesty was an important step in the campaigning of the local NGOs, which were struggling to occupy the political arena. They knew Amnesty International had already been guaranteed a place as a public voice on the international stage. The influence of Amnesty as a political actor is five fold. First, the organization enjoys high status and also moral force, as it is seen to be independent of governments or political ideologies (Burnell, 1991). Second, it has sufficient organizational resources. The International Secretariat in London has around 300 paid staff and volunteers. The research and documentation departments gather information, check facts, indicate the best course of action, and distribute material and guidance for effective campaigning and fund-raising. Third, it has not only the necessary resources but also the skills to achieve publicity. The Department of Press and Publications regularly provides the international media with press releases, periodically feeds them with background documents, produces a monthly newsletter available on subscription and a country-by-country Annual Report, as well as films and several other materials such as posters and leaflets for raising funds. These also raise awareness, and are an important form of publicity. The organization also issues guidelines and advises sections and groups on how best to approach the national media and create publicity. These reveal professional expertise on public relations and news management techniques (See Amnesty International, 1992a, *esp. pp 78-80*, 1992b).

The fourth and fifth aspects are crucial for Amnesty's impact in the international public sphere. These are the organization's dual connection with the centre of the political system at a global level, legitimized by its transnational network links with local groups on the periphery, combined with different degrees of complexity, within national civil societies. Amnesty is allowed to make formal representations to inter-governmental bodies, and has permanent representation at the United Nations in New York and in Geneva, and at the European communities in Brussels. By the early 1990s, the organization was represented in most countries through its sections or individual members, supporters, subscribers and donors, totalling around a million people. Its activism spread through more than 6000 local groups. For this reason, Amnesty defines itself as "an international system of action

networks...[and] a global web of interwoven and overlapping channels of communications" (Amnesty International, 1992a: 45).

Through its internal structures, Amnesty uses traditional and new technologies to distribute and exchange information, and to organize swift action if necessary. The organization is also kept informed by a wide array of sources, comprising the relatives of victims, religious leaders and other local human rights groups, as well as concerned lawyers and other citizens. Among them, domestic journalists and British foreign correspondents who are members of the organization or supporters of its cause, collaborate with Amnesty by gathering, checking and relaying information for the International Secretariat in London. Alternative political publications and the mainstream media are invaluable sources for the organization, which scans newspapers to produce its reports, and can assess the repercussions of the problems in national society.

As shown above, the street children's movement handed the international organization the results of surveys on the murders of children and adolescents in April, and the organization was contacting police authorities in Rio on the issue of police brutality. Although Amnesty only really started to campaign against the extra-legal killings of youths from June 1990, the potential impact of Amnesty's revelations was one of President Collor's political calculations, and he lent political support to promote the campaign against the killings and facilitate the approval of the new statute in the Senate in April.

4.12 'War on Children' in the Hall of Congress

On 17 April, Gilberto Dimenstein's book *War on Children* was released. It was funded by UNICEF and ABRINQ, and narrated the "silent war of extermination being waged against young petty criminals", estimated to be responsible for the killing of one child a day in Brazil. The book featured street children and several people from the Catholic Church and children's defence groups in some states, as well as some authorities. It even cited people accused of belonging to deaths squads. Volmer do Nascimento was given prominence in the book, and the head of Public

Security in Rio, Helio Saboya, was quoted as admitting to a "process of extermination of young people" that involved the police. (In this same month the lawyer was ousted from the Secretary of Public Security in Rio.)

War on Children had a positive impact nationally and abroad. The first edition was sold out in a week and translations were commissioned in English, German and Italian. Besides generating features in the foreign press (see e.g. *The Times* 16.04.90; *GD* 21.04.90) the book was chosen as the basis for a forthcoming ABC documentary (JBR 25.04.90). A Brazilian film-maker, Sandra Werneck, also started contacting national and international charities and broadcasting companies to get funding for a documentary based on the book.

Dimenstein was also invited to contribute to television debates and received more support from his newspaper to continue writing on the issue. The book drew increased attention to the problem of international organizations such as Amnesty International. The Guardian correspondent, Jan Rocha, who wrote the introduction for the English edition, was also to become more involved with the problem. Dimenstein recalled that since the first meeting with UNICEF about the book, the need to sensitize international opinion makers was on the agenda. He felt that the killing of street children was a "big issue" likely to interest leading foreign newspapers. He believed that Amnesty's later intervention added credibility to his revelations (personal interview).

The *Guardian* story was headlined: "Police linked to process of exterminating children", and focused on the charges about brutal torture, murder and imprisonment of street children. Reproducing quotations from sources such as Volmer do Nascimento and the Secretary of Civil Police in Rio, taken from the book, it drew on the theme of the small impact of the issue on public opinion, despite one child being killed a day. Nevertheless, the story also reported on the launch of a foundation set up by entrepreneurs - ABRINQ - an association of toy manufacturers composed of liberal businessmen who opposed the leadership of the powerful Industry Federation of São Paulo. This was reported as a reaction of society coming from an "unexpected corner", as businessmen were accused of sponsoring the elimination of street children.

The success of the book made the subject of the killing of street children appear in the literary section of *Veja* - the largest selling weekly news magazine in Brazil, which still did not report on the issue. As the editor of the Brazilian news section acknowledged, they did not believe it interested their middle-class readership (Personal interview May 1994). On 16 May, the magazine reviewed Dimenstein's book, under the headline "Without a future". The book came seventh in the list of best selling non-fiction books that week.

The short article mentioned that the head of the Brasilia bureau of *Folha de São Paulo* had visited the main cities in Brazil gathering information for a "cruel report: the action of paramilitary groups against children and adolescents living a marginal life, as a sub product of social perversity." It also mentioned that exterminators who themselves claimed to be guardians of order, were engaged in a war in which one minor was killed a day.

On 24 April, the day before the voting of the Statute in the Senate, the deputy Benedita da Silva gave a speech announcing that she was going to request the installation of a CPI to investigate the extermination of children and adolescents. She called the attention of members of the lower house of Parliament to the figures of killings published in the report to the United Nations (based on the survey coordinated by ASSEAF with the support of the DCI), and also to the data collected by Dimenstein that was presented in the recently published book. In her speech, reproduced by a newspaper in the capital of the country, da Silva accused police forces and the Justice system of complicity with the killings. In her view, the death squads, which were formed by policemen, retired military officers, businessmen, security agents and drug traffickers, were encouraged by their belief in impunity. She also attacked the reaction of a society that regarded the daily murders as normal (JBR 25.04.90).

The following day, Dimenstein's book, "A Guerra dos Meninos (The War of the Boys)", translated into English as "War on Children", was launched in the Hall of Congress, with the presence of NGOs and representatives of the Collor government. Following the commotion provoked by the invasion of Congress in September 1989, the issue of the killing of street children had not been a subject for debate in Parliament. The children's defence groups had been debating the need to approve a

better legislation in the Press, and had also been lobbying deputies for several months. After the launch of the book, a few parliamentarians of the major parties made speeches on the issue.

The reception of Dimenstein's book and the initial sympathy of the new federal government concerned with its international image helped the campaign to approve the new Statute, in spite of the strong opposition by the Minors' Court Judges and other Law and Order groups. The Statute for the Child and Adolescent was passed in the Senate. On 25 April, *O Estado de São Paulo* welcomed the new bill.

The organizations in the street children's movement continued to promote other initiatives to guarantee the approval of the Statute in the Chamber of Deputies, and to call attention to the problem of the killing of street children. On 7 May, the report prepared by CEAP entitled "The Extermination of Children and Adolescents" was launched. It was later published in English, to facilitate its publicity abroad.

UNICEF had not funded the report, but the representative of the agency in Brazil attended the launch and lent support to the campaign. This was another demonstration that the intergovernmental organization was finally adopting the issue of the killings that had previously only been campaigned for by more radical groups. The "Don't kill our children" campaign organized by CEAP and the MNMMR was launched in other states with the presence of civil society organizations, including professional associations and groups from the black and women's movements, most closely linked to the Workers' Party.

The following day, the deputy Benedita da Silva commented on the campaign in the Chamber of Deputies and requested the transcription of CEAP's document in the annals of the Chamber. After this, the deputy Nelson Aguiar called for the approval of the Statute in the lower house of Parliament. A few days later, a representative of CEAP, Ele Semog, was invited for a hearing of the Special Commission for the Child and Adolescent in the Chamber of Deputies. The launch of the CEAP report also generated a formal meeting of the NGO with the Minister of Justice, Bernardo Cabral (MNMMR/IBASE/NEV-USP, 1991).

On 30 May, the Minister of Health was appointed as the first Minister of the Child. The Ministry was in fact an interministerial programme to implement public

policies for children, but it was given a lot of publicity. In a later reconstruction of the state measures for the 'extermination of children', it was said that the President gave heed to "the outcry of different segments of the national and international communities", and that he stated explicitly the political will to face this grave problem in a resolute manner: "We must say enough! ...We cannot become the Land of Pixote. Nothing in the world justifies the quiet acceptance of this shameful situation, which cannot and will not endure." (Guerra, 1991:17).

A national programme for needy children was also announced, and *Jornal do Brasil* reported favourably on the government's "daring" plan to "radically change the failed policy of interning needy minors" (JB 27.04.90 and 31.05.90). But *O Estado de São Paulo*, with its traditional mistrust of state spending on welfare, firmly criticized the government's project to invest a large sum for taking four million children off the streets (OE 11.07.90).

In mid 1990, the national mobilization of children's advocacy groups was starting to generate responses from the federal government at legislative and executive levels. However, the President's support for the children's cause was considered to be a façade by the NGOs, designed only to impress the international community because of the World Summit on the Child.

4.13 Street children and their Statute under heavy fire

As one newspaper reported (JBR 02.05.90), after the vote in the Senate, the new Code came under heavy fire from Minors' Judges and other sectors of the police, judiciary and society. These sectors opposed it, and the NGOs were worried that they could reverse the vote for the Statute bill in the forthcoming vote at the Lower House. Proposals to reduce the age of criminal responsibility were also in debate in Parliament.

On 30 April, just five days after the approval of the new Statute in the Senate, more slaughters of youths were committed. This time they were in Diadema, a poor industrial city in the São Paulo suburbs. First, gunmen in plain clothes shot and killed two brothers because the youths did not present labour cards. About an

hour later, four or five armed men, also in plain clothes, forced six youths to lie down on a nearby street corner and shot five of them dead, seriously injuring the other (Amnesty International, 1991). Representatives of children's advocacy groups protested and urged the government to take action to halt killing with impunity, and further called on the Chamber of Deputies to approve the Statute. They also demanded immediate measures to be taken by states and municipalities such as S.O.S Child phone lines to receive complaints of violence (Grajew , FSP 08.05.90). These murders had more repercussions and a police special unit was set up in São Paulo to combat crimes by justice makers.

The killings in Diadema, 23 in two weeks, and the creation of the group to hunt down *justiceiros*, were reported by *The Guardian* on 18 May. Jan Rocha interviewed the mother of some of the victims, who complained that her sons were not involved in crime, and also the Chief Inspector, who dismissed the existence of *justiceiros*. She also interviewed a local councillor who confirmed that the killers were hired by local traders and were accepted as a way to control crime, since the police could not arrest or kill minors. The killings in Diadema were reported to Amnesty International (1991).

Growing violence against minors, which in turn generated protests from the street children's movement, was also reported in other Brazilian states. In Pernambuco, it was reported that institutions defending street children also faced death threats from the extermination groups and attacks from certain sectors of society (JB 04.06.90; OE 14.6.90).

In Rio, there was growing pressure on the police from hotel owners who wanted to clear the streets of street children as news of violence in the city greatly affected tourism. To check the problem of the decline in the tourist trade and complaints that tourists were refusing to visit Rio because they had read so many stories about the issue, Jan Rocha, the *Guardian* correspondent based in São Paulo, travelled to the city. She got confirmation of the problem by interviewing travel agents. In her story, headed "Letter from Rio", the journalist also narrated her personal experience of being assaulted in the city. The story further publicized the problem of growing violence in Rio, including the murder of people found shot dead and decapitated (GD 23.05.90).

Killings by death squads or *justiceiros* in Rio and São Paulo were becoming so frequent that a documentary about the activities of these groups was presented on Brazilian television. On 3 June, the day before the documentary was broadcast, two youngsters were dragged from their homes and killed. According to Amnesty International, the dwellers believed that the deaths were related to interviews they gave to *TV Globo* reporters. They had talked about their work as lookouts for drug dealers in the slum (Amnesty International, 1990c: 4).

Also at the time, as part of the offensive against the Statute for the Child and Adolescent, the São Paulo Minors' Judge Wilson Barreira wrote articles to "alert the nation to the forthcoming disaster if the proposed law [is] approved, as it would result in the constitution of a new category of criminal - under 18 years old, professional delinquents stimulated by soft sentences...leading to total chaos and insecurity in an already defenceless and powerless Brazilian society" (OE 13.06.90). In line with the judge's warning, the theme of "bandit minors" was again to make headlines. This time the stories were motivated by the arrest of a 15-year-old boy, said to be the leader of a youth gang and responsible for at least five bank robberies in Rio. Press stories compared him to other famous young bandits such as *Brasileirinho* and *Maguinho* (see e.g. JB 20.06.90). It was in this climate that Amnesty International started to campaign against the killing of children in Brazil, and the Bill of the Statute for the Child and Adolescent was voted in the Chamber of Deputies. These developments form the basis for the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: THE INTERNATIONAL SCANDAL

5.1 Beyond the law

In June 1990, Amnesty International published a special report entitled *Beyond the Law: Torture and Extrajudicial Execution in Urban Brazil* (1990a). The focus of the report was police brutality, including torture and extrajudicial executions of the poor in particular, and the failure of authorities to take action in these cases. The document urged the government to stop these human rights violations. It also reproduced the results of the 1989 IBASE survey on the violent deaths of children and adolescents, and mentioned that many were destitute children, arbitrarily detained by the police. In the final pages, it also commented on the evidence for an increasing concern for human rights in Brazil over the last few decades, as shown in the activities of three hundred local groups, and the cases of lawyers, bishops, journalists and children advocates, who risked their lives to fight the extermination groups.

To support the launch of the report in Britain, *Channel 4* television screened a film by Judy Jackson, which showed the "inspirational struggle" of a woman fighting against police brutality in Rio. It featured Regina Gordilho, the middle-class housewife whose son was killed by the police and who was later elected for the city council and the Chamber of Deputies (see chapter three). This story was published by the *New York Times* in December 1988. The subsequent film was reviewed by *The Guardian* and the author of the documentary said that her aim was to challenge dominant views portraying women in Third World countries as powerless victims dependent on external help (GD 12.06.90).

To launch the document, Amnesty International staged a press conference in Brazil on 19 June, and distributed a three page international press release headlined "Police brutality in Brazil: Government urged to punish police torturers, killers." The main theme of the statement was police violence against the poor, and the reference to the murders of children by death squads came only in the seventh paragraph. Concerning the central idea of official violence, and especially torture and extra-legal killings of destitute people in Brazil, the themes in the Amnesty statement were:

increasing poverty and rising crime in Brazil; the mixed feelings of society towards extra-legal killings as a consequence of the former; and the impunity of the police and death squads as authorities failed to take action against their crimes and actually condoned the violence.

Amnesty's revelations were covered by national television and received front-page treatment in *Jornal do Brasil*, which was the only one of the national newspapers in the sample to give attention to Amnesty's charges. There was no mention of the murder of children in the Brazilian daily, which focused on police brutality against the poor, a theme the newspaper had itself helped to develop. Of the four international dailies researched, all published an item reporting on the charges, which included the participation of police officers in death squads. However, only *Le Monde*, which had previously given prominence to the slaughter of children by death squads, referred to the issue, this time in a small news report dispatched by the French news agency *AFP*.

The page one headline of *Jornal do Brasil* read: "Amnesty condemns violence against poor people". The inside story was printed as the main story on the national news page. But an important point to note is that the source for the story was not the press conference, which took place in São Paulo. The article was signed by the correspondent in Washington, Manoel Francisco Brito. He reported that the seventeen page report entitled *Beyond the law*, had been distributed in the US Congress the previous day.

The article's lead stressed that Amnesty was revealing to the rest of the world what Brazilians already knew or had experienced, if they were poor. Torture had not ended with the end of the military regime; rather, the perpetrators now were the civil and military police and the targets were common prisoners. The story quoted the report in the context of government responsibility, saying that tolerating such abuse was the same as making it official. And, as mentioned above, there was no reference to the killing of children in the piece.

Two days later, however, *Jornal do Brasil* carried an op-ed article by José Louzeiro, the journalist who wrote the book that inspired Babenco's film *Pixote*, which also commented on the launch of *Beyond the Law* in the US. The article, entitled "Torture: never again?" takes issue with the fact that torture left the media

when the middle-class political prisoners left jail. It explained that Amnesty's report pictured not only the massacre of adults, but also of children, and further claimed that the reason for the bloodshed was the fact that the victims had no voice, and the police had no shame in attributing the killings to exchange of fire, so that the murders went unpunished. Thus, the writer welcomed the report, which he saw to be "giving voice to the people who have suffered the horrors of Brazilian jails, and to the children slaughtered." The story endorsed Amnesty's explanations for the violence, but also drew on more structural causes of the problem. It commented on the problem of a class-based justice system and on the failed public policies that forced children onto the streets. The columnist judged that the abandoned child was an effect, not the cause, of a social problem that was so large that society and the government had showed little political will to tackle it.

El País published a news report by William Waack from São Paulo entitled "Amnesty International accuses Brazilian police of torture and murder". The report stressed how unusual it was for the human rights organization to hold a press conference in the country accused. The topics selected emphasized police brutality and terror as a routine practice stimulated by impunity in Brazil, and the divergence between law and reality, given that the country was said to have one of the most modern Constitutions in the world, especially in the field of human rights. The main theme in the article was the government's failure to punish the crimes of extermination groups, due to corruption in the police and lack of state authority.

Another theme was social acceptance of the use of force by the police, considered a "necessary evil" by Brazilians because of high levels of criminality. The story by a Brazilian journalist in *El País* mentioned above placed the issue in the regional context, giving figures about justice makers in São Paulo, and emphasizing the race and social class of the victims, who were black and poor.

The Guardian carried a small news report signed by the paper's own correspondent, Jan Rocha, in São Paulo. The story opened with the same opposition between the advances in constitutional rights and lack of change in reality that was stressed in the Spanish paper, and developed the idea that torture was a routine part of Brazilian policing.

The story referred to the launch of the report in São Paulo, and quoted the vice-president of Amnesty saying that the victims of the death squads were usually poor and destitute, and that most were "suspected petty criminals" and many were "young". There was no reference to structural causes or direct criticism of the government in the short report, which stated that Amnesty blamed the situation on escalating crime, overcrowded prisons, and pressure on the police to show results. All these facts pointed to a criminal justice system in crisis.

The item in *Le Monde* on the following day entitled: "Brazil: Amnesty International denounces 'police brutality'", was a short dispatch from *AFP*. It summarized Amnesty's report charging the police of killing, torturing and mutilating common prisoners or those suspected of petty crimes, and of belonging to extermination groups. As mentioned, the French paper was the only one to refer to the killings of children, reporting that in São Paulo a third of the violent deaths of children were attributed to death squads.

The *New York Times* story by James Brooke, the paper's correspondent in Rio, was the longest in the international press, and carried the headline: "Brazil: Police accused of Torture and Killing in Rights Report". The subject of enduring police brutality directed at common suspects, summary executions in Brazil, and the participation of police officers in death squads even after the end of the military regime, was well known to the paper. Indeed, as far back as December 1987, the previous correspondent, Alan Riding, had commented on a long report on the issue by Americas Watch. Brooke's article also drew on public support for the killings due to "widespread fear of crime". The story reproduced Amnesty's call for the government to "dedicate the resources" that would "make the criminal justice system more humane". It was less critical of the authorities than the other stories mentioned above, and this paper alone gave voice to a spokesman from the federal government commenting on governmental policy. In contrast to *The Guardian*, *El País*, and *Jornal do Brasil*, the story did not look at the race or social background of the victims: it simply depicted them as criminal suspects.

It is interesting to observe that despite important differences in these reports, the themes highlighted were the usual negative ones of police brutality, corrupt and weak authorities, laws unimplemented, and powerless victims. In contrast, the

positive themes of Brazilian people's self-reliance, and the existence of human rights activism in the country, were given no attention, and were even replaced by the idea of social acceptance of the crimes within Brazilian society. But here it is also important to observe the immediate impact of this publicity on the political agenda.

5.2 International publicity and national policy-making

The indictments by the international human rights organization were repeated in the National Chamber, where a deputy made a speech commenting on the report on 19 June 1990. The repercussions of Amnesty's revelations also prompted reactions from the Brazilian president, who seemed receptive to the campaign. On 22 June, in a national televised speech, Collor promised that: "We cannot and will not be a country again cited as violent in reports by Amnesty International... We will not allow the new Brazil to accept any form of disrespect for human rights." (Amnesty International, 1991). He even invited the international human rights organization to come to Brazil to hand him their recommendations for resolving the problem personally.

In fact, the President welcomed Amnesty's revelations as a way of gaining international publicity for his government's concern over human rights issues. Nonetheless, Collor's acceptance of international criticism by Amnesty was not shared by other members of the government. Prior to the release of the Amnesty statement, the organization visited the Brazilian Ambassador in London, but he told them that there was no need for the organization to publish documents on the issue, as the situation was well known in Brazil. Despite Collor's invitation, the Minister of Justice treated the organization, and national NGOs, that visited him to condemn the killings, with indifference. He simply said that it was a problem for the states.

On 28 June, the Statute for the Child and Adolescent was approved in the Chamber, replacing the Minors' Code and the previous conception of assistance and repression for the idea of rights and citizenship. The Statute was passed in Congress "with the unanimous support of the leaders of all parties" (Swift, 1991). Deputies from different parties, including conservative ones, manifested their applause in

speeches. According to the head of UNICEF in Brazil, it was a "model for every country in the world" (Newsweek, 25.05.92).

The Bill incorporated principles of the International Convention on Children's Rights, but was also the result of a long process of debate between organizations in Brazilian civil society. The participation of these organizations in the process was guaranteed by the 1988 Constitution, but the Statute did not only secure the specific concerns of advocacy groups for street children, but further enhanced the constitutional opening for more participatory and associative forms of democracy. One important change was the decentralization and democratization of the policy-making process in the field. Government and non-governmental organizations at the federal, state and municipal level were to share responsibility in the enforcement of these rights, through the establishment of councils to formulate and monitor the policies and programmes.

The DCA Forum, which campaigned for the Bill, was mostly composed of organizations with a political profile that was further to the left than the majority of the Congress. The backing of UNICEF helped to broaden support for the campaign, presented as above political and ideological commitments. The support of the new President was obviously a crucial factor, and some deputies of parties supporting the government approved the Bill without a real understanding of its content. Later, they regretted this. As we have seen, the President was very much concerned with international publicity, and at that time children's rights were an important issue on the international agenda. Amnesty's recent interest in the matter demonstrated that the prospect of violence against children becoming an international issue, having already been exposed abroad by the NGOs, was a real possibility.

The new law not only made provision for securing basic rights for all children and adolescents, but also instituted tougher penalties for those who committed any kind of violence against them. It also strongly restricted the possibilities for internment or arrest of the needy and of offenders. In the final version of the Law 8.069 (see Ministério da Saude/Ministério da Criança, 1991) it was established that torture of children could lead to sentences of two to eight years imprisonment, and, if causing death, from fifteen to thirty years (Article 233). Its

final recommendations determined the modification of the Penal Code to increase the sentences in cases of homicide of children by one third (Article 263).

The new Code further stipulated that: "No child or adolescent shall be deprived of his/her freedom except in cases where there is evidence of *flagrante delicto*, or when there is a justified written warrant issued by the proper judicial authority (Article 106: 45). Failure to observe the legal formalities could result in imprisonment from six months to two years (Article 230).

With the new legislation, the role of the police and the courts was extremely restricted. The judges' rulings were subject to approval by a review body, and an adolescent accused of a serious offence was guaranteed the right to legal representation. In these cases, the maximum period of internment was three years, and alternative measures to internment were to be applied in the case of lighter offences. It was no surprise that these sectors strongly reacted against the Bill.

5.3 The efforts of law and order sectors fail

As has been shown, by mid 1990, the national mobilization of children's defence groups fighting against violence towards street children, and campaigning to change the legislation had increased. It had incorporated new key players, and the two campaigns had become increasingly mixed. The counter-mobilization of the sectors *against* the Statute had also increased. The Judiciary represented a very traditional institution in Brazil, with the power to review decisions of other authorities, but with no accountability. Minors' Courts strongly resisted any curtailment of their arbitrary power over minors. They counted on the support of businessmen's groups, powerful sectors of the police and the state reformatories; sectors in the press, and most of the general public, all of whom were more concerned with the violence committed by these youths, than the violence against them.

On the day Amnesty released the report on police violence in Brazil, the police fed the newspapers with stories about violence committed by youths. Adding to the police news, the magistrates' crusade and the pressure from shopkeepers, hard

line groups in the Army - another very powerful institution in the country - started to join the law and order campaign on their side. They sought to stimulate public anxiety and hostility against street children by circulating pamphlets. These contained extracts of a document, *Brazil Year 2001*, produced by a group of officers from the Superior War College in 1989. Foreseeing an apocalyptic scenario, the pamphlets predicted that, by the end of the century, the street children would be *marginais* and murderers, threatening social peace, and that the armed forces might have to be called in "to face this horde of bandits, neutralising them and even destroying them" if the police were unable to handle the problem (JBR 25.06.90; GD 07.09.90).

In the streets, and on the periphery, the police and death squads continued to act beyond the law, even meeting with the support of some judges involved with extermination groups.

The Statute for the Child and Adolescent provoked a serious division between central powers and some elite groups. However, in spite of strong opposition from the judges and other law and order groups, the Statute was sanctioned on 13 July, (one day after Amnesty International Annual report was published in the Brazilian Press), without veto from the President. He was more concerned with international public opinion.

5.4 Amnesty condemns state inefficiency: a theme for *O Estado*

The Amnesty Report (1990b) referred to the events of 1989, and still took the fate of peasants involved in land disputes and the torture of criminal suspects and prisoners as its main themes concerning the disrespect of human rights in Brazil. Death squad murders of suspected petty criminals and juvenile offenders, predominantly between the ages of 18 and 25 were briefly mentioned. On this occasion, *O Estado de São Paulo* (12.07.90) carried an interview with the vice-president of Amnesty International in Brazil. It is interesting to examine how the conservative newspaper was reacting to revelations of slaughters of poor children and adolescents, how the issue was represented at the time, and the similarities and

differences between the editorial policy of the paper and the human rights groups' framing of the problem.

On 22 May, after a series of slaughters on the periphery of São Paulo, *O Estado de São Paulo* had addressed the issue of the killing of minors in an editorial headlined: "The appeal to the *justiceiros* and the failure of the State." The precipitating event was the recent slaughter of five youngsters in Embu, which, the paper claimed, had hardly been noticed, in contrast to the slaughter of Diadema, which had gained an "unprecedented coverage in the news".

The article acknowledged that after months of deaths of minors that had received neither punishment nor even proper investigation (since the killings were regarded as just, and neighbours were afraid of exposing the killers), the prominence of the slaughter in Diadema should be attributed to the fact that the youngsters had no criminal record, while in the Embu case two of them had previously offended. The paper then complained that extra-judicial executions of delinquents did not have the same repercussions as a mistake that victimized innocents.

The coverage in the paper at the time suggests that what motivated the editorial was more a concern with the repercussions of the killings of minors, which were also publicized abroad, than with the crimes themselves, which were not reported by the paper. The subject was also taken up by the newspaper as a means of criticizing the administration of the state at a time when the electoral season was approaching, and of expressing its general ideological views against statism, and law and order concerns with crime growth. The editorial alerted its readers to the fact that the rate of homicides had risen 26% between 1984 and 1988, whereas the population growth was only 15% in the same period. Then it suggested that the killings of minors were the result of high levels of criminality combined with little legal punishment. An important aspect of this editorial is that despite the reference to the fact that crimes against minors went unpunished, the theme of impunity as an explanation for the killings, was mostly framed in terms of the crimes committed by minors, which themselves provided the justification for their murder. This contrasted with the interpretation proposed by local human rights groups. The final conclusion of the editorial was that it was the inefficiency of the police and the omission of the State, which led the people to choose barbarism.

On 18 July, commenting on reports estimating that at least one third of the murders of children and adolescents were committed by death squads, as well as the incidence of 45 violent deaths in the state during the week-end (data collected by IBASE), the newspaper again issued a long editorial commenting on the rise of violence in the state and the actions of the "justiceiros". *O Estado* acknowledged the existence of groups specialized in murdering "minors", and again criticized accounts of the massacre of five adolescents in Diadema by justice makers, which expressed regret simply because the victims did not have criminal records. The paper viewed this as evidence of an implicit acceptance of private justice in the case of criminals.

O Estado de São Paulo stated that, in the last forty five days, the police had registered thirty seven deaths by hired killers. But it is worth noting that the newspaper had not reported on these deaths. The main explanatory theme adopted by the paper was the failure of state power, evidenced by social acceptance of private justice on the one hand, and the impunity of the crimes on the other.

The editorial read: "Impunity destroys the rest of the moral values and enables the disruption of the civilized order." Diverging again from the perspective of human rights organizations, who claimed that failure to punish the crimes of extermination groups was the cause of the problem, the newspaper was here referring to the crimes committed by minors as a way of explaining their deaths. The moral crisis, the crisis of authority and the consequent disruption of the social order emerged as preferred themes when the paper attempted to account for the rise in criminality.

In this same edition, an article signed by journalist and University lecturer Juarez Bahia, also discusses the issue, and draws attention to impunity, corruption, private justice, and the crisis of the State. But here the themes are placed in a wider framework, highlighting the "noxious residues" of authoritarianism and the social conditions of the minors and their deprived communities, who are forced to live with organized crime. The author calls for better standards of education, health, employment and housing.

The editorial voice of the paper welcomed the report by the human rights organization criticizing the failures and corruption of the authorities, since it coincided with its declared banner to defend free enterprise, support liberal

democracy and prevent state control of the economy and social life (see interview with the proprietor and publisher in Mattiussi, 1988), as well as to defend law and order. This can be further confirmed by a series of editorials which suggest a deliberate campaign: "Weapons and drugs in Brasilia: crisis of authority"(OE 08.07.90); "Crime: there is no State in Rio any longer"; "The crisis of the police arrives in São Paulo" (OE 18.07.90) and "Certificate of 'administrative inefficiency'" (OE 01.09.90, commenting on recent slaughters). Amnesty's report also presented the victims as offenders - a viewpoint that coincided with the paper's views, although the paper diverged in its definition of the theme of impunity. *O Estado* also complained of the newsworthiness of slaughters when the victims were innocent, which, as we shall see, was to become the framework for the organization's campaign for this very reason. This also was how the Brazilian NGOs had already begun to frame their campaign.

5.5 Don't kill our children

Following the approval of the Statute by the Chamber of Deputies, the street children's movement helped to intensify national and international mobilization towards change. The movement wanted to secure the implementation of the new structures that were to be put into operation when the new law come into force three months later. In São Paulo, the Minors' Pastoral and other NGOs organized a march of five thousand children to celebrate the approval of the Statute, and to call for its enforcement. The successful legislative campaign, which came in the wake of favourable statements from the President and international condemnation of the killing of street children, seemed to suggest that the social movement was winning the definitional struggle against those sectors opposing the reforms and those still concerned about the street children as a threat to society.

The national dailies gave favourable coverage to the approval of the new law in this period. The conservative paper *O Estado de São Paulo* reported on the mobilization of the NGOs, favourably covering the march and giving a voice to representatives of the MNMMR, ABRINQ and even its traditional enemy - the

Minors' Pastoral of the Catholic Church (see also JB 01.08.90). *Jornal do Brasil* carried an interview with the radical Bishop of the diocese in the *Baixada Fluminense*, Dom Mauro Morelli, who was one of the first to denounce the killings (JB 21.08.90).

Jurists and other professionals in favour of the Statute law wrote lengthy articles explaining the changes it brought, which received space in the press (e.g. Cury, OE 22.07.90 & 26.09.90; Saturnio, 15.08.90; Silva, OE 22.08.90; Gomide, OE 22.08.90; Melo Junior, OE 05.09.90). Members of NGOs were also invited to comment on the new law (JB 20.08.90). Some journalists, even in the conservative press, wrote long features welcoming the new law (e.g. OE 14.10.90). In addition, professionals in the fields of law, health and psychology were sensitized to the issue and created voluntary associations to provide free assistance and legal representation for street children. The associations became important political advocates in the public sphere. Examples of NGOs set up in this period were ABRAPIA, in Rio (see JB 20.07.90) and CEDECA linked to the FORUM DCA in Bahia. The killings, however, had not stopped. In July, for instance, a shop owner killed a youth with an iron bar and set fire to his body. On 2 August, CEAP organized a public demonstration to protest against the disappearance of eleven youngsters in an Acari slum, inviting the international press. Also in August, in its sixth Assembly, the MNMMR elected the struggle against extermination as one of the main priorities and approved a motion repudiating the killings and demanding measures that was sent to CBIA, the Ministry of Justice, and to the President of the Republic. Again, a highly dramatic protest was staged.

The subject of the killing of children was also the main issue at the national meeting of the CESE in Salvador at the end of the month, in which twenty seven organizations participated, including five evangelical churches and the Catholic Church. The participants claimed that Collor was taking political advantages from his approval of the Statute which came about as a result of the United Nations Summit on the Child, as a means of changing Brazil's image and influencing debt negotiations. They warned that changing the legislation would not be enough to change the reality of the children. The meeting called for further mobilization to guarantee the implementation of the Statute and also for structural changes such as

agrarian reform and changes in education, housing, and other basic rights policies. In September, the campaign "Don't kill our children" was launched in several states. It was promoted by a pool of NGOs including CESE, FASE, GAJOP, NEPI, CEDI, CEAP and the Minors' Pastoral, with UNICEF support.

The issue of violence against children and adolescents was also on the governmental agenda. In August, the Ministries of Justice and Social Action promoted a national seminar to discuss infancy and adolescence, including human rights and violence. At the opening of the meeting, Collor said that he was leading a personal crusade regarding violence against minors, which provoked a commentary from the UNICEF representative in Brazil, who considered this a historic moment of government recognition of such issues.

Collor stated that he was open to charges and criticism from national or international organizations such as Amnesty International, or individuals, but that he expected constructive criticism and not electoral or promotional banners (FSP 23.08.90). In the same month, the vice-president of Amnesty met President Collor to discuss the organization's report. Collor asked for their assistance and promised to study Amnesty's recommendations. He said he did not consider AI's work to be an interference in Brazil's internal affairs (Amnesty International, 1991).

However, a few days later, Amnesty International issued another international press release, embargoed for 6 September, which stressed that the killings were increasing and that the authorities had failed to take action. The issue was also the subject of Amnesty's September newsletter. The reports publicized the preliminary findings of a survey jointly prepared by IBASE, MNMMR and NEV-USP on the killings of children in 1989, drawing on 457 cases of violent deaths of children and adolescents in Brazil in three cities: Rio, São Paulo and Recife. The findings indicated that at least one child was killed a day in these cities. This time, Amnesty's statement highlighted the killings of children and was part of a strategically planned campaign.

5.6 Vulnerable children and cruel authorities

The press published an interview with an Amnesty International official by a Brazilian correspondent in London. She said that this specific statement about children was the second stage of the campaign against violation of human rights in Brazil, begun in June with the document "Torture and Extrajudicial Executions". The third phase would be continuing international pressure. In a signed article, Dimenstein further explained that Amnesty was convinced that without co-ordinated pressure from abroad, human rights campaigns in Brazil would have little chance of demanding the end of the killing, maltreatment and torture of children from state and federal governments (FSP 06.09.90).

Amnesty International's news release was headlined: "Children tortured and killed in Brazil". The lead proclaimed that "hundreds of children" in Brazil had been gunned down by death squads, and many more had been beaten and tortured by on-duty police. And it stressed that violence was continuing. As in the previous statement, widespread police violence and corruption, plus the failure of authorities to take action, were the main topics. The slowness of justice was also stressed.

An important aspect of this campaign was that the street children killed were no longer presented as criminals. The 'strategies of survival' frame was adopted, and they were portrayed as vulnerable victims "forced onto the streets to help support their families or fend for themselves". The only villains were the police, who were members of the death squads, and also the authorities who "failed to take action" and who "treated the children with contempt".

The statement also drew on the promises of action made by the Brazilian government as a result of Amnesty's pressure, and followed the recommendations made by the organization which included the setting up of a register of all violent deaths related to death squads or police officers, federal supervision of all investigations into such killings and adequate protection for victims and witnesses.

The newsworthiness of the 'innocent victims' and 'anti-authority' frameworks (Wolsfeld, 1997) pursued by the campaigners proved to be effective. The charges received front-page attention in the national dailies, and were reproduced in the international press. It is important to note that the issue was still not taken up by the

Brazilian weeklies, but gained coverage in their American counterparts, such as *Time* and *Newsweek*.

It is revealing to compare how the different papers absorbed Amnesty's statement: either by stressing, playing down or omitting selected topics and themes present in the release, and the relative importance initially given to it. Also, it is important to assess whether the framing of the issue which granted it access to the press also allowed the message to be communicated in the desired way.

On the day designated for publication, the *O Estado de São Paulo's* headline read: "Amnesty says that one minor is killed a day". As in the release, the perpetrators of the killings (police and death squads) are not mentioned in the title, and here the actor in the story is Amnesty, and the newsworthy event is Amnesty's statement in London. In the title, the paper uses the term minor (which implies the negative connotation already discussed), thereby dissociating the story from the idea of children. The text nonetheless reproduces the definition given by Amnesty by focusing not on the criminal behaviour of the children, but their status as low income Brazilians, vulnerable because they are forced to live and work on the streets. It also mentions that IBASE's study states that the majority of the victims have no criminal record.

The other topic selected refers to the previous meeting of the international human rights organization and the President's unfulfilled promise to take measures. The article closes with one of the quotations provided in the press release, stating that Brazilian children are treated with contempt by the authorities, who violate their rights instead of safeguarding them. The paper, however, is careful to relate such statements to Amnesty. The issue of the crisis of the justice system is not pursued.

Amnesty's statement receives much more attention in *Jornal do Brasil*. From the title, it also gets a different placement, treatment and framing. Although in both papers it is given front page attention, the coverage in the São Paulo daily consists of just a brief reference on the front page to the five paragraph story in the crime news page, while the Rio daily gives a short summary item on page one at the top right, followed by a longer article, the headline of page 5, Brazilian news. While the *O Estado de São Paulo* piece is simply a selection of extracts of Amnesty's news

release, the report in *Jornal do Brasil* is a rewriting of the Amnesty statement, supplemented by background information.

The headline: "Amnesty denounces extermination of youngsters in Brazil" also places the international human rights organization as the main actor, and the charge as the event reported, but the selection of terms gives much clearer information about the subject - "extermination". Instead of children or the pejorative term minor, the term youngsters is chosen - a word that more accurately portrays the real subjects than Amnesty's formulation. The lead focus is the fact that "Brazil became again the subject of a tragic report by Amnesty International", stressing that the study was dispatched to all the papers in the world. Below, the article observes that it is the second time in less than three months that Amnesty has denounced violations of human rights in Brazil. The item in *Jornal do Brasil* covered all the main topics in the release, and all the significant quotations. Although Amnesty is always said to be the source of the charges, the paper lends support by reporting that in preparing the report the organization had interviewed relatives of the victims, people in the police, militant members of social movements and the church. It also reproduced statements by street children they had interviewed.

In contrast to the item in *O Estado*, *Jornal do Brasil's* story highlights police violence, and gives details of the cases of torture and police corruption, as well as criticising the justice system - themes that are absent in *O Estado's* article. It paints a much darker picture than the São Paulo daily, and reproduces the idea present in the Amnesty report of the context of continuing and increasing violence against children and youths. The theme of selective police violence against needy minors is stressed, as well as the fact that the victims have no criminal record. Of all the newspapers, *Jornal do Brasil* alone cites the recommendations proposed by Amnesty as the first step towards solving the problem.

In a separate story *Jornal do Brasil* interviews members of IBASE, Amnesty's source, who state that at least one child is killed a day. The researcher reports that the full results of the survey would be announced by the end of the month. Herbert de Souza, the head of IBASE, is quoted as saying that the report is a tragic indicator of how Brazilian society treats its equals, and that an international jury should judge crimes like these. The international dailies take up Amnesty's way

of presenting the murdered youths as poor children who are forced onto the streets, but most replace the term children in the title. *The Guardian* further explains that they are killed because "in the eyes of civil and military police officers, they are suspected criminals" (GD 07.09.90).

On the day of the release, the *New York Times* published a dispatch by Reuters. The report was a transcription of Reuters' copy, with minor editing. The only significant difference was in the title. While Reuters mentioned "hundreds of children tortured and killed in Brazil", the American daily was headlined "Killing of Brazil Youths reported". The news agency piece was itself a summary of Amnesty's news release. As in the release, the victims were conceived as workers who supported their families. IBASE's survey of 457 children killed in three cities, most with no criminal record was mentioned, as well as cases that showed the police beating, torturing, and gunning them down for futile motives.

Amnesty's quotation criticizing the government for treating children with contempt was also reproduced. The only omission was the reference to the international organization's previous contacts with the Brazilian government, and the acceptance of the organization's recommendations. The *New York Times* would only publish a feature by its own correspondent in the issue in November.

On 7 September, *Le Monde* published a small news report with the title "Amnesty International denounces the slaughters of children in Brazil". The *AP* copy in the French paper was a short summary of the release, denouncing the slaughters. The lead quotes the opening of Amnesty's news release that speaks of hundreds of children being killed by death squads and tortured by police officers in Brazil. It reproduces the idea that the killings are increasing and mostly affect poor children. The estimate that one child a day is killed by death squads is rightly attributed to a Brazilian human rights organization.

Only the British daily carried a feature written by the paper's own correspondent, Jan Rocha, on the following day (GD 07.09.90). The story linked the killings to previous explanations of Brazil's troubles. The main themes were, again, extreme inequality in income distribution in Brazil, and wrongful development policies applied by successive governments, as indicated by a World Bank report. The economic policy of the Collor government, which was bringing recession and

unemployment, was also considered. The solution for the problem was then related to a radical change in income distribution. Rocha's report also mentioned the document by the right-wing think-tank of the Brazilian Superior War College, criticized by Brazilian journalists since the piece was also based on other sources besides the release, including Amnesty's September newsletter and the Brazilian press. The frame highlighted was mistrust of the Brazilian authorities, who made promises but did not act, although some of the measures taken by the Brazilian government were outlined in the article.

Nonetheless, in a column about television programmes in the same paper, Nigel Fountain commented that the news that most chilled him in the period were the reports by *The Guardian* that homeless children were being tortured and killed by death squads, often led by police officers. But in this account the problems of street children exposed by Amnesty were also related to the impositions of the International Monetary Fund and the burden of foreign debt in developing countries (GD 14.09.90).

5.7 Crisis consciousness and crisis of consciences

Following the exposés, both *Jornal do Brasil* and *O Estado de São Paulo* ran reports showing that the President demanded rigorous investigation of the indictments, and carried statements from the Minister of Justice, who claimed to be "appalled" by the report. Before the publicity of Amnesty's charges in the foreign press, ministers had refused to take any action on the problem, arguing that this was a problem for state governments, as the police forces involved were under their control.

After the publication of Amnesty's release, the President called for full federal investigations, and the Minister of Justice promised to contact IBASE and the state governors. Bernardo Cabral explained that violence against children was a problem restricted to the actions of state governments, but that the international repercussions affected federal government. They therefore wanted to help the states to stop such "unspeakable violence". The minister also promised to promote a

meeting of the National Human Rights Council (CDDPH) to draw up a strategy to protect the lives of children.

In the foreign press, it was initially only *El País*, which had not reported on Amnesty's revelations on the previous day that mentioned the government's reaction to the problem. On 8 September, the Spanish paper published a small news in brief dispatched by *EFE*, saying that President Collor had demanded an inquiry into the killing of children following Amnesty's revelations.

A week after the Amnesty statement, IBASE released a report with the final findings of the survey on the slaughters. *Jornal do Brasil* gave prominent coverage to the survey results on page 5 (15.09.90), and also published a long article by the head of IBASE, Herbert de Souza. The story was a large report that summarized the findings of the survey and was accompanied by some analysis in the form of the presentation of figures in graphs.

An important point highlighted in the item was the impact of the international revelation on the government. The head of IBASE was quoted as saying that the research only provided systematic data on what was already public knowledge. However, his argument was that nothing had happened when this was announced in the national domain, and government responses only followed after the matter had been turned into a scandal by international condemnation. The article also carried his further call for outrage over these odious killings, as he feared that society had lost the sense that the murder of a child was an abominable crime. Betinho was also quoted, defending the idea of holding Brazil to national trial with international surveillance.

On the same page, the paper carried small items concerning cases of violence against a street girl and a black youngster, and a box reporting on a Brazilian journalist from a small city in Bahia, who was cited in the Amnesty report as the first Brazilian journalist to denounce the maltreatment of street children by the police, and take them to court in May 1987. She had been praised by the United Nations during the presentation of the Amnesty International annual report, and received compliments from the Minister of Foreign Relations. The story presented in the box was headlined: "An exemplary citizen", further demonstrating the paper's involvement with the campaign.

The following day, the Rio daily carried another story, which came from the bureau in Recife and reported on a new survey conducted by the local section of the MNMMR. Their leader was interviewed and heard to protest against police impunity and the misery underlying the killing. A few days later the same paper returned to the matter. The issue of the killing of "children" was the main subject of the weekly cultural supplement (JB 23.09.90).

The idea that Brazilian society, with the exception of a few organizations campaigning for children, only manifested outrage after the international condemnation was again expressed. The headline: "Consent to Extermination" introduced two long articles, one by Herbert de Souza, IBASE's head and another by a psychologist. The subheadline echoed the ideas presented earlier by de Souza concerning the need for international surveillance to challenge Brazilian society's indifference to the killings. It read: "It took an Amnesty International report on the murder of children in Brazil for the national conscience to ache." A superheadline pointed out that, in a departure from the normal official silence that had always followed foreign reports about Brazil, the President had praised Amnesty's initiative and had invited IBASE's head to discuss solutions.

The main theme of the article was concern about the lack of social indignation over the killings. The article further explored the fact that the international scandal had triggered government protests of indignation and promises of action, but questioned the real significance of such statements. Some arresting passages such as the following were highlighted on the page: "Killing children, when their deaths are announced in the first world, constitutes a crime. When their deaths are publicized abroad the Brazilian children achieve the status they do not have in life. They enter history by the door of news, it is a pity that they are already dead".

The "storm of consciousness" that followed the international condemnation still did not reach the most typical middle-class press in Brazil. As mentioned earlier, Amnesty's release did not provoke stories in the leading national news magazines, *Veja* and *Isto É*. However, *Time* and *Newsweek* carried items on the issue a few weeks later.

Newsweek's piece on 17 September was an unsigned article covering half a page. Besides Amnesty's report, the sources for the item in *Newsweek* were members

of the street children's movement, MNMMR and IBASE. In this piece, MNMMR highlighted the issue of the shopkeepers' desire to clean up the streets by hiring extermination groups that it had reported on since 1989. Here, the explanation offered for the murders is two-fold: first, the involvement of children in crime, including drug trafficking; and second, the failure to punish the killings, due to police involvement in the death squads.

Time dedicated a whole page in a feature signed by a staff member and reported by the stringer in Brazil, John Maier. The story had a wider range of sources and more concern with balance. Besides Amnesty International's press release, Amnesty's newsletter focus was also used. Relatives of victims and members of street children's advocacy organizations, such as MNMMR, NEV and CEAP were given coverage, but the other side was also represented, as the vice-president of Rio Hotel associations was heard. Official sources were quoted. However, besides the common idea of mistrust in the Brazilian government, it pointed out that the president was using Amnesty to show sensitivity towards human rights (TI 24.09.90).

Another theme present in the magazine was middle-class indifference to the killings, due to a recent crime wave. Ivanir dos Santos from CEAP was quoted as saying that there was a deliberate campaign in Brazil to eliminate street children. Other topics included authorities treating children with contempt and trampling on their rights, death squads killing innocent people, the Brazilian justice system as clumsy and corrupt, crimes left unpunished, and a crime wave that was turning Brazil into an "army camp." The article also mentions Amnesty's recommendations for solving the problem.

Following up the issue on 28 September, *The Guardian* published a feature by Jan Rocha headlined: "Life and Death on the streets of Brazil". The peg for the story was the adoption of a baby found in a litter bin. Such a happy ending was contrasted with the fate of the "seven million youngsters who live on the streets in Brazil". who are regarded as "rubbish to be cleaned up" - the same theme previously put forward by the street children's movement.

The story then sought to provide an explanation for the revelations of the killings of street children by Amnesty International, returning to the themes

developed in the *Guardian's* earlier report, but with a more contextualized framework. First, it put forward the idea that street children and death squads were "the most visible symptoms of a social system that encourages inequality unrivalled in most countries". Secondly, it suggested that the wrong government policies pursued since the seventies were responsible for cutting wages and expenditure on education, health and low-income housing, with its consequent effects on the children. The story ended by giving a dramatic picture of the life of a poor child in a slum.

Following Amnesty International's charges in the foreign press, and the expectations of the Child Summit, a Term of Co-operation Agreement was signed between the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Action and UNICEF for the "development of a co-ordinated set of actions with the aim of fostering and defending the rights of children and adolescents in particularly difficult circumstances." (Guerra, 1991: 3).

At an international level, Amnesty's campaign prompted a resolution in the European Parliament, condemning the existence of death squads and deploring the fact that the authorities did not act properly to protect the children. This also supported Amnesty's recommendations and urged the Brazilian government to translate constitutional obligations into reality.

In his speech to the World Summit for Children at the United Nations in late September, President Collor responded to the indictments thus:

In the face of recent reports concerning threats to the human rights and the very lives of children in my country, I have also called for the restructuring of the Council for the Defence of Human Rights, in the Ministry of Justice, with a view to converting that body into an instrument for the permanent protection of the physical integrity of Brazilian children (UNICEF, 1990:97).

The Child Summit was one of the first of a series of global conferences in the social agenda of the United Nations in the 1990s, which were attended by a large number

of heads of state, with parallel participation by NGOs. The event attracted significant media coverage about the issue of children's rights.

5.8 Rising dissent in the elite camp

After the Statute was approved and sanctioned by the President in July 1990, some minors' judges and other eminent jurists, police authorities and other groups in the law and order sphere, continued to attack the new law and to publish articles criticizing it (e.g. Cavalieri, OE 19.09.90). Newspapers such as *O Globo* gave coverage to the claims of Liborni Siqueira, the minors' court judge in Rio, that the Statute was going to increase marginality, and also to his complaints that few minors' judges took part in the drafting of the new law. The judge tried to alarm society and protested against the establishment of the maximum of three years for internment (OG 05.08.90).

In addition, stories of minors escaping from the reformatories with the help of armed gun men said to be drug dealers, were publicized together with a historical account bringing back the theme of minors as the work force of drug trafficking (see e.g. OG 22.08.90). Some press articles called attention to legal obstacles and other difficulties in implementing the Statute (JT 24.08.90). Others still resisted the issue of the killing of street children by police and extermination groups, and called attention to the problem of the victims of family violence.

More violent groups tried to silence the reformers and to prevent investigation of the murders in brutal and criminal ways. In August 1990, the murder of a nephew of the deputy Benedita da Silva (who had requested the CPI) during a police raid was denounced in the Chamber of Deputies by her colleagues from the Workers' Party (see also OD 20.09.90).

Nonetheless, the support of the President, the approval of the Statute in Parliament and international condemnation of the slaughters seemed to suggest that the balance of power in the political arena had shifted in favour of the sectors in supporting children's rights. It is also important to mention that at an international level, the 'war on drugs' in the United States was no longer very high on the agenda.

According to a poll by IBGE, the issues that most concerned Brazilians at the time were wages, health and unemployment (OE 12.09.90).

By September 1990, the reaction of important sectors of the judiciary, security forces and shop owners no longer dominated the media. Indeed, by offering the explanation of impunity as the reason for the killings, together with police violence and corruption, the responsibility of the judges and the crisis of the slow and corrupt justice system were starting to gain more visibility. Nonetheless, some military policemen, believed to be members of death squads, were convicted of the murders of Simone Almeida and Disney Rodrigues in December 1988, and of the slaughter of five young people in Nova Friburgo, Rio de Janeiro, in 1989. These cases had been highlighted by the press at the time. In the first case, four of the accused were sentenced to more than thirty years imprisonment, and in the other the two policemen were sentenced to seventy one years and forty two years imprisonment respectively (Amnesty International, 1991).

However, in October, the Statute for Children and Adolescents came into force. As a result of the more liberal policies, 55% of the internments made during July in São Paulo, for example, were considered improper (JB 08.12.91). Thus, a large number of children and youths interned in boarding schools began to be released, and many took to the streets as the new structures that should have replaced the former institutions were not in operation. This provoked strong reactions from sectors against the new policy, which renewed their campaign against the Statute and tried to create a social panic over the release of the children and adolescents interned. It was reported that 2047 juvenile offenders were released from FEBEM in São Paulo as a consequence of the new law. A police detective interviewed by a paper said he feared for the outcome of such policy (OE 10.10.90).

In a signed article in *Jornal do Brasil*, Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, the progressive Archbishop of São Paulo (JB 07.10.90) warned that fear and the propaganda of fear aimed to take people away from the struggle for justice. He commented on the situation of the Brazilian children and Amnesty's condemnation of this in the context of an ideological radical discourse with religious contours, emphasizing the need to change the structural conditions of the country in terms of

the political and socio-economic model. He also called for an end to impunity and more public participation in creating a solution to the problem.

The Secretary for Minors, Alda MarcoAntonio, responsible for the state children's welfare department in São Paulo, complained that the Minors' Judge was hindering her work and disobeying the Statute, which established that the younger children should be released first. Instead, the judge was releasing the older juvenile offenders first in order to create more fear in the general population. According to the Secretary, the judges were also hampering the setting up of the institution that would replace the former structures. Some sectors, she claimed, were creating "terrorism", since she was receiving several phone calls to say that the juveniles released were committing crimes" (OE 28.10.90).

The press again became more than a battleground. The story in *Jornal do Brasil* reporting on the closing of the FEBEM in São Paulo, which also had the Secretary for the Minor as a source, only focused on the positive aspects of the children's release, and the destruction of the old reformatories replaced by new institutions as a consequence of the Statute.

However, pressures against the Statute and the theme of minors as a threat to society, renewed because of the events described above, surfaced again in what were typically the more liberal papers, providing ambivalent readings. On the occasion of Children's Day, 12 October, Tim Lopes departed from the usual themes of this coverage by paying a visit to the open house for minors run by Volmer do Nascimento in the Baixada. In the feature, which was published by *Jornal do Brasil* and headlined "Two boys, two paths", the criminal career of a youth nicknamed Itibiriba was compared to the life story of another boy, who had ceased to sniff glue, and kept himself away from drug dealers. He earned a living by selling his drawings. Itibiriba, who used to come to the open house, appeared in the picture with a grin on his face, holding a gun in one hand and embracing a dog with the other. Commenting on his life, the boy mentioned his own death, since he was quoted as saying that he would rather have a brave death in an exchange of fire. Although the story took a line that condemned the killings and tried to give a voice to the street children, the main picture in the feature showed eight boys surrounding a large board with the list

of minors killed. The boys, who appeared with their faces covered by hats or T-shirts for their protection, appeared quite menacing.

Also in October, an advertisement published in the British press by the British section of Amnesty International provoked outrage in Brazil and further dissent within the elite camp, triggering more stories on the issue of the killing of street children nationally and internationally, especially after the *New York Times* report on the issue. Coinciding with Amnesty's campaign, a documentary "Tomorrow's Child" was also screened on British television (BBC1), reporting on the situation of children in Brazil and two other countries. The advertisement said that Brazil had solved the problem of how to take the children off the streets: killing them.

O Estado de São Paulo's correspondent in London sent a story commenting on how the advertisement showed a "terrifying and depressing picture of the situation of the poor children in Brazil". As seen the international repercussions of the problem were of important news value for the paper, which published the item with more coverage than the first revelations (OE 02.10.90). The story dispatched by the *O Estado* wires was reproduced by other newspapers all over the country reaching, for example the front page of *A Tarde* in Bahia (AT 02.10.90).

Amnesty's funding campaign provoked an indignant reaction from the Brazilian government, voiced by the Minister for Foreign Relations, who was concerned about Brazil's international image. The issue received major treatment in the national press (see eg JB 07.10.90 "Resek repels Amnesty's charges about the minor of the streets", OE 02.10.90, AT 01.10.90, IE 17.10.90). The Brazilian government's protest and Amnesty's subsequent apology were dispatched by *AP* and *Reuters* and were also reported in *Le Monde* (LM 23.10.90 & 27.10.90).

The Minister for Foreign Relations, Resek, declared that the accusation that Brazil had a deliberate policy of eliminating children was "dishonest and stupid". He threatened that the government would "stop collaborating" with the organization, and contacted the international human rights organization demanding an apology. This was issued by the general secretary of the organization, who nonetheless confirmed the charges (IE 14.11.90).

In the meantime, IBASE's study of the killings uncovered that out of 424 crimes between March and August, the killers ~~were~~ identified in only 17 cases. *O Estado de São Paulo* reported that the Ministry of Justice and CBIA were analysing the striking findings that revealed how murders of children and adolescents went unpunished (OE 06.11.90). A study was also prepared for a seminar of the National Society of Paediatricians, which indicated that in the first semester of 1990, the number of minors killed had doubled compared with 1989 (FS P16.10.90).

However, despite this increasing attention to the problem, the slaughters of children that had made news in international weeklies such as *Time* and *Newsweek* still were not reported by the main national news magazines *Veja* and *Isto É*. The reasons for this will be further analysed in the last chapter. Here it is sufficient to demonstrate that it was the strong reaction of the Brazilian government to Amnesty's advertisement that caught the eyes of *Isto É*. According to José (1996), *Isto É* was one of the only outlets in the Brazilian press that did not support Collor's campaign for the presidency, and remained vigilantly opposed to him. The first story on the subject (IE 17.10.90) by Antonio Carlos Prado, was headlined: "Troublesome Amnesty neither left-wing nor right-wing: it displeases the Brazilian government because it talks about the country".

Two weeks after the incident, the magazine reported on Amnesty's accusations in the British paper and the subsequent reactions of the Minister of Foreign Relations including his threat to terminate the government's collaboration with Amnesty. The story qualified the Minister's remark, explaining that governments were not supposed to co-operate with the organization, and instead Amnesty had a group of anonymous informers such as the Bishop Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns in every country, and that such information was checked by members of the organization who visited the country.

The feature reproduced passages of Amnesty's 1990 Report and interviewed the head of the Brazilian chapter of Amnesty International and another human rights activist from the Justice and Peace Commission. It also featured Resek and a representative of the International Secretariat. The four page article drew on the history, objectives and work of Amnesty International, but only briefly mentioned the charges that death squads were operating against "delinquents and street

children", among other indictments of human rights violations in Brazil, although this was the cause of the argument between the government and Amnesty to which the story was pegged.

Four issues later (IE 14.11.90), the opening interview of the magazine featured the Foreign Minister. Headlined: "The respect that is requested", and with the subheadline: "For the Minister Resek, Brazil has changed, but the world does not see", the article was pegged again to Amnesty's advertisement in the British press and the subsequent apology from the General Secretary. This time, *Isto É* accepted the government's view that the advertisement implied misinformation and even bad faith on the part of the organization, but remarked that cases of killings of minors were multiplying each day.

The Minister complained that the objective of the British section was to sensitize the public in order to get funding for its activities, which represented a just cause. But again, he reacted to the form of the advertisement with strong words. The following edition brought an interview with Ian Martin, the general secretary of Amnesty, signed by the magazine stringer in London Gabriel Ramalho, which concerned the 30th anniversary of the international human rights organization. The killing of street children by extermination groups appeared as just one of the issues that the organization focused its attention on in Brazil. The examination of the original version written by Ramalho before the previous story further demonstrates the weekly's late development of an interest in the issue of the killing of street children. Ramalho recalls that he had offered the story to the outlet before, but they had not published it (personal interview, London 1994). The lead called attention to the advertisement and the report that had directed world attention to the situation of children in Brazil and the government's reaction. In the rewriting of the story published after the episode had been commented on in the previous article, the killing of children was downgraded in relation to other human rights violations.

5.9 The *New York Times* said ...

The repercussions of Amnesty's charges of murdering children resulted in a feature in the *New York Times* on 13 November, 1990 written by James Brooke, the paper's own correspondent. Besides the human rights organization report, the other two sources were a sociologist from IBASE and the superintendent of the Children's Crusade, a project funded by hotel owners. More radical NGOs were not interviewed by the paper. In the authoritative voice of the *Times*, the victims of the death squads are clearly defined as petty criminals. It is also reported that the legal system makes minors "useful for criminal gangs".

Two other sets of explanations for the killings are given. First, the impunity of the military police who act as "self-appointed executioners", and secondly, the indifference of the middle and upper classes. Such indifference is also explained on the grounds of racial prejudice, as well as fear of crime. The piece counters the accusations against businessmen and the authorities by reporting on projects for street children such as the programme set up by a group of tourist hotel entrepreneurs aiming to provide them with food and schooling or official initiatives such as a human-rights course for police officers.

From November 1990, a new worldwide wave of stories about Amnesty's revelations of the killing of children in Brazil followed. The Canadian newspaper the *Globe and Mail* (19-21.11.90), for instance, ran a three-day report. The story was also covered by papers in places such as Jamaica (*Sunday Gleaner*, 18.11.90) and Yugoslavia (*Borba*, 19.11.90).

It is important to say that this new wave of publicity concerning the killing of Brazilian street children triggered by the row over Amnesty's funding campaign, contributed to the subject's increased prominence and further empowered the street children's movement. Thus, despite the reaction of the Foreign Minister to the terms of the charges, the government was led to establish more contact with representatives of the MNMMR and to accept some of their proposals. The concern about the country's image and the diplomatic embarrassment it represented is evidenced by the fact that, instead of the Minister for Justice, it was the Foreign Minister who invited

Benedito dos Santos, a national leader of the MNMMR, for a private conversation, and who promised to activate the federal police (IE 23.01.91).

5.10 A new hero and the double-edged sword of publicity

At the time, the local commission of the MNMMR in the poor suburb of Duque de Caxias was completing a new dossier about the actions of the extermination groups with the support of Tania Moreira, a local prosecutor. The MNMMR released more figures of slaughters of street children in the Baixada, and the dossier was presented to the Foreign Minister through the mediation of the political columnist Gilberto Dimenstein. Resek promised to take it to the President.

Volmer do Nascimento, who ran the shelter for street children in the town, and who had joined forces with the bishop Dom Mauro Morelli to expose the killings (see chapter three), was a member of this group. Nascimento had gained a lot of prominence after Dimenstein's book, Amnesty's report and the international press coverage. This skinny black social worker from the periphery was now well known to foreign journalists, and his media contacts probably influenced his election to the post of regional co-ordinator of the MNMMR in the state of Rio.

International recognition of Nascimento's work also gained him coverage in the national press, and contributed to raising awareness about the killings of poor children and adolescents. Even the largest selling paper in Rio, the conservative *O Globo* carried a whole page interview with the Rio co-ordinator of the MNMMR, headlined: "No one is punished for killing street children" (OG 11.11.90; see also OG 13.10.90).

On these occasions, Nascimento criticized the President for representing himself as the author of the Statute, which had been drafted before Collor's inauguration. He further charged the government of endorsing the discourse of the NGOs, but doing nothing to improve the situation of the children. The Rio leader of the MNMMR insisted that despite Collor's reaction to Amnesty's advertisement in the British press, there was a "policy of genocide" in the country. Nascimento complained that in police stations he was received as the "protector of little bandits".

With a defiant attitude, Volmer publicly denounced the action of the extermination groups in the Baixada Fluminense, and even named some judges, police officers and businessmen accused of involvement with such groups. But the MNMMR leader was to encounter the double-edged sword of publicity in more than one way. In early November, Nascimento announced that a man had followed him, pointing a gun at his back and warning him to stop causing trouble. Rio papers carried the requests made by the street children's movement and the international human rights organizations for police protection for him. The positive outcome of this was that an extraordinary meeting of the CDDPH in the Ministry of Justice was held on 21 November to debate the charges and propose measures.

Also in the context of increasing condemnation of the killings, a minors' judge revealed that an extermination group was murdering youths, who had been at the state reformatories in the small state of Sergipe. The judge, who said he had been pressurised by local merchants, accused policemen of the slaughter of four children and adolescents aged between 10 and 13. The murdered boys had robbed shops in the city. A policeman was arrested after confessing the crime. It was revealed that he used to make the children steal for him, and he had killed them because they knew too much. Three other boys had reported the crime to the minors' judge. For their protection, the witnesses were sent to a distant state. (JB 21.11.90, 24.11.90, 28.11.90, 05.12.90). Although this was not the first slaughter of minors in the state, this one shocked the population and gained some publicity in the national press. *Jornal do Brasil* also followed the issue. When another boy was killed in the city capital Aracaju, the paper published an article with background information on the previous slaughter, dismissing the explanations provided by the civil police, who attributed the killing to a "marijuana war" in the city. Alongside the story, the paper also published the figures of the regional Bar Association, which had recorded 62 summary executions in the city from April to September 1989, including those of 29 minors.

Another event that revealed the violent reaction and largely unpunished behaviour of the extermination groups targetting street children and their advocates and generated press coverage, was the killing of Itibiriba in late November. This

fifteen year old boy, employed by drug-traffickers, had been featured in *Jornal do Brasil* the previous month in the open house run by Volmer (see Section 5.8).

On 29 November, the same journalist, Tim Lopes, reported on the killing of Itibiriba in a salient feature occupying a full page spread and headlined: "The announced death: Severino (the real name of the boy nicknamed Itibiriba) 15, enlarges the statistics of children murdered in the Baixada Fluminense". The article referred back to the previous story and narrated the life and death of the boy. It included interviews with his relatives and with Volmer do Nascimento.

A further story on the same day featured Nascimento, who had not yet received the police protection promised by the government. The story highlighted the fact that this MNMMR leader was now well known among human rights organizations all over the world, and international organizations were very concerned with his security. In this story, as well as the previous one, the notion that the crimes needed to be punished was put forward as the only way to stop the killings.

The execution of Itibiriba and support for Volmer do Nascimento, who was receiving death threats, further mobilised civil society organizations in the fight against the extermination groups in this period. The NGOs organized a protest act at the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB). The event was covered by *Jornal do Brasil* (30.11.90) on the first page of its supplement *City News*. After that, the OAB started to investigate Nascimento's accusations of the involvement of judges with extermination groups.

The press gave space to the complaint of the MNMMR that, a week after the government's promise of protection for Volmer do Nascimento, this had not yet happened. Furthermore, the press reported that the government had done nothing to investigate the charges (JB 30.11.90). On the following day, *Jornal do Brasil* reported that, after a meeting with the Federal Police, Nascimento was already protected by three federal policemen (JB 01.12.90).

Jornal do Brasil (JB 01.12.90) also complained that the inquiry into Itibiriba's death had not even been initiated. Impunity and police indifference towards the inquiry were the themes of the coverage. At the opening of the story, the paper carried a statement by the renowned jurist and former minors' judge Alyrio

Cavallieri, who opposed the Statute. He declared that he was convinced that extermination was a fact and a hideous crime. But the judge contested the claim of some children's advocacy groups, saying that it reached adults and minors alike.

On 2 December 1990, the paper dedicated nearly a whole page to the killings in Sergipe. A feature by Marcelo Pontes entitled: "Three minors are marked to die" gave background information on the slaughter and featured the three children who had witnessed the killings. The story reported on the petty crimes they had committed, and also on their childish games. Another item by Tim Lopes, headlined: "Violence without frontiers" provided figures of killings in other states, showing that the killing of children was not restricted to Sergipe and Rio, but was a widespread cause of violent deaths among minors all over the country.

That same day, *Jornal do Brasil* carried a long interview with Nascimento that occupied a full page. The authors of the story, Francisco Luis Noel and Tim Lopes, introduced the leader of the MNMMR as a "hero", a "new Chico Mendes of the Baixada", comparing him to the human rights lawyer, who was a leader of the rubber tappers, and whose assassination by a farmer in December 1988, aroused strong international condemnation. International acclaim was an important theme of the story. The journalists reported that Volmer do Nascimento was receiving fifty letters a day from international organizations, and he was contacted by foreign journalists at least once a day, as well as taking parts in several seminars abroad (JB 02.12.90). Nascimento's criticism of the government satisfied anti-authority frames, even more common in the case of corrupt authorities in so-called banana republics. The opposition of the humble defender of street children to the cruel and powerful extermination groups also fits with well-known stories such as the fight between David and Goliath, which have become newsworthy frames (Wolsfeld, 1997). It had the ingredients of drama, violence, defiance, children as victims, and thus satisfied the demands of journalists chasing a good story.

It also genuinely sensitized concerned journalists and organizations, while annoying the children advocates' opponents. As a consequence of the indictments by the Rio leader of the MNMMR, the judge who later superseded the magistrate he had accused closed down the safe house for street children that he had been running in the violent periphery of Rio, on the grounds that children had been caught using

drugs and being sexually promiscuous. Nascimento told *Jornal do Brasil* journalists that the new judge warned that she was going to investigate his involvement with drug-traffickers, and that he feared they were going to frame him (JB 0 3.1.91).

In December, reaction against the Statute was also increasing. In the Chamber of Deputies, some deputies of parties supporting the President argued that the new law was increasing criminality among minors and generating more unpunished crimes. However, by the end of 1990, the NGOs' efforts to sensitise some foreign journalists and international human rights organizations such as Amnesty to the issue by creating more coverage in the international media and thus influencing the government had considerably altered the status of the problem on the political agenda. The visit of the President of the United States to Brazil in early December offers an invaluable means of assessing the rise in prominence given to the issue and changes in its formulation - something that also suggests the importance of the international agenda. At this time, concerns about a real war were more important than the war on drugs prevailing at the time of the presidential meeting between Bush and Sarney in 1989 reported in chapter four.

George Bush came to Brazil during the Gulf crisis and amidst economic troubles between Europe and the US. Some journalists took this as evidence that the trip was important for American foreign policy, and complained that despite this, the issue of the killing of street children dominated the news. Coverage by the American TV network CBS coast to coast dedicated only thirty seconds to the presidential meeting between Bush and Collor. It then screened a long story about street children said to pay the police to sleep on the streets and be killed by death squads hired by shopkeepers (JB 09.12.90). Irrespective of the motives for the visit, the timing made the issue of the slaughters of children in Brazil more visible abroad and further alerted the government to the impact of the issue in international public opinion.

In an interview with *Jornal do Brasil* (09.12.90), Marcilio Moreira, the Brazilian Ambassador in Washington, commented on the issue. Marcilio remarked that in his post he had been the Ambassador for the foreign debt, then Ambassador for the Amazon and ecology, and predicted that the new issue on the international agenda was undoubtedly going to be the problem of human rights. This time it was not a problem of official repression against citizens, but "the violence of society

against its children". And he further explained: "the international agenda hates a vacuum and always finds a new theme so the change is very fast".

The NGOs and the leaders of the progressive sectors of the Catholic Church all argued that the government measures concerning needy children and adolescents had so far been merely superficial, and the President's claims of commitment to human rights issues were just opportunistic acts. However, on 6 December, a working group with equal representation of government sectors and non-governmental organizations was established. It was determined that the National Commission should draw up a plan to combat the killing of children, in a month's time. On the occasion of the setting up of the commission, the new Minister of Justice, Jarbas Passarinho, recognized that the killing of children was a critical issue, and promised prompt action from the government. But again, he repudiated Amnesty's latest campaign, which showed the killing of street children to be a project to eliminate poverty.

Among the non-governmental organizations represented in the committee were the National Confederation of the Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), the National Movement of Human Rights (MNDU), and the national movement of street boys and girls, which had Volmer do Nascimento as its representative (Guerra, 1991; Rocha, 1991). UNICEF was also represented. The mediating role of UNICEF behind the scenes was important in securing the joint participation of government agencies and non-governmental organizations. Also, the prominence of leaders of NGOs in the national and international media, especially after Amnesty's intervention, empowered the organizations and altered their relationship with the government. Despite the joint meetings, the leaders of the movement who politically opposed the President continued to criticize him and to dismiss his initiatives as "mere words" (see e.g. JB 02.01.91). After the setting-up of the National Commission, the national movement of street boys and girls continued to pressurise the government to take action over the killings, and to implement the Statute. The committee provided an official channel of negotiation between the government and NGOs. Through its work, the authorities were officially informed of the reports and studies produced by the movement on the matter of the killings, and had to respond to this publicly.

At the time, radical politicians and especially militants of the Workers' Party such as the deputy Benedita da Silva, and the mayor of Vitoria, helped to raise more awareness of the problem, and supported the NGOs' campaign. For example, on 13 December, Benedita da Silva, who was linked to the CEAP, made a speech in the Chamber of Deputies calling on the government to investigate the charges made by Nascimento about the involvement of policemen and judges. On 30 December, *Jornal do Brasil* also published a lengthy article signed by da Silva, discussing the historical reasons for the "extermination" of children and her announcement that her request for a CPI would be voted on shortly.

The strategy of the social movement calling international attention to the issue was successful in raising awareness of the problem, and provoked international condemnation and government responses, as well as gaining more prominence and legitimation for some NGOs members. However, the slaughters continued, and still did not arouse the expected outrage in public opinion.

Moreover, law and order groups continued to attempt to create a social panic, facilitated by the enforcement of the new legislation without the implementation of the adequate structures to prevent or contain juvenile crime. At times they were successful. For instance, another slaughter of four minors, this time in São Paulo, where the law enforcement agencies had a policy of tougher repression of minors, was reported by the press without much prominence (see e.g. JB 15.12.90), and had no follow-up.

The definitional struggle over 'the problem of the minor' continued, and the movement sought to feed international organizations and the national and international press with more information and arguments about the killings. For example, in an article published in *Jornal do Brasil* (07.12.90), Deodato Rivera insisted on the idea of genocide, and compared the extermination of children in Brazil to the murder of the Jews by the Nazis. He stressed the common aspect of the two tragedies - the omission or complicity of the government and society - and also questioned the views which framed the issue as a consequence of the irresponsibility of the children's families. The DCA Forum member also called for social responsibility amongst the media, and demanded changes in their representation of the street children which, instead of "enhancing the prejudice against the boys

thrown on the streets, should inform public opinion about the origins and complexity of their situation, even when they become destructive".

An important change in the development of the issue of the killing of street children at the time was that it had started to be upgraded from the crime news pages to the opinion and national news sections. Furthermore, in the political debate, apart from speeches made by the President and statements by his Ministers, who mainly reacted to Amnesty's accusation, the NGOs had become more pro-active, and indeed, become the main voices in the campaign against the murders, thus "commanding the field", especially in the international press.

In early 1991, the municipal council of Rio received the statistics they had requested from the Secretary of the Civil Police about the killings of minors during 1990. Although these were official figures, Volmer do Nascimento was the main source for the reports, which published the new figures of 445 violent deaths of minors.

In the first edition of the programme *Meeting the Press* broadcast by the *Jornal do Brasil* radio station, Volmer do Nascimento was the first person to be heard, and the interview was published in a prominent position in the Rio paper (JB 03.01.91). The story drew on the drama of the private life of the leader of the MNMMR, who could not spend Christmas or New Year with his family (who had been sent to a distant state), but had to be permanently accompanied by two bodyguards. In spite of the threats to his life, Nascimento confirmed his accusations against a judge who had distributed credentials to a well-known killer on the periphery, and promised to continue the struggle against the extermination groups.

The figures published by *Jornal do Brasil* were dispatched by *AFP* and generated short reports in *Le Monde* (05.01.91) and *El País* (04.01.91). The statistics and Nascimento's interview for the paper were also reproduced in a *Reuters* story on 4 January. A few days earlier, the British news agency had delivered a long feature by Michael Stott, for which Nascimento was the main source, and endorsed his heavy criticism of the Collor government.

From January 1991, the government was to change its strategy, taking the lead in publicising the issue and attempting to create an impact. Both the government and the leaders of the street children's movement were to discover that media

publicity can be a dangerous weapon. The next chapter tells this story, and points to other national and international repercussions of the NGOs struggle, and the international scandal about the 'extermination of children' in Brazil.

CHAPTER 6: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REPERCUSSIONS

6.1 Making official headlines

From January 1991, the Collor government decided to take the lead in the campaign against the killing of street children. One of their tactics in defending themselves from domestic and international criticism was to attack other groups, diverting the attention away from the government's own responsibilities. Two days after Nascimento's exclusive interview with *Jornal do Brasil*, the National Secretary for Citizenship Rights, who presided over the meeting of the national committee composed of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the Ministry of Justice, condemned the involvement of policemen, security agents and officials in the judiciary with extermination groups.

O Estado de São Paulo (05.01.01) paid considerable attention to this meeting, which was the subject of the main story on page 7, headlined: "Police officers kill children in the country". This time the main source for the report was a government spokesman, although Volmer was also heard.

The national committee also accepted the NGOs' proposal that six cases of violent deaths of children and adolescents in the states where the situation was worst should be selected and thoroughly investigated, to serve as examples to break the cycle of impunity. The inquiries were to be monitored by Special State Prosecutors and the Federal Police. In all cases there was evidence of civil and military police officers' involvement, and the investigation had been paralysed. It must also be noted that another criteria for selection was that the case must have had international repercussions.

O Estado, which had not given much importance to the issue since its reports on the Amnesty advertisement in the British press in October, published the statements of the spokesman of the federal government and regularly covered the works of the Committee, which was to continue in activity for thirty days more in order to execute some of the measures proposed (see e.g. OE 22.01.91). The national secretary was quoted as saying that the solution to the problem was in the hands of

the states, but "on the part of the federal government there was effective interest and total effort to investigate all the cases". The newspaper provided background information on the issue "which gained international prominence" (OE 05.01.91).

One of the arguments put forward by the NGOs concerning the lack of government interest in the problem was the absence of official national statistics on the issue. In January 1991, the official agency IBGE released some dramatic figures on the violent deaths of children. These recent figures, and the earlier data on the 445 violent deaths of children in Rio in 1990, were the subject of a story by Patricio Valenzuela (EP 09.01.91), which formed the headline on page 19 of the Spanish paper *El País*. In this account, all the violent deaths were wrongly attributed to killings "by death squads or drug traffickers". *El País* also reported that, according to IBGE, an exceptional number of children between nine and twelve had been murdered in 1989 (EP 09.01.91).

The paper had briefly reported on the government reaction to the issue before. This story concluded by saying that Collor had enacted a new Statute intending to change the situation. The main theme in the article was the idea of cleansing in tourist areas, provoked by the anger of shopkeepers and hotel owners over the criminal behaviour of the street children. The previous theme of street children attacking tourists was brought to the fore. As evidence, a street boy, said to be the spokesman of a gang of youngsters, was quoted as saying that they earned money cleaning cars, but when a foreigner appeared they formed a group, stole his wallet, and ran away. The other theme present, which together with that of violence was recurrent in the paper's stories about Brazil, was misery. NGOs were the main sources of the story, and Volmer do Nascimento's attacks against policemen and officials were reported, including his charge that a special police commission had identified 59 members of extermination groups, but only two were convicted.

In mid January, the federal government decided to create publicity. Following Presidential advice, Alceni Guerra, the Minister for Health and also appointed as Minister for the Child, took the initiative of discussing the problem of minors with businessmen, artists and other personalities. During the debate, which took place in the Trade Association in Rio, the Minister shocked his hosts by accusing businessmen of funding extermination groups. The move was also part of a

wider strategy to seek an alliance with emerging powers, and take political advantage at national and international levels.

The attack surprised businessmen and also sectors of the social movement and state authorities, provoking various reactions. It certainly made news in the national press. Interviewed by *Jornal do Brasil*, the representative of CNBB on the committee, Roberto Santos from São Martinho, applauded the initiative. Volmer do Nascimento and the national co-ordinator of the MNMMR considered it a positive step, but criticized the generalization of the charge, as the Minister did not give names, and there were businessmen who helped the work with street children. *Jornal do Brasil* reported Nascimento saying that he expected the government finally to start to act (JB 12.01.91). A popular paper reported that the Rio co-ordinator of the MNMMR said that the organization had been denouncing the action of the extermination groups for many years, but only now that the international media had started to give publicity to the issue, had the government started to show concern. He insisted that this was just a concern with the foreign image of the country (OD 11.01.91).

The fiercest reaction to the Minister's speech came from police spokesmen and business leaders. The head of the Civil Police in Rio, Heraldo Gomes, said that he was appalled that a Minister could make such a statement, and reported that the police did not have any official information linking businessmen to extermination groups. He attributed the deaths to the victims' environment and drug traffickers, reaffirming the idea that the victims were the responsible for their own deaths since they were eliminated when they became useless for the gangs to which they belonged (JB 11.01.91).

The President of the Shopkeepers' Association in Rio, Silvio Cunha, reacted angrily to the accusations. His remark during an interview in a radio programme provoked a social outcry. He said: "whoever kills a *pivettino* benefits society". The head of the association of travel agencies lamented the Minister's declarations, and complained that they could lead to misguided interpretations, especially in the foreign press.

Another leader of the shop owners' organizations, Getulio Gonçalves, the president of the Trade Association of Duque de Caxias, who was indicted by Volmer

for involvement with the death squads, returned the charges. Gonçalves said that the greatest exterminator of children was the Ministry for Health, which did not offer adequate treatment to needy children through mismanagement, and was responsible for the misery that surrounded their lives. He also accused Nascimento of allowing drugs and sexual promiscuity in the shelter Casa do Menor (OD 12.01.91). The president of the Commercial Association of Rio, Paulo Protasio, said criminality in Rio had its roots in impunity and the poverty caused by failures of the state in the fields of health, education and housing.

The federation of the Agro-Industrial and Trade Associations in Rio sent a letter to the Minister protesting against the accusations, and saying that Guerra let himself be involved with the same kind of imprudence that led to distortions and accusations against Brazil at the international level. The most important businessmen's associations in Rio also published a joint statement as an advertisement in the newspapers, voicing their position and complaining that the press had given more prominence to the charges than to the response of the entrepreneurs. They called on the government to give the names of the businessmen involved.

Guerra's statements accusing businessmen, and their consequences were given prominence in the national press. In the sample of the foreign press studied, it was again the case that they were reported only in *El País* (13.01.91) at the outset. *Jornal do Brasil* gave front-page treatment to the government's attack, and dedicated a whole page to the issue. The coverage of the debate in the Trade Association was accompanied by background stories and other items about the repercussions of the Minister's charges.

However, the amount of coverage did not always mean favourable news. The Minister's declarations provoked an indignant editorial in *O Estado de São Paulo* (11.01.91), whose readership included influential businessmen. The paper described the accusations as flippant comments. Other conservative papers in the country, such as *A Tarde* in Bahia, took the same line.

Isto É dedicated two pages to the event. The story, by Francisco Viana, was tied to the arrest of a well-known killer accused by Volmer, which followed the Minister's accusations. For the first time, the killing of street children was a central

topic in the weekly. It was also the first time that Volmer do Nascimento was mentioned. The leader of the MNMMR was depicted as the "best depiction of the drama in Rio", and said to be the real source of the revelations of the involvement of businessmen and police officers with the killers that had been voiced by Guerra.

Nevertheless, the focus of the article was the Minister's statement. The magazine uncovered that this was part of a strategic plan by President Collor, who was concerned on the one hand with Amnesty International's publicity, and on the other, with political gains. Combating the killing of children could also be a means of making an alliance with the newly elected governor of Rio, Brizola, one of his opponents in the previous Presidential election (IE 23.01.91). In fact, the federal government initiated conversations with two of his political opponents, Brizola, and Erundina, the mayor of São Paulo, from the Workers' Party. It is worth noting that the other main Brazilian news and current affairs weekly *Veja*, still did not think the issue deserved the attention of its middle-class readership.

The repercussions of the accusation were well received by the Minister, who boasted that the target had been fully reached since a dangerous killer was in jail, the killing had stopped and society was mobilized on a national scale. At the same time, an inquiry was set up by the federal police to investigate the statements of Silvio Cunha, the president of Rio's Shopkeepers Association, who was charged with making an apology to crime. Other important organizations in civil society such as the Brazilian Press Association (ABI) and the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), also became engaged in the investigation of the six exemplary cases in the states (JB 24.01.91).

So far, the federal government's response to the criticism of the more radical NGOs was to adopt their discourse and forward their charges and demands. A foreign correspondent commented that Collor used the same tactics to defuse environmental issues. He identified with his critics, announced spectacular measures, and even posed as a champion of the cause, but did not address the root of the problem (Rocha, 1991).

In spite of that, the involvement of the President with the problem obviously helped to place the issue on the political agenda, and some of the measures were to produce positive results. In this period, *Jornal do Brasil* reported daily on the

initiatives of the government and NGOs in its national news section. On 18 January, President Collor signed a decree restructuring the National Council for the Defence of Human Rights in accordance with the approval of the National Plan of Action to Combat Violence against Children and Adolescents. It was announced that the Minister for the Child and the representative of the federal government in the national Commission were going to visit the states to discuss the problem and pressurize the authorities to act. After the second meeting of the federal committee in January, the government spokesman of the commission, Carlos Eduardo de Araujo Lima, announced the proposal to launch a national campaign against violence towards children, using radio and television (JB 19.01.91).

6.2 Reacting to sensational images in the foreign media

After the episode of the Minister's charges against businessmen, the event that sparked even more press coverage, shocking foreign viewers, outraging Brazilian newspapers, and creating an impact on the political system, was a documentary screened on British Television. Dan Jordan's film for the *World in Action* series (Granada production) was filmed in November in Rio and Recife. It was initially for 14 January, and the *Guardian Weekly* published a summary by Jan Rocha on that day, but it was postponed due to the Gulf War. On 28 January, "Child killers of Brazil" was aired prime time amidst the news of the war. The main characters of the documentary were defiant killers. The Public Prosecutor Tania Moreira and the Bishop Dom Mauro Morelli were also featured.

Another review of the film in a *Guardian* column by Hugh Herbert gives an idea of the exaggerated and sensationalist tone of the film. It ran: "In the cities of Brazil part of the street cleaning service is to beat up and quite often kill the homeless children who litter them". And it further compared Rio to medieval London in a plague year "with the steady morning rumble of the body wagons". For *The Guardian* again, this was the result of a society divided between the extremely rich and the extremely poor and hopelessly corrupt (GD 29.01.91: 32).

The *O Estado de São Paulo* reported on the documentary, stressing in its headline that the death of children in Brazil had shocked the British people (OE 31.01.91: 20). The damage to Brazil's image abroad, already stained by Amnesty's advertisement in October, was the main focus of the item. The report summarized the film, which promoted the themes of the acceptance of violence by the authorities, and the complicity of the police and justice system with the killings. The story reproduced a statement of a member of an extermination group featured in the film who boasted: "I have already killed around 80... It's like killing a fly". The Brazilian correspondent also interviewed an 83-year-old English widow whose dream was to visit Brazil, and who had tearfully discovered that it was not "the piece of paradise, inhabited by beautiful and good-natured people" that her husband had told her.

O Estado's sister paper, *Jornal da Tarde*, also carried an article by the correspondent Zeca de Santana, who reported that an official of the Brazilian Embassy said that the twenty five minutes of the programme seemed an eternity, and that the viewers were tortured by the sight of mutilated corpses and shocking statements.

"Child killers of Brazil" also caught the attention of the London correspondent of the leading Rio paper *O Globo*. On 30 January, Teodomiro Braga's "Death of children: a scandal on British TV", explained that the programme screened for millions of viewers, added to other press stories that had put Brazil's image at the lowest level since Collor's inauguration. The next day, the correspondent reported that the Brazilian Embassy had received dozens of phone calls from British citizens indignant with the scene, saying: "Don't you have hearts?"; "Are you savages?"; "You don't have the right to do this to children!"

The report provoked an indignant editorial about the film (OG 30.01.91). Headlined: "False Picture", it deserves a detailed summary, as it represents one of the main ways of framing the problem, and the motives and effects of international coverage. The editorial lamented the damage caused to Brazil by the wicked combination of "truths that make us ashamed", with "sensationalist fantasies that transform us into a monstrous society in the eyes of the world". The piece set out to differentiate fact from fiction in the story. The facts were: there were frequent slaughters; some corrupt police officers belonged to death squads; the latter killed

delinquents or rival bandits; Brazilian justice was slow; witnesses did not want to testify due to threats and absence of official protection; and small merchants financed the death squads, counting on impunity, and alleging that they had no alternative to protect themselves against assaults.

However, it judged that firstly, it was a lie to say that there was extermination of children in Brazil, as the majority of victims were adolescents aged between 14 and 18, many who had been involved with criminal activities from being very young. The paper stressed that to call them children had a devastating effect, as it promoted negative propaganda that would not occur if the problem received a more accurate definition (even if already lamentable), and defined the victims as minors co-opted by bandits. Secondly, it argued that it was not true that this phenomenon was characteristic of Rio. Thirdly, there was no evidence of the complicity of the police with corruption, whenever proved.

The paper then concluded that the problem was lack of resources to adequately face social problems - a malady typical of Brazil and other Latin American countries. But it also advanced another interpretation for the exposure of the problem abroad: since Brazil had stopped paying taxes on the foreign debt, it had been the target of attempts at defamation in the press of the rich countries who were creditors. Thus, slaughters of Indians, forest devastation, and extermination of children had all become preferred themes. *O Globo* further complained that such coverage suggested that all of a sudden the Brazilian people had started committing the most heinous crimes.

The same view of a conspiratorial coverage was present in the reaction of the Secretary of the Civil Police in Rio, who described ITV's documentary as distorted, exaggerated and unfounded. He also said that it was part of an international orchestration against Brazilian cities, and further complained that he was going to receive hundreds of letters from all over the world protesting against the killing of children (OG 31.01.91).

The Minister for the Child, however, had a completely different reaction. Instead of complaining about the programme, he used it for political profit. He criticized the leaving governor of Rio, Moreira Franco, for not fulfilling his role in the investigation of the crimes, which had resulted in financial problems for the state

because of Rio's bad image. Alcení Guerra welcomed the documentary, arguing that it highlighted one of the greatest problems in Brazilian society.

Moreover, the Minister announced that he was going to travel to Europe to present more ammunition for the charges, and demand more pressure against the violence, for which he deemed the state governors responsible. He mentioned that he planned to contact intergovernmental agencies and international organizations, and in London he intended to visit Amnesty International (FSP 30.01.91). The message, sent via the press, was a clear signal that the federal government wanted to re-establish favourable relations with the international organization, after the row following the advertisement in October. It was received by an Amnesty representative in Brazil at the time, who forwarded a copy of the news to the International Secretariat.

On 2 February, a few days after this, the life and death of street children in Brazil became the subject of a front-page story in *Le Monde*. This was a long feature, which continued onto page 11, and was the first one on the issue by the correspondent Denis Hautin-Guiraud. The story was about the condemnation of hundreds of thousands of Brazilian children to a life of crime. The article presented the "nauseating" statistics of the context of misery and violence which surrounded the Brazilian children, and led them to prostitution, drugs, delinquency and malnutrition - circumstances which also led to them being hounded by death squads.

It also mentioned the sensation caused by the Minister's statement at the Commercial Association, publicly denouncing the death squads and announcing the end of their barbaric practices, as well as Silvio Cunha's statement that "whoever kills a pivate is doing a benefit to society". The story drew mostly on the life histories of children abandoned by their families and already involved with crime. The only positive development reported was that these children were now joining non-official projects, such as Joãozinho Trinta's carnival school.

This feature by the French paper, although drawing on the usual themes of misery and violence, presented the problem in a different way from the British documentary, and from the other story in the paper in May 1989, written by the previous correspondent. As mentioned, on that occasion, Vanecke adopted the frame

of cleaning up the streets proposed by the representative of the MNMMR, who was the main source for the story.

In a personal interview, Hautin-Guiraud declared that he thought that in general the external coverage was seriously mistaken, as it conveyed the idea of a plan to kill children, which was not the case in reality. This French journalist, who regarded the *Gazeta Mercantil*, a newspaper aimed at businessmen, as the best press source in the country, did not accept the discourse of the president and of the NGOs. Asked about the reasons for the killings, he explained that there were many cases of adolescents killing each other or being killed by older drug-traffickers. He also declared that, when asked by the paper to write more stories on the killings, he refused.

Following the exposure of the life and death of street children in the French press in late February, as reported by *Jornal do Brasil*, a representative of the French government visited the country to know what was being done in the children's favour. The representative said he had a double image of Brazil. On the one hand, the French press reported on the killing of children. On the other hand, he was impressed by the new Statute for the Child (JB 01.03.91). He admitted that in France, figures indicated between 300 to 400 deaths of children each year as a result of abuse.

6.3 Responding to the international outcry

The reaction of British viewers to the killing of street children, the ensuing coverage, and the visit of the French envoy, were further indicators of the impact the issue was likely to have on international public opinion. The concern with the international outcry generated immediate measures from the government, and had an impact on the balance of power between the NGOs and the authorities on the one hand, and between the antagonists defending law and order or human rights on the other. The foreseeable consequences also brought the market and the state together with civil society.

A week after the documentary was shown on British television, the national commission was transformed into a permanent working group, with the task of implementing and monitoring the recommendations of the National Plan to Combat Violence against Children (Guerra, 1991). In February, the Minister of Health continued to produce statements absorbing part of the discourse of the NGOs, and blaming state governors (who were finishing their terms of office) for the killings. He lamented that a month after his indictments only one killer had been arrested, and that the investigations were so slow, but stated that the Federal Police should not act since the murders were outside their competence. He reacted to the publication of new figures of minors murdered in 1990, concerned about the negative image of the country and saying that it was a shameful situation that brought Brazil ridicule abroad (JB 08.02.91).

The deputy Benedita da Silva was still one of the main voices on the NGOs side in the Chamber of Deputies, especially through her links with the CEAP. In February, the organization provided her with a list of twenty nine children marked to die in the state of Alagoas, the home town of the President, and a study predicting that four hundred and twenty children would be murdered in Rio the next year. Benedita da Silva announced that she was going to make a speech in the Federal Chamber about these killings to promote her call for the CPI. *Jornal do Brasil* carried an article by Florencia Costa airing the views of Benedita and the head of the CEAP and published the names of the children (JB 18.02.91). Following the press publicity, the Minister for the Child contacted the deputy of the Workers' Party, demanding a copy of the dossier.

The Minister again criticized the lack of effort to combat the problem on the part of the state governments, but *Jornal do Brasil* carried the deputy's statement on the position of the street children's movement, that the "extermination of children" should be transformed into a national matter and if the state governments did not act, the federal government had to intervene (JB 21.02.91). In early March, another member of the Workers' Party, the mayor of Vitoria, handed the Minister of Justice a dossier detailing the increase in the killings in the city.

Statistics of murders of street children were produced by the NGOs in other states. For instance, members of the Axé Project revealed the killing of 145 children

and adolescents in the city that year. The *Jornal do Brasil* gave a lot of space and favourable coverage to the project, which was set up in June 1990 in Salvador, with an innovative and efficient brief to take the children off the streets (JB 24.02.91). The paper also continued to give coverage to lengthy features on other projects for street children run by voluntary associations, church groups and now even by the Association of Hotel Owners, who proposed private alternative solutions to the problem. These carried the positive idea of the possibility of the regeneration of street children (see e.g. JB 03.01.91; JB 03.02.91; JB 05.04.91).

Following the national mobilization of the street children's movement, the number of protagonists campaigning against violence towards children in civil society had greatly increased. After the international publicity and the changes in policy, they had also gained more institutional space and power. In 1991, the DCA FORUM gathered twenty-seven organizations. In March, they joined other civil society organizations to prepare their recommendations for the National Plan to Combat Violence against children and adolescents.

Until mid March, radical leaders of the MNMMR still assessed the involvement of the Collor government with the problem as being "mere words" (JB 11.03.91). However, Marilia Muricy, a member of OAB, commented that the involvement of sixty organizations in the FORUM DCA in order to elaborate the emergency plan requested by the Minister for the Child, indicated a vote of confidence in the government, but hoped that this would not end up being a "legitimation strategy of political actions concentrated in pre-defined power spaces" (AT 28.03.91).

As we have seen, at this time, the issue of the 'extermination of children' had become a banner, not only for the street children's movement and the progressive Church and international agencies, but also for the federal government, concerned with its foreign image. It still sensitized mainly left politicians and progressive professional associations, and even a few liberal entrepreneurs, but other political actors were starting to join the campaign. Among them was another former street child, recently elected for the Legislative Assembly in Rio, and also businessmen concerned with the consequences of the issue for the tourist trade.

A month and a half after Guerra's charges and the negative reaction of the businessmen, there was a large party for the Minister in the Trade Association. Volmer do Nascimento and other representatives of the street children's movement, together with artists, authorities, and other personalities, were present. The businessmen handed the Minister a fifty-page document with their proposals for street children, which included converting part of the foreign debt into social projects. Through the proposed agreement, US creditors would contribute to Brazilian organizations, and would gain fiscal advantages in the US. The Minister promised to forward the proposal to the economic sectors of the government (JB 08.03.91).

Also in March, a three-day seminar about street children, promoted by the Federal University of Rio, gathered businessmen, intellectuals, artists and other members of society. In the coverage of the event, *Jornal do Brasil* pointed out that such a heterogenous audience was united by the same concern: the growth of a social problem that could hit Brazilian society through a world outcry that had already become audible. The hotel owners present at the meeting did not hide their main concern, that the Rio hotels were becoming empty, as tourists were afraid to come (JB 24.03.91).

6.4 Lives at risk in the political arena

Another consequence of the international outcry was the installation of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI) to investigate the killings of poor children and adolescents and links between the death squads and the police. Since 1989, the children's advocacy groups had been demanding the installation of a CPI in the National Congress. In the wake of the occupation of Congress during the national conference of the MNMMR, Nelson Aguiar, the author of the Statute bill, made a speech calling for parliamentary hearings. At the same time, the Senator Fernando Henrique Cardoso of the Social Democratic Party (PSDB) also reported that he had started collecting the 272 signatures needed for a CPI. In April 1990, on the occasion

of the launching of Dimenstein's book in the hall of Congress, Benedita da Silva, the deputy, requested the CPI. Nonetheless, almost one year later it had not been voted in.

Following the repercussions of the documentary on British TV, when *O Globo's* report on the ITV film provoked speeches in Parliament and a conservative deputy Sandra Cavalcanti showed concern about the worldwide exposure of the killings, a deputy from the Socialist Party (PSB), Celio de Castro, who had more influence among elite and middle-class groups, also called for a CPI. The deputy Benedita da Silva renewed her calls for its approval.

To coincide with the voting in of the CPI the book *Vidas em risco* (Lives at Risk) was launched at a ceremony in the National Congress. The book, analysing 457 violent deaths of minors in Recife, São Paulo and Rio in 1989, was a joint publication by IBASE and the Centre for the Study of Violence of the University of São Paulo NEV-USP. The Minister for Health and the Child and the Chairwoman of the CBIA were present, together with representatives of 30 civil society organizations. Several deputies manifested their support for the campaign against the killing of children, and the CPI was finally approved in the Chamber. The book was officially handed to the President.

The launching of *Vidas em Risco* was covered by the national press and merited a report in *The Guardian*. *Jornal do Brasil's* report summarized the main findings of the research in terms of the profile of the victims and the culprits, and also reported on the main recommendations offered by the organizers. The report stressed that the research showed that poor children and adolescents were the main targets of the extermination groups. It also reported that the majority of the children killed had no criminal records, were not armed, and did not use drugs. The emphasis of the article was on the increase in murders, and a passage was quoted stating that it was reaching alarming levels and indicated a state of war.

The *Guardian* story on 3 April by Jan Rocha was headlined: "Brazil: Child killings socially accepted". It represented an angle not pursued by the national newspapers. The focus of the article was the conclusion of the book that pointed to the responsibility of society and the media. It cited research finding that society and the media portray the victims in a negative light, criminalising them as a way of

accounting for their murder. As a result, their deaths were seen not as the deaths of children and adolescents, but as the elimination of yet another petty thief or street child who was a threat to the security of the population. This was strengthened by another quotation blaming a society "which has absorbed the phenomenon as something natural", and the media, which "both reflects this acceptance and reinforces it, by the way it covers the issue". The article closed with the conclusion of the human rights organizations that the best way to reverse the situation was to "overcome the certainty of those responsible that they will remain unpunished for their crimes".

On 4 April, during a national meeting of the Justice Administration System for Infancy and Youth, Collor launched the "National Plan to Combat Violence Against Children and Adolescents", co-ordinated by the working group that provided technical and financial support to States, municipalities, and NGOs. It incorporated recommendations made by the street children's movement and other organizations in civil society, as well as Amnesty International.

Among the recommendations were: (1) Interruption of the cycle of impunity through rigorous investigations carried out by Civil Police Chiefs, specially chosen by the Movements for the Defence of Children and Adolescents under the surveillance of a special prosecutor, and, if necessary, collaboration from the Federal police; (2) a review of the police forces and the criteria for recruitment, selection and training as well as the juridical framework; (3) the creation of joint commissions similar to the National Commission in the states, and the implementation of systems to monitor the phenomenon of extermination, subject to these commissions, which should produce concrete data for preventing and combating violence against children and adolescents; (4) social mobilization through public opinion campaigns; (5) the restructuring of the CDDPH to respond to the allegations of violence; (6) the immediate implementation of the national council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CONANDA) (Guerra, 1991).

On the same day, the President also announced the allocation of funds to implement the plan and signed a treaty in the National Congress, submitting the draft of the law that created CONANDA (Guerra, 1991). Another change was the replacement of the Chair of the National Welfare Foundation for Children (CBIA)

by Antonio Carlos Gomes, a former UNICEF official, well respected by the social movement.

The complete implementation of the plan was scheduled for December 1992. It was discussed at a national meeting gathering Ministers for Justice, Health, Social Welfare and Foreign Relations and the Solicitor-General, together with state government authorities such as Secretaries of Justice and Public Security, Justice Attorneys, Commanding Officers of the Military Police and Chiefs of the Civil Police. In the meeting, the Acting Minister for Foreign Relations, Marcos Azambuja, warned that violence against children and adolescents in Brazil was damaging Brazil's image abroad, and that the only way for the country to achieve a position in international modern society was to define a clear policy to combat human rights violations.

The President's announcement of the allocation of funds for combating violence was reported by *Jornal do Brasil*. The new director of the CBIA was quoted as saying that the resources were given to the states, so that the financial difficulties of the police would not be an excuse for inaction. The report also quoted Mario Volpi, the national leader of the MNMMR, who said that he expected that the decision of the government to combat violence against children would break the cycle of impunity that currently protected the killers of children (JB 04.04.91).

Lives at Risk received considerable coverage in the national news section of *O Estado de São Paulo* on the occasion of the announcement of the National Plan. Although the immediate event in the report was the handing over of the book to the President, during the announcement it was the book, and not the plan, which featured in the headline: "Research surveys crime against minors". The subheadline stressed the report's finding that "violence does not only touch street children as 38% of the children and adolescents killed lived with their families". The article also reported that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the researchers found that the number of children involved in crime was small. The other theme of the article was the expected growth in the murders (OE 04.04.91).

Besides the book itself, the other sources for the report were a researcher from NEV-USP, Myriam Mesquita, who called attention to the related issue of domestic violence, and Paulo Sotero, the Executive Secretary of the Ministry of

Justice, who was quoted saying that: "We want to unite State and society to combat those crimes", a recurrent theme of government discourse in the period. A further item chose a dramatic story reported in the book, of a mother who had lost three sons, who were abducted and killed in Rio in 1989. And even Volmer do Nascimento, the Rio leader of the MNMMR, who had accused businessmen and judges, was interviewed to comment on the deaths.

In Rio, the NGOs, with the support of left politicians from the Workers' Party (PT) and the communist party (PCB), also organized meetings and a press conference in the Legislative Assembly of Rio. CEAP released the estimated figures of 420 killings of children for 1991. For the meeting, the elected vice-governor and the Archbishop of Rio from the conservative sector of the Church were also invited (JB 12.03.91).

The Legislative Assembly of Rio started to discuss the setting up of a CPI in late March. The author of the proposition, Paulo Melo, a member of the social democratic party (PSDB), was a former street child, elected as a deputy in the previous election. On 9 April, the commission of inquiry was installed in the Legislative Assembly of Rio. The CPI was approved by the leaders of all parties. Paulo Melo, who requested the CPI, said its work was mainly based on Nascimento's indictments. Nascimento, who had suggested the inquiry, was the first person to be heard in the CPI, and confirmed his charges of the involvement of judges, policemen and local businessmen in the extermination of children. In the following months, Melo was to become a new hero and a press personality himself, while Volmer do Nascimento was to have his image tarnished.

6.5 Nascimento disappears: media gimmick or media denigration?

The most sensational event in the conflict between sectors for and against the street children's movement in mid 1991 was the controversial kidnapping and subsequent reappearance of Volmer do Nascimento. The disappearance of the most famous leader of the MNMMR had international repercussions. And international

repercussion was indeed one of the most important angles in the national press coverage of the issue.

On 15 April, the Federal Police asked the Civil Police of Rio to provide police protection for Volmer do Nascimento. On 18 April, it withdrew Nascimento's bodyguard before the Civil Police had taken on the task. On Thursday 25 April, Nascimento went to the Bank and did not return, although that day he had an appointment with a reporter from the British paper *The Independent* in the morning, and a meeting with the women of an American Society at night. A further indication of the international prominence of the issue of the murder of Brazilian street children - something which could also be interpreted as a perfect setting and timing for an arranged event - was that on the same day, Princess Diana was visiting a nearby street children's centre, the São Martinho Foundation, linked to the Catholic Church.

When the disappearance of the Rio co-ordinator of the MNMMR was announced, deputies, representatives of NGOs, street children and common citizens gathered in a vigil on the steps of the Municipal Council. Volmer do Nascimento reappeared on Saturday 27th. On his return, he told the police he had been kidnapped by five men and later was able to escape, when the men left him alone in a car.

On 27 April, *Jornal do Brasil* gave prominence to the disappearance of Nascimento. Under a large headline, the coverage included stories narrating the episode, interviews with Volmer's girlfriend and his former wife, as well as with Roberto Santos from São Martinho. Even the governor of the state gave statements about the disappearance.

Jornal do Brasil also carried a report from the correspondent in Washington, who interviewed the Brazilian Ambassador in the US and a member of the American section of Amnesty International. The daily reported on the reaction of the human rights organization 'Americas Watch' and also interviewed foreign correspondents in Rio.

The consequences of the disappearance of the Rio leader of the MNMMR in Brazil and their impact abroad give a measure of the high profile of the issue he was associated with. In the States, Americas Watch sent a letter to *Jornal do Brasil* addressed to President Collor, expressing their concern and demanding action to find Nascimento. The disappearance was also aired on one of the most important radio

news programmes in the country, which was the source of information for an official of Amnesty International in the US, who expressed her distress over the news. The Brazilian Ambassador, Marcilio Moreira, talked about the negative impact of the event and pointed out that Nascimento was a symbol representing the Brazilian government's commitment to combating the 'extermination of children', since he was a member of the national commission created to tackle the problem.

In Rio, the governor blamed the federal police who suspended Nascimento's protection, and said it was a provocation from the extermination groups. The same opinion was expressed by friends, and the São Martinho head stated that when world attention was focused on the Princess's visit to street children, the disappearance of Volmer was an attempt by extermination groups to show their power and demoralize the state government.

The reaction of the foreign correspondents was quite distinct. The British news agency *Reuters* dispatched a three and a half page report to its clients, which was almost the same length as the report of the *United Press International (UPI)*. The *Washington Post's* correspondent, Julia Preston, also wired a long report, explaining that there was interest in the street children's movement in the US and that world public opinion was alert to the murder of any leader of popular movements in Brazil. On the other hand, James Brooke of the *New York Times* simply gathered the material, and the editor of the *Associated Press*, Todd Lewan, said he was going to wait for a solution to the case, as he could simply be hiding himself (JB 27.04.91).

Commenting on the response of the international press, as compared to the earlier coverage of the killing of Chico Mendes, *Jornal do Brasil* remarked that, in contrast to the case of the environmental champion of the Amazon, whose murder was noted by the international press before the Brazilian Press realized the importance of the matter, in this case the correspondents were waiting for the reports in the national press (JB 27.04.91).

Reuters' copy (27.04) by Tova Chapoval reported on the investigation of Nascimento's disappearance. The only source for the article was a police spokesman, who had the clear intention of denigrating Nascimento. The journalist, who appeared to be personally afraid of street children (personal interview), quoted him saying that

they were investigating his relationship with his "four lovers" and his "connections with a gambling boss".

On the same day, *The Guardian* ran a seven-paragraph news report delivered by Jan Rocha, stressing that Nascimento's life had been threatened many times and reporting that, according to the federal police, his bodyguard had been withdrawn because of lack of men and vehicles. The item also reported on the vigil started by human rights groups for the campaigner, and provided background on the MNMMR leader's struggle and the closing of his street children's shelter by a judge.

On 28 April, *Le Monde* published a report by Denis Hautin-Guiraut, the Rio correspondent, on "the disappearance of the most famous protector of street children in Rio". It stressed that Volmer do Nascimento had been at great risk after his bodyguard was withdrawn, due to "obscure negotiations" between the federal and state police forces. The article reported on the life-story of Volmer do Nascimento and his permanent anguish, after he had had the courage to denounce the links between death squads and some policemen and magistrates, based on the interview he gave to *Jornal do Brasil* in December. The other source for the story was Joãozinho Trinta, the samba school organizer, responsible for a street children's project already publicized by *Le Monde* in February, who voiced his anxiety. The correspondent also commented on the irony that on the same day that Nascimento disappeared, the press service of the Presidency had addressed a copy of the Statute to foreign correspondents, although most observers expected the worst to happen.

On 29 April, after Nascimento's reappearance, *Jornal do Brasil* reported that he was going to be heard by the police to clarify aspects of the story of the "alleged kidnapping" that were obscure, although this coverage was relatively low-profile.

El País (29.04.91) also carried an article by Ricardo Soca after the reappearance of the leader of the MNMMR, headlined: "The defender of the poor children of Brazil runs away from a death squad." After narrating the mysterious disappearance of Nascimento, Soca said that Nascimento had blamed organizations of businessmen and judges who funded death squads for his kidnapping.

On the following day, *Le Monde* also reported cautiously on the reappearance of Volmer. Denis Hautin-Guiraud remarked that the main Brazilian newspapers and television networks, which had prominently covered the event had

all described it as strange. The article reported on the protests following Nascimento's disappearance and assessed that the incident had the positive effect of assuring protection for him from the military police. *Reuters* pursued the issue for two days. On 29 April, the dispatch reported on Nascimento's interview on Brazilian television, describing how he had escaped the kidnappers. The next day, an article that opened with CEAP's press conference statements forecasting figures for the year returned to the subject of Volmer's kidnapping. The unsigned report stated that Nascimento's quick release had led to local press speculation that the kidnapping was a set up, but quoted Nascimento explaining that he believed they just wanted to discredit him.

Five days after Nascimento's disappearance, *Jornal do Brasil* (30.04.91) pointed out that the representative of the MNMMR announced that he would disconnect himself from the national committee against violence as a protest, until the kidnapping was resolved, and also to show the movement's concern with the slowness of justice, as none of the six exemplary cases had been solved. The paper also voiced Nascimento's thesis that the kidnapping had been planned to discredit him and weaken the movement, while the Secretary of Public Security was quoted as saying that the police were examining Nascimento's version carefully.

The same paper continued to follow the issue in early May, allowing the local leader of the street children's movement to further sustain his version. Nascimento explained that as he was already charged with three libel suits, his condemnation would be much easier if he was denigrated (JB 01.05.91). On 2 May, the paper reported that the police were considering closing the case, and warned that if it was proved that the kidnapping was a sham, Nascimento could be charged with false reporting of crime. Mario Volpi, the national leader of the MNMMR, released an official memo issued by the National Commission, stating that Nascimento's disappearance would not hamper the collaboration between state and society in favour of children and the commission expected that the incident would be completely unravelled.

The "alleged kidnapping" of Volmer also merited stories in the weeklies. After Nascimento's reappearance, *Isto É* (08.05.91) published a whole-page article by Marcela Esteves. Despite the title: "Fantastic plot", and superheader:

"kidnapping?", which cast doubt on the occurrence, and the report that Nascimento had told a "strange story", the article was not particularly negative towards the leader of the street children's movement. It pointed out that the story could damage his image, but that, incredible as it seemed, it "could not invalidate the brave campaign against the extermination of children" in which Nascimento was engaged. In addition, the story stated that "kidnapped or not", nobody had denied the macabre statistics of 93 children killed in the Baixada Fluminense, that he had exposed and condemned.

Veja, which so far had not shown interest in the problem of the killing of street children, dedicated stories in two issues to the event. The first story on 1 May, headlined "Strange trip", occupied around half a page. It described Nascimento as a protector of street children who had been marked to die. The story briefly mentioned his reappearance and mostly drew on the "bureaucratic" imbroglio between the police forces providing protection for him, and the reaction and search of his friends and relatives. It seems to indicate that *Veja* was going to report on the disappearance of the leader of the street children's movement, but shortly before the closing of the edition he reappeared, and the story was rewritten.

The following week, a longer story had a more detailed account of Nascimento's alleged kidnapping that was "full of disconnected and fantastic passages". The article, by Marcelo Auler, was entitled "A strange vanishing", and had the sub-title: "Even friends found the kidnapping narrated by the leader of the street children movement strange". Nonetheless, it explored the problems of Nascimento's narrative, but also pointed out contradictions in the version of a witness, who declared that he had met Nascimento during the period he had disappeared. It also quoted him as saying: "Everything was a plot to discredit and denigrate him and the movement".

At the end of the article, the magazine conceded that Nascimento had his biography in his favour, and reported that for years he had been denouncing the massacre of street children, work that had awarded him public respect and made him the target of extermination groups. It pointed out that his friend Dom Mauro, the Bishop of the Baixada, had not come to public light to defend him, but that the governor of Rio had declared that he accepted Nascimento's version.

It is important to note that the disappearance of the leader of the street children's movement - a political story - was the first event in the campaign against violence on children to sensitize *Veja* in the period, and it brought up the issue of the murders indirectly. This issue had previously been absent from its pages, although, as the story acknowledged, it had been known about for years.

The kidnapping of Volmer do Nascimento was the event that sparked further press coverage over the killing of street children following Amnesty's revelations in September 1990. Although the outspoken statements of the Minister for the Child, in January, were designed to create impact and had wide repercussions in the national press, they did not have the same effect on the international media.

As demonstrated, the struggle of the humble but brave protector of street children against the wicked killers and corrupt authorities had more media appeal than flamboyant actions and announced government plans. Also, it must be noted that the rules of entry and the thresholds are different in the case of the domestic and foreign press. If the President and other high status authorities enjoy nearly automatic access in the national press, if not necessarily favourable coverage, the leader of a Latin American country has to resort to much more daring attitudes or hire skilled public relations agencies to gain access to the international media.

6.6 International outrage for debt and funds

In April, a videotape was commissioned by the government to be exhibited abroad. Besides extracts of speeches by the President and talks by the Minister for the Child, the video produced by the independent company *Emavideo* also carried statements by the main leaders of the street children's movement, including Volmer do Nascimento, the first to speak, and also a representative of UNICEF. The video summarized the official discourse on the issue at the time, and was part of the government's strategy to acknowledge the problem, at the same time as the President presented himself as a champion for street children and bargained for resources.

The problem of violence against children and adolescents was related back to the country's colonial heritage, which had produced an unjust and unequal society

that generated the institutionalization of violence as a natural consequence, thereby exempting the present government from any responsibility. The video explained that in recent years a large contingent of children had taken to the streets to survive, and had become the victims of the socio-economic process and of a "social elite that regarded them as future marginals". The video showed police officers abusing children, but also provided figures on the social violence and poverty that characterized the life conditions of these children.

Against this background, governmental initiatives and the efforts of the street children's movement were presented in the historical context of the process of redemocratization of the country. Furthermore, the video related the poor socio-economic indicators to the foreign debt, and demonstrated that in recent years Brazil had exported a large sum of money to pay for debt taxes, while only 10% of this value had returned to the country as aid for social programmes. In the presidential speeches reproduced, Collor talked about his indignation with this campaign of extermination of children, and of his obligation to the nation and international society to guarantee their rights (see Ministério da Criança, 1991).

In April and May, the Minister for the Child visited countries in Europe and showed the film. In London, Alceni visited Amnesty International and UNICEF, and contacted British government officials, demanding funding for the recently launched programme for assistance to street children. Taking part in a Conference of the World Health Organization, the Minister pointed out that one of the causes of infant mortality was the need to use national resources to pay off foreign debt.

In his visit to Amnesty International, Alceni spoke about the measures taken by the government to combat violence against children and adolescents, and invited Ian Martin to take part in a meeting of the national council of human rights in June. While the Minister had talks with the General Secretary, a member of the Brazilian branch of the international human rights organization, was visiting the country and contacting local human rights groups and families of victims (FSP 03.06.91).

In Brazil, *O Globo* carried a report about the contacts between the Brazilian government and Amnesty, and the correspondent mentioned a "formal alliance" between the Collor government and the international organization (OG 10.05.91). In its annual report launched in the following year, Amnesty International registered

that they "welcomed the measures but noted that so far, the legislative and administrative measures taken by the Brazilian authorities seemed to have had no significant impact on the incidence of violence against children" (Amnesty International, 1992c). Reporting on the visit, *Jornal do Brasil* (11.05.91) stressed that the Minister had promised to stop the killers, and also that the new state governors were making efforts to investigate the killings. However, the situation was not the same in all states. The election of new governors reflected changes in the balance of power, which affected the outcome of the struggle between law and order groups and the advocacy groups campaigning for street children, and also the press coverage.

6.7 Violent power versus administrative power in Rio

In Rio, the Minors' Judge Liborni Siqueira was a fierce opponent of the reforms, but with the new administration in the state he had less support from the police. He resorted to writing articles in the newspapers criticizing the government and the NGOs for their "empty and even criminal attacks only aimed at distracting the attention of people from the real causes of the problems which affected children, thus forgotten, fantasized and masked." (JB 18.03.91).

The new state government was to engage in a war with the extermination groups. The new governor, Brizola, from the PDT linked to the International Socialist, chose a street child as a symbol of his government, to indicate that the issue was a priority concern. This is a further indicator of the level of political importance that the problem was gaining at the time. It also represented a serious economic problem since one of the results of the prominence of violence in Rio in the foreign media was that the number of tourists visiting the city capital dropped sharply, from 1.9 million in 1987 to 800,000 in 1990 (LM 28.02.92; EP 22.09.90).

Brizola's vice governor and Secretary of Public Security, Nilo Batista, was a lawyer who had been involved with human rights organizations and was concerned about police violence and extra legal killings. Nilo Batista set up a phone line to receive allegations about extermination groups and ordered immediate investigation

of the charges. As a consequence, some military police officers were imprisoned. Nonetheless, the extermination groups defied the government with more slaughters.

This was the theme of an editorial in *Jornal do Brasil*. The paper, which had previously criticized Brizola's former administration, welcomed the actions of the Rio government, and condemned the extermination groups who were responding with more crimes. *Jornal do Brasil* opposed the popular view that the extermination groups paid services to society, judging that they were not socially conscious angels, but bloody criminals who killed for villainous reasons such as drug trafficking. The editorial further pushed the government, claiming that preventing this kind of crime that damaged the image of the country so much, particularly since many victims were minors, was a matter of will and action.

Nonetheless, in the peripheral areas of the Baixada, the extermination groups, who had the support of some judges, still controlled the situation, both through violent coercion and the consent of the population, who were not guaranteed their basic needs and security by the state. In spite of the declared war between the extermination groups and the government in Rio, Pedro Capeta (Pedro the devil), the famous killer arrested after the Minister for the Child's indictments in January, was released after a trial in the municipality of Duque de Caxias in May. The jury was unanimous in absolving him (JB 17.05.91). While Volmer do Nascimento, who denounced his activities, was facing charges of libel and false communication of kidnapping, the acquittal of the killer was welcomed by shopkeepers and the dwellers of Duque de Caxias with a large party, celebrations and fireworks.

6.8 The police and street-children at war in São Paulo

In São Paulo, a commercial and industrial state, whose capital city São Paulo was among the five largest in the world, the new administration of the governor Fleury Filho had different priorities, and his Secretary for Public Security was not so concerned with human rights than with law and order. Regarding the courts, the Minors' Judge in São Paulo was also a fierce antagonist of the new legislation for children and adolescents, and, together with other judges, he barred the instigation of

the tutelary councils - one of the vital measures for the implementation of the Statute. He did this by arguing that the proceedings were against the Constitution. *O Estado de São Paulo* continued to carry the legal debate in its justice pages (see OE 24.04.91).

The law and order groups invested in strategies to gain access to the press and justify their actions. In late April, alarming figures of crime in São Paulo were released, and the publishing of a research report on the profile of criminals was also a blow to minors. The research, conducted by a sociologist in December 1988, and conveniently publicised now, showed that most criminals (62%) were between 16 to 25 years old (JB 28.04.91).

The release of the figures coincided with an operation to install 150 men policing the centre of São Paulo to address "an unbearable crime wave" in the city. These were the words of a Military Police Commander who ordered high visibility policing, the use of dogs and other law and order measures. The tighter police control in the city also generated complaints of ill-treatment of children and adolescents, as the activities of the "trombadinhas" won special attention from the police. This was reported by the Rio newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* (28.04.91).

The "crime wave" in São Paulo was national news, and even generated an editorial in *Jornal do Brasil*. However, besides the concern with the high rates of crime, *Jornal do Brasil* also showed concern with its equivalent in "evil effects on the other side of the coin": high rates of police violence, especially in São Paulo. The editorial also expressed indignation with the practices of extermination groups (JB 21.05.91). In São Paulo in May, the press reported that the Praça da Sé, the main square in the city centre, had turned into a battlefield between the police and the street children (FSP 11.05.91).

In this context, *Veja* (29.05.91), the largest news and current affairs weekly in Brazil with a readership of around a million readers, published a special report on the life and death of street children that was headlined: "Infancy of hatred, pain and blood". The ten-page coverage involved the work of reporters in Rio, São Paulo and Recife.

In the introduction, the street children were firstly characterized as young offenders, who could not be criminally punished even if they robbed and killed. The

first adolescent to be portrayed as "a beast in the jungle of the Brazilian cities" was said to have experimented with cocaine at the age of 5 (which is not common, as the drug most used by younger street children is glue), and was only 7 when he took part in his first armed assault. He was said to love nobody, to believe in nothing, and to be ready to kill.

The article provided an estimate, attributed to the government, that 800,000 boys and girls were on the streets daily, working to support their families. Although it observed that the majority of the children on the streets who did odd jobs were engaged in honest work, the high number (80,000) who were believed to be offenders and "dangerous bandits" had a terrifying effect, despite being only 10% of the total. The report did remark that the street children were feared as thousands of them robbed, killed, and died every day.

On the second page of the feature, statistics of the killing of children and adolescents are provided. Drawing on the data presented in *Lives at Risk*, which showed that the great majority of boys killed had no criminal records, they remarked that from a "legal point of view", the others were as "innocent as the businessman Paulo Cesar Farias". This was a clear indication that they did not really believe in the innocence of the children; rather, they thought that they had escaped with impunity. The aforementioned businessman linked to the President was so involved with corruption schemes that he later became the key actor in the impeachment of President Collor, provoked by a media campaign and investigation in which both *Veja* and *Isto É* played an important role (see José, 1996).

The other topic of the article was the response of government and society. Voluntary action in favour of the street children was praised, while state action was deeply criticized. Nonetheless, the Collor government was doubly judged. On the one hand, a programme to build five thousand centres for children was favourably mentioned; on the other, the Ministry for the Child was described as sheer ostentation. For *Veja*, the origin of the problem was in the family, as the children did not run away "to escape poverty, but to avoid a daily life of brutality, typical of families in crisis". Exploitation by criminal adults and impunity were the other elements in this picture.

The opening story quoted sources from the state government (Alda Marco Antonio, the Secretary for the Welfare of Minors in São Paulo), a leader of the street children's movement, (Mario Volpi, the National Secretary of the MNMMR), and the press officer of the Minister Alcení Guerra. The three other articles by Eliane Azevedo in Rio, Mario Simas in São Paulo, and Lula Costa Pinto in Recife, were mainly constructed of interviews with street children or their relatives, and were based on direct observation from the reporters, who had spent two weeks in touch with the street children and their mothers, or collecting information in the Coroner's office.

Through the life histories of two youngsters, one who worked on the streets to maintain his family, and another who was a "specialist" in assault, the Rio story described how both were led to the streets by disrupted families, whose parents had no jobs or were destroyed by alcoholism. The São Paulo piece drew on the lives of the children on the streets "playing like children, making love like adults and stealing like bandits". At the end of the article it was reported briefly that during Easter twelve boys had been kidnapped and beaten. Seven had returned to the square, while five, whose names were provided, were killed. One of the survivors showed a scar saying this resulted from a shooting from a policeman. The magazine simply provided the information, without any adjectives or comments. The Recife article, from one of the cities where the NGOs had found more support from the authorities in exposing the killings, was the only one that reported on how they died. But all of the victims and their friends cited were petty thieves. The first article finished by saying that despite the Ministry for the Child, the children "will remain on the streets, robbing, killing, loving and dying". As the order of the phrase suggests, their deaths appeared as a natural consequence of their violent lives.

In the ten pages, there was no mention of the expression "extermination of children", and just a brief passage where police violence appeared in a mother's account. It is true to say that, at the time, the emergence of the legislation establishing radical changes in the whole social welfare system and the judicial apparatus responsible for children and adolescents, had resulted in a worsening of the problem of violent behaviour by some street children. This was because the legislation had been passed without the implementation of the necessary structures,

and the problems were exacerbated by mistaken understanding, or deliberate misuse, of the law by the police and the street children. Commenting on the feature, one of the journalists and the editor justified the picture of the street children by saying that they did not want to take the priest's point of view of seeing the children as poor angels, but to present the reality (personal interview with Mario Simas and Paulo Moreira Leite, May 1994).

The *Veja* story was welcomed by some members of the CPI for giving prominence to street children's problems, an absent theme for the leading national magazine so far. However, the main concern here still appears to be the threat that they represented to society and its likely effect - more public fear of street children. The next chapter finishes this narrative and shows that the rise of the issue in the media and on the political agenda initially resulted in a further polarization of the public debate in the context of concerns about the rise in juvenile delinquency. This also resulted in more cross-national exchanges in civil society, prompting increased international pressure. Finally, the chapter shows how the operation of the international public sphere had resulted in significant changes in the responses of the Brazilian press, government and society to the issue of the killing of street children. This is further illustrated by the subsequent story carried by *Veja* six months later.

CHAPTER 7: STREET CHILDREN ON THE PUBLIC AGENDA

7.1 Public controversy increases

The report in the largest weekly in the country is a good indicator of the rise of the issue of violence against street children onto the Brazilian agenda, and it further raised public awareness. By mid 1991, involvement from both the President and the political system as a result of intense local and national mobilization and international pressure, had propelled the problem from the riots and banners in street demonstrations to cabinet meetings. On 29 May, the CPI to investigate the killing of children and adolescents was finally installed in the Federal Chamber. Similar Commissions were later installed in Municipal Councils and Legislative Assemblies in other states, as had already happened in Rio. By mid 1991, the issue had secured its place in the political arena and significant changes in policy had been deliberated, in line with increased media visibility. In some places this worked immediately to reduce the killings. For instance, in Aracaju, where the slaughter of four youths had provoked a large social outcry (see chapter five), violence against minors dropped 30% after children's judges set up twenty-nine special units to monitor the problem (FSP 09.04.91).

However, as a whole, the problem still did not touch important sectors of the middle and upper-classes and the general public, who were more concerned about violence committed by street children. This fact was differently reflected in coverage by the elite papers in more market oriented outlets, and the sensationalistic popular media. The framing of the story in the largest news and current affairs weekly in the country is an important indicator of the state of domestic public opinion about the problem at the time. It shows that if the street children's movement had been successful in gaining access to the national and international media, and especially in sensitizing international public opinion and ensuring that the message reached policy-makers, they nonetheless needed to continue fighting to promote their definitions of the problem - still resisted by important sectors in Brazilian society and the media. The movement believed that changes in the formulation of the issue were

crucial to the outcome of the congressional hearings, and necessary to guarantee the implementation of the measures established in both the new Statute and the National Plan to prevent and combat the killings.

From mid June, the issue of the 'extermination of children' gained much greater coverage in the press, as the CPI in the National Congress started its hearings. More figures and indictments against members and supporters of extermination groups, also exposed by the CPI in the Rio State Legislative Assembly and in other states, came to public attention. Newspapers covered statements by members of the street children's movement, the progressive Church, journalists who had investigated the problem, authorities, relatives of victims, and people accused of belonging to extermination groups. The hearings provided daily headlines, especially in newspapers such as *Jornal do Brasil*, which further upgraded the subject from the bottom of crime news pages to political coverage. However, the press were very selective regarding the sources of the statements in their coverage, as the news media had their own agendas when approaching the issue. Initially, the weeklies did not report on the debates.

Another event that raised media interest in the issue and helped to activate the public debate was the leak of a confidential report produced by the Department of Social and Political Order of the Federal Police - DOPS - to the *O Estado* news agency. This report registered 4611 deaths of minors in the previous three years, pointing to an increase of more than 75% in killings taking place in the country as a whole between 1988 and 1990. Among the reasons given for the killings, the report cited the exploitation of children by adults who employed them to beg and to deliver drugs. It also revealed the involvement of police officers in the drug gangs. The story, which concluded that violence against street children was growing at an alarming rate and was out of control, was published by *O Estado de São Paulo* and its sister paper *Jornal da Tarde* (05.06.91). It made a significant impact on the Brazilian press because here the "genocide" of street children was acknowledged by an "unsuspected" source. *The Guardian* (06.06.91) also carried a story based on the feature in the São Paulo daily, stressing that the coverage confirmed "the worst fears of human rights organizations".

Nonetheless, *O Estado* issued an editorial criticizing the NGOs for turning the revelations of such figures into an ideological matter. In spite of the report, the editorial in the conservative daily preferred to stress the issue of family violence. It also contested views linking the killings to politics or the economy, and judged that the problem was not confined to underdeveloped societies with a high income concentration, and that violence affected children of all social classes (see OE. 09.06.91).

In fact, the rise of the problem on the national agenda and the introduction of new legislation further exacerbated the controversy that already existed in the public sphere between sectors that mostly regarded street children as delinquents and a threat to society, and those who viewed children and adolescents as victims of society and therefore human beings with rights. The same phenomenon occurred regarding attitudes towards those who used non-discursive weapons to promote their views and achieve their aims, resorting instead to sheer violence. The last six months in this historical narrative are central to an understanding of the complex mediation between real relations and media representations, public and policy agendas, and the dynamics of the operation of the international public sphere.

The polarization described above brought old and new themes to the fore. On the one hand, some columnists called for tougher policing to protect law-abiding citizens from the dangerous street children. Advocates of this line of action explained the origins of the problem in terms of 'irresponsible parenthood' (OE 20.07.91). On the other hand, liberal intellectuals and politicians called for action to combat the impunity of crimes against children and for structural reforms. This group described the problem in terms of the social background of the children's families, claiming that the majority of the victims were poor (FSP 20.06.91). Some condemned the portrayal of street children as social monsters, while many were concerned that the killings denigrated Brazil's image abroad.

The contest for definition of the problem also revealed some extreme views. Portraits of the street children as guerrilla boys and bandits were present both in the apocalyptic interpretation of the Superior War School (ESG), and in the counter-cultural discourse of some intellectuals, who described the street children as invincible, and saw attitudes of resistance and creativity in their ways of evading

death, order, the law of private property and liberal morality, even if these were violent (Leite & Esteves, JB 14.07.91).

The ESG document produced in 1989 was put back into circulation. A radical right-wing group from inside the Army's think-tank distributed pamphlets with excerpts from the paper, which predicted that public order could only be guaranteed if the armed forces were called on to "neutralize and even destroy" the street children, who were turning into "hordes of bandits". This group also predicted that, in future, these bandits would outnumber the military. On this occasion, *Jornal do Brasil* (19.06.91) gave the issue prominence. This, in turn, provoked a sharp conflict between a number of military commanders and some intellectuals, creating yet more exposure for the issue of violence against street children (JB 20.06.91, 01.07.91, 04.07.91). Alongside the hard liners in the Army, other opponents of the philosophy of human rights were becoming more aggressive. In early June, the deputy Samuel Correa, who defended extra-legal killings of street children in his radio programmes, expressed his views in the Legislative Assembly of Rio. He claimed that the *pivete* of today is the bandit of tomorrow, and bandits must therefore be gunned down (reported in JB 15.10.91).

At the same time, the Statute for the Child and Adolescent again came under heavy fire. During a national meeting of Military Police Commanders, a Colonel voiced the Military Police leaders' dissatisfaction with the law, which they considered to have "failed to address the interests of the honest citizen daily attacked by pivetes". He further complained that everyone was concerned with the rights and freedom of the minors, and not with the rights of adult citizens. As *Jornal do Brasil* (20.06.91) reported, the Colonel declared that the Statute might be good for countries such as Switzerland or Sweden, but not for Brazil. The military police wanted changes in the law, since they believed that it allowed the *trombadinhas* to do whatever they wished, while at the same time preventing the police from detaining the minors.

7.2 Public spheres beyond frontiers

While the life and death of minors divided Brazilian society, international attention to the murders of children continued to spread. As Claire de Oliveira Neto of the French news agency *AFP* observed, the issue of the killing of street children had become an "obsession", meaning that every foreign journalist who visited the country was only interested in this. "Foreign media interest in the subject, and that of the international community at large continued to be noted by the Brazilian press. For instance, *O Globo* (27.08.91) reported on a ten-page feature published by the magazine *Der Spiegel*, as well as a TV documentary produced by the same media group. Meanwhile, *Jornal do Brasil* (14.06.91) commented on the interest of foreign film makers such as a Danish film director from the state television channel, who was producing a docudrama on the killings to be broadcast in several European countries. Also in June, Francisco Panizza, of Amnesty International revealed in an interview for a Brazilian newspaper, that the organization was receiving a huge number of requests for information on the murder of children and adolescents in Brazil (FS P 18.0 6.91).

Alongside media exposure of the problem, international human rights organizations continued to pressurize foreign agencies to protest against the killings, and foreign politicians and citizens became involved in the issues. On 4 June, for instance, at the annual meeting of the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs, officials answered questions about what the Dutch government had done to express their concerns to Brazilian authorities in the presence of Amnesty representatives and members of Parliament. At the same time, members of Brazilian NGOs were invited to meetings in foreign Parliaments. June also saw the visit of Danny Smith, the head of the Jubilee Campaign (a human rights group composed of members of the British Parliament), who came to Brazil together with Ana Capaldi, the wife of a musician from the British band Traffic who was organizing a group called "Brazilian Street Children's Appeal" to collect funds for street children's projects.

An important issue here is that these exchanges between foreign and domestic civil societies not only helped to publicize the issue, but also served to increase concern about the problem among other groups in Brazilian society. For

instance, Danny Smith and Ana Capaldi were present at a party to launch another project aimed at helping the street children - a "carnival factory" organized by Joäzinho Trinta, the director of a samba school. The party gathered Brazilian high society, representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), influential businessmen and TV stars. This got prominent coverage in *Jornal do Brasil* (14.06.91), and was the subject of a favourable report dispatched by *Reuters*.

As a result of this, sectors of the political, economic and intellectual elite were mobilized to campaign against violence towards children. The issue became a prominent theme for academic congresses in several fields (JB 26.07.91). Progressive musicians such as Chico Buarque de Holanda and Aquiles Reis joined with the head of IBASE, Herbert de Souza, in order to organize the production of a compact disc and videotape to raise funds for a project to help street children (JB 24.07.91, JB 30.08.91). At the time, there was also constant communication between Brazilian children's advocacy groups such as the MNMMR, NEV, CEAP, Pastoral do Menor, and international human rights groups such as Amnesty.

One important event, which provoked further responses from authorities and the press as part of the interaction between national and international spheres, was the publication of the 1991 Amnesty International Annual Report in mid July, and especially its impact on the European Parliament. *O Estado de São Paulo* (11.07.91) reported that the extermination of minors was the main topic on the organization's list of violations of human rights in Brazil. The paper interviewed the head of Amnesty in Brazil, who was quoted as saying that he expected the Collor government to take action regarding the abuse.

Following Amnesty's Report, the European Parliament published another resolution that caused great concern in Brazil. The resolution expressed its "disgust at the acts of violence against street children in Brazil and the apparent indifference with which the authorities in Brazil treat this problem". It called on the European Council to "draw the attention of the Brazilian authorities to the detrimental effect which the continuation of these human rights violations could have on relations between the EC and Brazil". The resolution asked the Commission to examine methods of helping the street children and also ways in which "it might wish to use

the 'conditionality principle' in economic relations with Brazil", should the violation of the rights of the children persist (see European Parliament, 1991).

The Brazilian government reacted to the resolution by issuing a statement that opposed it, since it appeared to disregard the measures the government was taking to solve the problem, and to represent a form of intimidation (FSP 10.08.91). On 23 July, a delegation of twenty-five members of the European Parliament arrived in Brazil for a two-day visit and to meet the President, the Minister of Economy and members of Congress. The street children's issue was one of the main concerns of the delegation, and before meeting the authorities they met representatives of the street children's movement.

The resolution also made a considerable impact on the Brazilian Press. With the title: "Brazil is condemned: murders of children outrage the European Parliament", *Jornal do Brasil* (12.07.91) highlighted the fact that the organization had demanded that the European Economic Commission make provision of economic aid to Brazil conditional upon government measures to ensure a better destiny for the street children. In his column in *Folha de São Paulo*, Gilberto Dimenstein claimed that the government was right to consider the resolution imprecise, and to complain about the economic threats, but argued that it would also have positive effects, since the government only took measures to combat violence against children in reaction to international pressure.

On 1 August, the damage to Brazil's image abroad that had come about as a consequence of the extermination of children was the main topic of discussion in the meeting of the National Council of Human Rights (CDDPH) (JB 01.08.91). As a response to international condemnation, the Ministry for Health and the Child announced a few days later that the Collor government had decided to allocate 4 billion dollars for the implementation of the Statute, and that part of these funds was to be released immediately for curbing violence against children (JB 11.08.91). He also announced that the CBIA was promoting seminars with Secretaries for Public Security and police chiefs to brief them about the new Code, which faced resistance from the judiciary. In the statement, the Minister rejected the charges of the president of the CPI, who claimed that the government was late in sending the bill to create the

National Council of Rights for Children and Adolescents, and blamed the Legislative for taking too much time over examining the proposal.

International condemnation, in the form of threats of economic retaliation, also had an important impact on Brazilian newspapers such as *O Estado de São Paulo*, which had acted until now as a carrier for a certain range of views in the public debate, shaping opinion by framing the problem in accordance with its general editorial line. *O Estado* then decided to conduct an independent investigation of the issue in order to establish the truth. Such an investigation was also destined to make an impact due to the prestige of the newspaper.

The São Paulo paper did not find the statistics produced by the NGOs trustworthy, and the chief editor, Augusto Nunes, wanted to check the real extent of the violence against minors and to investigate the profile of the victims. Instead of a crime correspondent, a special reporter with experience in social and economic affairs was assigned to the task. Roldão Arruda spent 19 days investigating deaths that occurred over a period of a month by visiting relatives and neighbours of the victims, as well as by interviewing police officers and examining police registers. In the Sunday edition of 4 August, the story was published across a two-page spread. It reported on 30 deaths of minors in São Paulo during July, and published their pictures together with the story of their own lives and those of their families, accompanied by a description of how they had died. The leading paragraph highlighted one of the main findings of the reporter's investigation: whereas some of the minors killed were actually robust bandits in spite of their youth, and had died in exchange of fire with police officers; others were workers with no criminal record. According to the newspaper, their murders confirmed the "banalization of death" in the poor boroughs on the periphery of São Paulo.

Another finding contradicted one of the arguments of the previous editorial in the newspaper: that is, the dead were poor. Nevertheless, the main conclusion of the story was that despite the report by the Federal Police, whose figures suggested a deliberate extermination of minors, there was not a campaign to kill criminal adolescents. Rather, it should be noted that for each minor killed, at least 3 adults were also murdered. The feature confirmed other findings from earlier surveys: the

majority of the victims were black and came from broken families that were also very large.

Two days later, *O Estado* dedicated a whole page to reporting the reactions of state authorities, members of the CPI of the Federal Chamber, leaders of the MNMMR and representatives of other NGOs. In the main story, the Governor, the Minors' Judge, the Secretary for the Minor and even the director of the Brazilian branch of Amnesty International commented on the feature, which was praised by all. A related story on the page gave figures for other states. The following day, the paper issued an editorial containing revelations from the Minors' Judge and the head of the state children's welfare agency that mothers wanted to put their children into state reformatories to protect them from the killers.

Such coverage by a traditional newspaper had a considerable impact on the state. At a press conference, the Governor announced he had ordered an immediate investigation into the 30 deaths, although he stressed that the newspaper's report made it clear that there were no organized extermination groups and that the deaths were a consequence of the general levels of violence in society (OE 06.08.91).

The report had further repercussions in civil society. The Brazilian Bar Association (OAB) created a special commission to investigate the summary executions of children and adolescents. The co-ordinator of the commission remarked that they had been alerted by the special report in the paper, and invited the reporter, Roldão Arruda, to the launch. Along with Gilberto Dimenstein, Arruda's views were heard in the opening proceedings. The researcher for NEV, Myriam Mesquita, also revealed that the paper's investigation had motivated a change in the centre's methods. Prior to this, it had based its surveys only on the violent deaths of children and adolescents that appeared in press reports.

The in-depth story in *O Estado de São Paulo* produced a change both in the way that the newspaper reported murders of children and adolescents itself, and in its relationship to the main sources of information within the state. *O Estado* became more receptive to criticisms of institutions such as the Brazilian Bar Association and the human rights centre of the University of São Paulo, which received more coverage from then on. Even members of the Minors' Pastoral, linked to the progressive sector of the Catholic Church, who had previously been vetoed by the

paper, were given more space for their campaign. From the point when Roldão was assigned to investigate the story, *O Estado de São Paulo* continued to report on the issue, and even created an icon to represent it: a small square with the silhouette of a boy's profile, an "x" marking his face as that of a youth destined to die.

On 7 August, the paper carried a story illustrating the changes. It had two precipitating events: one was the OAB's charge that two children had disappeared after accusing police officers of belonging to extermination groups; the other was the escape of two minors from a state reformatory, released by the Minors' Judge. Reports on escapes of young offenders usually received prominent coverage in the paper. However, on that day the escapes were downgraded in relation to the lawyer's allegations about the children's disappearance. The story was headed: "Children disappear from Sé, OAB charges". Even more important was the story's illustration, which took the form of a photograph showing two boys mugging a man while a third boy approached. The boy, depicted holding the victim while the other searched the man's pocket was quite robust. Nonetheless, the caption offered a completely different reading for the scene. It read: "Minors play at Sé square: fear of being murdered".

7.3 Ambivalent media responses

The later coverage of *Estado de São Paulo* provoked indignant protests. The reporter received threatening letters alleging that he was defending bandits. Many readers and outside sources complained that the newspaper was portraying dangerous minors as martyrs, and demanded that they looked at the other side of the problem (personal interviews with Roberto Gazzi and Roldão Arruda). This public reaction was to a certain extent related to a real increase in the criminal behaviour of the youths at the time. In São Paulo, and particularly the Sé Square, the situation worsened when police officers failed to take action over pickpocketing, mugging and burglaries, wrongly telling victims of the youths that they could not do anything because the new Statute prohibited any proceedings against minors. Street children then became more aggressive and defiant, and the press reported that they threatened

policemen, claiming that they would be the ones arrested if they tried to stop them. According to members of the Minors' Pastoral, this was part of the campaign of law and order sectors, which wanted the abolition of the new law (OE 28.08.91). It contributed to the spread of misinformation about the Statute, which was described as too permissive, among policemen, street children and the public. Nonetheless, newspapers such as *Jornal do Brasil* continued to fulfil the role of informing people about real changes brought by the new law, while other newspapers (see e.g. OG 29.09.91) and more sensational outlets, especially popular radio programmes, promoted a distorted perception of the law.

The contest between children's advocacy groups and the law and order sectors that took place daily on the streets was paralleled in the news media. In addition, it was now also staged in Parliament, where sectors denouncing the killings received a better hearing. In mid August in São Paulo, Father Lancelloti of the Minors' Pastoral released information revealing that children had disappeared from the square due to the activities of extermination groups in the area. In the CPI he repeated the charges and accused the police of practising torture and corruption (Câmara dos Deputados, 1992). The charges received prominent coverage in *Jornal do Brasil* (14.08.91) and were also reported in *O Estado de São Paulo* (13.08.91). From the police point of view, figures were released showing an increase in juvenile crime.

The two newspapers mentioned above sent reporters to the square to investigate both the charges brought by the Minors' Pastoral and complaints from shopkeepers and the police about violence committed by children. On the day the stories were published a youngster nicknamed Indinho was shot and killed in the square by a man who defended himself against the assault. Nonetheless, the headlines indicate that on this occasion the newspapers did examine the point of view of sectors concerned with violence committed by street children. In the São Paulo newspaper, the feature signed by Roldão Arruda read: "Sé Square suffers boys' guerrilla attack" (OE 18.08.91). Similarly, the Rio daily reported the story from correspondent José Maria Mayrink with the title: "Bandits and *trombadinhas* make a hell of Sé" (JB 18.08.91).

In the *O Estado* story, the reporter was the story-teller and narrated the fact as an eye-witness. In his narrative, groups of minors, including both children and adults, moved around the square searching for people to mug. In less than half an hour, five assaults were committed. Considering other accounts of the situation, the reporter's description might be an accurate one: nonetheless, this story shows again how, even in serious newspapers, devices used to attest that the story is a true reproduction of reality can be manipulated. The illustration accompanying the story depicts two youths attacking a man, probably to steal his wallet. The caption states that the boys had interrupted the interview to assault the old man and then had resumed their talk with the reporter, as if nothing had happened. What is striking about this story is that it uses the same picture that illustrated the former story on 7 August, only then it was used to signify minors "playing, afraid of being killed".

This does not mean that the story had no balance. It reported on the voluntary work undertaken by a former delinquent youth in order to regenerate other street children, and commented that during the night the police did not patrol the square, exposing the minors who slept there to violence too. The article also confirmed that the police only took action against the adults involved in offences. A few days later the newspaper (OE 25.08.91) published another signed feature, this time by Silvia Campolim, that was based on interviews with street children, sociologists and psychologists and provided more liberal explanations for their behaviour, arguing that they were not in fact very violent.

The main sources for the *Jornal do Brasil* story produced by the São Paulo office were a member of the Trade Association, who demanded more police repression and the Colonel, who was campaigning for the abolition of the Statute, since he believed that it was too tolerant of the minors while at the same time curtailing the rights of good citizens. However, in the same edition, the newspaper carried another long feature, signed by Antonio Mendes in Rio, for which the only sources were NGO members and the President of the CPI, who contested the attacks against the Statute. The focus here was violence against the children and adolescents.

Another indication that the children's advocacy organizations continued to make inroads within the elite and middle class sectors, in spite of the worsening problem of street children's offences and the campaign of the law and order groups,

was the special report in *Isto É* (28.08.91). This five-page feature drew on the death of Indinho to describe the life of street children in Rio, Recife and São Paulo, but contrasted starkly with the previous special report in *Veja*, and the latest story in *O Estado*, as well as with earlier stories in the news magazine itself. While these earlier stories mainly expressed concern with the violent behaviour of street children, this one took the need to protect minors as its standpoint, seeing them as a group threatened by misery, violence and the arbitrariness of family and society, including the police and the army. In this case, the young offenders featured in the article had been led to a criminal life because of their social background and the lack of opportunity produced by a failed state. The story showed their struggle to survive and focused on dramatic deaths of youths killed by police officers and security guards. In line with the human rights groups, it also stressed the need to stop such crimes going unpunished.

At the time, more sectors of society were led to form opinions and take sides, as the conflict over the "street children" acquired increased symbolic and real significance throughout the country. The work of the commissions of inquiry, which promoted public hearings and visits to violent areas, resulted in more indictments against bandits, merchants, police officers, officials of the justice system, and even judges involved with extermination groups. As a consequence, there were several arrests of members of these groups including police officers, especially in Rio.

Following inquiries of the CPIs, a few security firms were even closed down (JB 25.08.91). These groups then reacted with more killings of minors and other forms of intimidation. For instance, the deputy Paulo Melo, who was the president of the CPI in the Rio Legislative Assembly, and was becoming another press personality, received death threats. The same happened to witnesses, lawyers, and members of NGOs (JB 21.08.91; IE 13.11.91). One of the magistrates accused by Volmer do Nascimento of involvement with extermination groups condemned him for "false communication of crime" in the case of the kidnapping (JB 11.09.91, JB 02.10.91).

Meanwhile, the conflict between the Executive and the Judiciary increased. Following accusations received front page coverage in *Jornal do Brasil* (10.08.91), that officials in the judiciary were involved in the killings, the Minister for the Child

criticized the Judiciary at a press conference for failing to apply the new law (JB 11.08.91). This resistance turned into direct disobedience to the new law when, amidst news of a "wave of crime" committed by minors, minors' judges in Recife, Minas and Rio again adopted measures to detain large numbers of street children. These had the support of the police and associations of housewives and shop owners (see OG 23.8.91; JB 28.08.91; OE 29.08.91). But higher courts overruled their decisions following media debates and strong public protests from NGOs. The magistrate's offensive even provoked a meeting of the President with Ministers and a representative of the children's advocacy groups, Deodato Rivera. This resulted in more criticism of the Judiciary from both the Minister of the Child and even the President (See JB 28, 29, 30.08.91). The government then decided to invest more resources in training police officers to apply the new Code. In addition, a promotional campaign was launched on radio and television as part of the plan to combat violence (OE 29.08.91).

At the same time, the influential Cardinal Archbishop of Rio, from the conservative sector of the Catholic Church, organized a meeting that was attended by the governor of Rio and the Minister for the Child, and gathered other high authorities from the executive and judiciary to discuss the violence against children, with the additional participation of street educators (JB 28.08.91). He proposed to organize a forum to articulate the actions at federal, state and municipal levels. (JCR 23.11.91).

Also in Rio, a minors' judge, Siro Darlan, joined the side of the children's advocacy groups and started to publish statistics of violence against minors (personal interview), as the contest between the two sides over information continued. On the side of the campaigners against violence towards children, the NEV released statistics of murders of children and adolescents in São Paulo (IE 25.09.91), while the DCA FORUM published a long report on the life and death of children in Bahia, funded by UNICEF and the National Welfare Foundation (IE 16.10.91; CBIA and UNICEF; 1991), and the CBIA presented a dossier on children's deaths to the CPI. The CEAP, with the help of international NGOs, translated the report "The killing of Children and Adolescents in Brazil" to enable its distribution in Europe (OD 27.08.91). They also marched against the delay in the implementation of the Statute

(JB 12.10.91). In addition, debates between politicians, local authorities and human rights groups on the occasion of the CPI of the Federal Chamber's visits to other states resulted in favourable coverage and more regional press attention to violence against poor children and adolescents (see e.g. CB 11.09.91; JC 13.11.91; DP 11.09.91; OP C 15.10.91).

On the other side of the campaign, the dispute continued as figures about youth crime were released in September, and some offences committed by minors were sensationalized. In Minas Gerais, cases of street children who cut the pony-tails of other children to sell to transvestites and hairdressers became a novel journalistic issue, which gained more serious coverage when a seven-year-old girl was hit by a car while trying to escape the "gang with the scissors". Cases of youngsters who assaulted other youths to steal their trainers or watches also found prominence, and some provoked great public commotion, as when an adolescent in an industrial town in São Paulo was killed by an armed 17-year-old juvenile who wanted his trainers (OE 10.09.91, 11.09.91; JB 11.09.91).

These stories demonstrated a certain ambivalence of the press, with a range of frames and angles in play even in the prestige press. For instance, *O Estado* (OE 07.08.91) preferred the theme of the 'banalization of death', meaning that the killings were seen to be the result of the spread of violence. *Veja*, on the other hand (18.09.91), stressed the 'banalization of crimes', focusing on the senseless violence displayed by minors. Taking yet another viewpoint, *Jornal do Brasil* showed concern with the 'banalization of violence', bemoaning the lack of indignation caused by the frequency of the killings (see interview with the city editor of NYT 17.02.91).

7.4 Tell the world that Brazil has awakened to the drama

Despite these differences of view, this phase saw certain important developments in the coverage of the outlets examined. As demonstrated above, the conservative *O Estado de São Paulo* produced independent investigations of the murders in the same way that more liberal newspapers such as *Jornal do Brasil* had done before. Although this did not mean an adherence to the NGOs' claims, and in the second investigative report on the murders of minors, figures on juvenile

offences were also provided (OE 08.09.91), the paper did afford more space to sources campaigning against the killings. *Isto É*, the second largest weekly, which had previously taken interest in the killings only indirectly, also started to give more attention to the issue (See also IE 25.09.91, 16.10.91, 13.11.91, 18.12.91, 25.12.91). More importantly, the papers' definition of the problem changed in favour of the reformers. Yet there were still large sectors of public opinion, including those represented by *Veja*, which were more concerned with violent minors, ignoring or justifying their killings.

On Children's Day (12 October), President Collor addressed the nation on radio and television, calling on society to change its attitudes and to mobilize to rescue the children and youths caught up in the "silent catastrophe of abandonment and violence". He also made an appeal to the municipal governments to set up the Councils established in the new legislation. The speech's main aim was to publicize the government's actions in favour of children and adolescents and to announce the launch of new aid programmes. Among these were a programme providing 5000 training jobs for youngsters in the public service; funds allocated for SOS phone lines to reduce violence against children and adolescents; and a Prosecutor appointed in the critical states to follow-up investigations of cases of the murder of children. It was hoped that this publicity campaign in the national press would influence foreign correspondents.

In this phase, the federal government changed its publicity strategies, as the issue had turned into a serious diplomatic embarrassment. In his statement to the CPI, the Minister for Foreign Relations observed that the killing of children was the problem that was perpetuating the negative image of Brazil abroad. He said that Brazil was the only country that had officially acknowledged murders of children and was paying dearly for that. However, he refused to hire international firms that would lobby to improve Brazil's image (Câmara dos Deputados, 1992; GM 04.10.91; OE 29.08.91).

Although the President declared that it was important to publicize the situation to the whole world, it was for this reason that he now wanted to minimize the killings and focus on the government's efforts to resolve the problem, instead of sensationalizing the killings abroad. In doing so, the government counted on the help

of UNICEF. For instance, when the actor and public relations Ambassador for UNICEF, Roger Moore, visited the President and the National Congress, calling for the implementation of the National Council for the Rights of Children, he promised to publicize abroad the efforts that the government was making to help the children, as the headlines in the foreign media only focused on the problems (JB 02.10.91). The government had learned that by themselves they could not control the flow of information, particularly as it entered the international public sphere, and that the international scandal which they had helped to fuel had resulted for the most part in international condemnation.

This was to be evidenced further during a debate on the Italian TV channel RAI-3, which followed the screening of a documentary on the killing of children in early November. In the debate, which involved leaders of the Catholic Church including Dom Evaristo Arns, and of the MNMMR, mostly linked to the Workers Party, the government was heavily criticized, and the Minister for the Child, representing the government, complained of the lack of balance due to the overrepresentation of members of the opposition. The Pope's visit to Brazil also gave the government occasion for more negative publicity, as newspapers such as the *New York Times* (21.10.91) and *El País* reported on John Paul's message to the President, which condemned the killings.

Some NGOs also complained about the media framing of the problem, and particularly their horrifying depiction of summary executions in the international media, for presupposing a passive, inactive and indifferent society. In response, a group of university researchers published a book cataloguing more than 620 institutions of assistance to underprivileged and street children in Rio de Janeiro, to demonstrate that civil society had gradually been stirred to action (Valladares and Impelizeri, 1992). They received prominent coverage in *Jornal do Brasil* which carried a long interview with the authors and later published a favourable review of the book in its cultural supplement (JB 04.09.91; JB 26.10.91).

The headline in the national news section of the Rio daily on 10 November reflected this change of focus. It read: "The country awakens to the drama of the street children". The story reported that the international scandal seemed to be having an effect on the nation's conscience and thereby forcing the government to

take effective action instead of disseminating mere rhetoric. The article reported on measures taken by the state and federal governments as well as civil society, and especially on the work of the national Commission, composed of governmental and non-governmental organizations, that was charged with investigating cases of violence all over the country to end impunity. A follow-up article (JB 11.11.91) also drew on the Commission's activities. These reports came from an official source in the Ministry of Justice, who also commented on the slowness of justice.

Nonetheless, *Jornal do Brasil* carried an editorial on the following day which considered the impact of the RAI-3 programme *Urgent Transmission* in Italy, noting that the programme was classified as suitable only for children older than 14 years old, because of the violent scenes. The editorial stressed that the programme had created a most unusual outcry in Italian society, and that the network had received several phone calls from indignant viewers who expressed both their shock and their willingness to help. The paper judged that the government had good reason to complain about the unbalanced debate, but again considered that international public interest was likely to produce positive effects in the country. The main theme of the editorial was a call for Brazilian society to stop waiting for the state to solve the problem, and start acting (JB 12.11.91).

A few days later, a slaughter in the Nova Jerusalem slum on the periphery of Rio shocked Brazilian society and provided the opportunity for government and NGOs to show their level of concern with the problem. Six adolescents, who commonly committed petty thefts in the area were sniffing glue and drinking in a shack when they were kidnapped by three men and executed by a nearby river. A 16 year old girl, who was hit in the head by a bullet, survived by pretending to be dead and later exposed the killings. Although not an unusual event in itself, the response to this demonstrates its increased importance in the political arena, and changes in both press coverage and public opinion. Chapter four described a similar slaughter in August 1989, which was practically ignored. In contrast, this one received unprecedented coverage in the domestic press and prompted immediate responses from society and the government. It was also reported in the foreign press (e.g. JB 16.11.91, 17.11.91, 18.11.91, 19.11.91, 20.11.91, 21.11.91, 22.11.91, 24.11.91, 25.11.91, 26.11.91, 28.11.91, 29.11.91, 30.11.91, 03.12.91, 08.12.91; OE 16.11.91,

20.11.91, 21.11.91, 22.11.91; VE 27.11.91; EP 25.11.91; LM 30.11.91). The main national news programme, TV Globo's *Jornal Nacional* also carried an interview with Andrea (JB 30.11.91). The investigation was started immediately and a suspect was arrested after only five days. Two years later, five people accused of the murders were condemned to 93 years of imprisonment (later reduced to 45 years) (JB 28.04.96).

The slaughter also altered the pace of some initiatives in examination. For instance, federal government's decision to monitor investigations of murders of children themselves, instead of leaving it as the responsibility of the state police (a measure that had always been demanded by the NGOs), was finally initiated. The head of the Federal Police asked for copies of the inquiry on the slaughter and the Solicitor General of the Republic appointed a special prosecutor solely to follow the cases of summary executions of street children in the states. It was decided that political pressure and technical support should be applied to the state prosecutors. In addition, an agreement was made between the CBIA and the office of the Solicitor General, Aristides Junqueira, that a computer database should be set up with all the information on the killings - another demand of the human rights organizations. (JB 30.11.91) News of the dismantling of extermination groups in states such as Bahia and Ceará followed.

In the public debate that ensued, the episode was taken by the authorities to be a demonstration of governmental effort to combat violence against children as the Minister for the Child, Alcení Guerra, considered the killing to be an act of revenge motivated by the firm action of the Rio police, who had been dismantling some extermination groups (JB 18.11.91). Some deputies and representatives of NGOs also considered the incident to be a provocation from sectors believing in social cleansing.

A statistical controversy over the killings followed, which divided the government and the NGOs, and also sectors within them. Some presented figures indicating a decline in deaths and a falling trend, while others published reports which indicated an increase (JB 23.11.91 & 11.12.91). The federal government's official line was that there was a decrease brought about by the action of the police and the judiciary, and also by the performance of the press and organized society (JB

20.11.91, 24.11.91, EP 25.11.91). This was in line with a survey by the university centre NEPI commissioned by CBLA (JB & OG 12.11.91).

The "Nova Jerusalem" slaughter generated front-page stories, long features and editorial comments in *Jornal do Brasil*, which still linked the event to the astonishment and indignation that the killing of children had provoked in Italian society. Despite previous stories, the editorial judged that the issue had not yet provoked enough outrage in the country. The paper criticized the Brazilian authorities for presenting the issue as a social problem with structural causes, making this an excuse for inaction (JB 19.11.91).

The reporting in *O Estado de São Paulo*, predictably not as prominent as in the Rio daily, called attention to foreign press interest in the matter and to other aspects of the problem - namely family violence - which it saw to be the main reason for children taking to the streets (EP 22.11.91). A better indicator of the event's impact on society and the national press was its coverage in the leading weekly *Veja*, which had previously expressed concern with the threat that the youths represented to society.

The two-page story in *Veja* (27.11.91) took as its sources the victim, the arrested killer, a Minors' Judge who was concerned with the killings, and Herbert de Souza of IBASE. Although this incident partly corroborated the magazine's previous definition of the problem, as these adolescents were offenders (although not violent ones), the focus of this story headed "Brazilian tragedy" was not their criminal behaviour, but rather the issue of violence against them. The unusual effect of the slaughter on Brazilian society was captured in the *El País* headline: "A new killing of children touches Brazil", signed by Ricardo Soca. The story also reproduced arguments between Volmer do Nascimento and the Minister Alcení Guerra (EP 25.11.91).

A further indicator of the level of public reaction to the issue was evident in a street march on Thanksgiving Day organized by the Catholic Church, the CBLA, the municipal government and NGOs, but which also involved international organizations such as UNICEF, Childhope and Caritas. The march "In Defence of Life" gathered around 3000 people (estimations varied between 2000 to 6000) in the centre of Rio, who staged a dramatic protest and performance with the participation

of renowned actors and musicians, as well as political personalities. Street children told their stories over the microphone, and the participants chanted and demanded justice. Passers by engaged in the protest, which had an emotional climax when people knelt down on the streets for a minute of silence in homage to the dead children. Similar protests took place in other cities.

This march was also aimed at engaging international public opinion. In a long interview in *Jornal do Brasil* prior to the march, Roberto Santos of the São Martinho Foundation remarked that Brazil was awakening to the slaughters which had been happening for a long time. He also stated that international opinion had become aware of the murder of children in Brazil, and it was now necessary for them to become aware that Brazilians had decided to assist and defend the children (JB 26.11.91). The march was reported by *Le Monde* (28.11.91), which published a short item based on a Reuters dispatch.

The protest was awarded an editorial in *Jornal do Brasil* headlined: "Signs of Life", which closed with the optimistic view that this demonstrated that a significant sector of society was not insensitive to the problem of the minor, which had already shocked civilized consciences all over the world (JB 03.12.91:10). In *O Estado de São Paulo*, the Rio demonstration was also reported, but without the same prominence (OE 29.11.91).

In December, President Collor travelled to Italy to meet the Prime Minister, the President and business leaders, expecting to borrow 700 million dollars. Collor was keen to invite the head of CBIA to accompany him to present what the government was doing to solve the problem of the killing of street children and to contest the MNMMR accusations on TV, thereby establishing "the truth around the facts" (JB 08.12.91). The government also presented figures showing a decrease of the number of killings in 1991 in Salvador and Rio. It is significant that in the coverage of the presidential trip in *Isto É* (18.12.91), the killing of children was the lead issue of the story headlined "Useless pretence".

By the end of the year the most important event in relation to the campaign against the extermination of children was the release of the CPI of the Federal Chamber's conclusions, which received prominent coverage in the Brazilian Press, but were mostly ignored by the foreign newspapers. Of the foreign outlets examined,

only the Spanish daily briefly reported on the CPI's report (EP 07.10.91), although the wires dispatched stories on the issue. In the course of eight months of work, the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry visited seven states, interviewed six governors, staged 41 public hearings, and heard the testimonies of 73 representatives of civil society (including street children or their relatives and even individuals accused of belonging to extermination groups) and also of 41 public officials and authorities, including State Ministers.

The CPI recommended the indictment of around a hundred individuals for involvement with extermination groups and the investigation of several cases of murder in different states, including measures to provide protection for witnesses. As an immediate consequence of the CPI report, some security firms were closed down and the deputy Samuel Correa's radio programme, whose content was considered to be an apology to crime, ceased to be broadcast.

In addition, bills were proposed that aimed to control of the use of weapons; restrict the activities of security firms; change the law to enable police officers involved with extermination groups to be tried by civil justice instead of military courts; classify these murders as hideous crimes, so that bail could not be granted. Several changes in public policy at the level of basic social policies, assistance, rights and special protection for children at risk were also proposed, alongside recommendations for the full implementation of the Statute, in line with the NGOs' demands and UNICEF's principles. The suggested measures to "break the cycle of impunity" encompassed most of the recommendations of the street children's movement and of international organizations such as Amnesty International.

In its conclusions, the Commission stressed that all sectors of Brazilian society were somehow to blame for perpetuating and continuing such abominable genocide, whether by omission or commission. The CPI also concluded that "it is true that the Brazilian press only moved this issue from the police pages to the political pages after the foreign press did so" (Câmara dos Deputados, 1992: 18). However, the report acknowledged that some steps had been taken and that there were signs of confidence that the Nation would win the challenge. This optimistic view was furthered by recognition of the global dimension of human rights violations, whereby the extermination of children in Brazil became part of the

international community's agenda, as demonstrated by the international press coverage and political action of human rights organizations and institutions such as the European Parliament.

A representative of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights came to visit the country on a special mission to assess what the government was doing to combat the problem of the "extermination of children" (OG 06.12.91). One of the most radical critics of the government, Volmer do Nascimento of the MNMMR, was given an award by the Spanish Association for Human Rights. As *El País* prominently reported, he said at the time that the only hope for preventing the killings was to sensitize the Brazilian middle-class (EP 14.12.91). Signs that this had begun to happen could be seen in the 1991 retrospective stories in the Brazilian weeklies. The picture, "extermination of boys", was chosen by *Veja* as one of the most revolting scenes of the year. (VE 01.01.92). And in the last edition of 1991, *Isto É* carried a long feature highlighting the systematic killing of the children as the fact that most marked the year (IE 25.12.91). In addition, the mothers of the youngsters who disappeared in Acari, and the girl who survived the slaughter in Nova Jerusalem, were invited for a special appearance on one of the programmes with the highest ratings on Brazilian Television. On the celebrated singer Roberto Carlos's annual show, broadcast on New Year's Eve by TV Globo, they were to symbolize the struggle against violence in the country (OD 29.11.91).

This chapter ends the narrative of the rise to prominence of the issue of the killing of street children in Brazil and the changes in policy-making over five years. As seen, it was a long and uphill struggle that began at least twelve years ago. As shown in chapter two, it was 1979 (not only coincidentally the International Year of the Child), when the first revelations about the extra-legal killing of minors were published.

Naturally, this was not the end of this story and, as I have demonstrated, it did not have a unilinear development. In 1992, the theme of street children as "adults in crime" (*Isto É* 04.03.1992) made the headlines in the Brazilian press following a wave of murders committed by minors. But the Earth Summit held in Rio provided the occasion for further transnational exchanges between non-governmental organizations concerned with the issue of violence against street children, which

gained even more prominence and was brought to the attention of a wider audience after it was broadcast live by global networks such as CNN. In 1993, the murder of eight street children near the Candelaria Church in Rio prompted unprecedented coverage in Brazil and abroad, with national and international consequences. In the national debate, a campaign by sectors of the media threatened to turn the NGOs into the new folk devils, but the International Human Rights Conference in Vienna offered a global forum for their campaign, and other proposals of the street children's movement were incorporated in official human rights plans, later gaining international recognition.

Television campaigns against police violence also brought this problem to a wider audience. Slaughters of minors by the police, death squads and drug gangs still take place, since changes in policies addressing such complex problems require time, effort and resources before they produce results, and their roots are situated in conditions which require global solutions. But the crimes are now more likely to be punished. Waves of media reporting about the violent behaviour of street children and youths who are the work force of drug dealers occasionally emerge. However, while civil society is vigilant, and subordinate voices are permitted in a public sphere that is further expanded by the globalization of citizenship and media visibility, they are no longer likely to take the form of 'moral panics' and result in reactionary policies.

Hence, the Statute for Children and Adolescents has not been replaced, and positive concerns about the situation of poor children and adolescents have been definitively incorporated into law, institutions and public discourse. The street children have been a common theme for soap operas, plays, songs and conversations in homes and on the streets, as well as for news articles and parliamentary debates. This has been further stimulated by the creation of new skilled NGOs such as ANDI – a news agency for children's rights - which permanently feeds and monitors the media and links networks of children's defence groups, so that minors are discussed in much broader terms than simply the threat they may pose to society.

The next chapter, which concludes this study, discusses, on the one hand, the influences that help to explain the press coverage, and on the other, the relations between the media, public opinion and public policy outcomes. It draws together the

threads that explain why, in contrast to the early campaigners, the street children's movement succeeded this time in promoting changes in legislation and in mobilizing both the press and society to act on the issue of violence against street children.

CHAPTER 8: SHAPING NEWS THROUGH LOCAL GLOBAL INTERACTIONS

8.1 Introduction

This study has narrated the struggle to change policy and combat violence against poor children and adolescents in Brazil. As indicated in chapter two, the first attempt to reform the Minors' Code within the framework of children's rights and to arouse public concern about the killing of 'minors' in the late 1970s did not succeed. In a climate of moral panic about urban violence and juvenile delinquency, a bill disregarding the proposed changes was drafted by a corporation of Magistrates, with the support of government ministers, and was passed in Congress without debate.

However, as the preceding chapters demonstrate, the early 1990s saw the Code replaced by the Statute for Children and Adolescents, in the wake of intense debate and international condemnation of the 'killing of children'. The Statute radically changed the legal framework through which the issue was constituted, despite opposition from magistrates and other important sectors in the spheres of law and order. A national 'Plan to Combat Violence Against Children' was launched, in addition to a CPI set up in Congress to investigate the killings. Several other deliberative, individual and substantive measures followed (see Protesse et al, 1991 for concepts).

This chapter sets out to examine the reasons why these measures had two such different outcomes, separated temporally by little more than a decade. Which were the main factors contributing to the rise of the issue of the killing of street children on media and policy agendas? In order to answer this question, the final chapter draws on the historical narrative and textual analysis presented earlier in the thesis, and also on interviews with journalists, representatives of civil society organizations, and policy-makers. (Unless otherwise stated, the interviews were conducted between May and June 1994).

8.2 Context and contest

8.2.1 Escalating numbers of murders

Some journalists have suggested that the first and most obvious explanation for the rise of the issue of the killing of street children on media and policy agendas is the escalation of the problem itself. Although some scholars influenced by a symbolic interactionist model have rightly argued that social problems are not mere reflections of objective conditions (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988; Hansen, 1991), changes in real conditions cannot be neglected.

For example, statistics produced after the event indicate a sharp increase in the rate of murders as causes of death among youths, especially those between 15 and 17 years of age (Pinto, 1991; USP/NEV/CTV, 1993). Although this is not a sufficient explanation for the change that occurred during the 1980s, it was certainly this increase in slaughters of street children and adolescents that led to a "crisis of consciousness" on the periphery. As demonstrated in chapter three, as early as 1987, or even before, frequent unwarranted killings of youths at the hands of the police led poor communities to stage their protest by blocking roads or rioting, as they struggled to call attention to these arbitrary deaths. Such actions initially proved counterproductive, because the disorderly communities were then regarded as the cause of the problem. However, the cries from the periphery reverberated throughout other sectors of the community, and were heard by voluntary associations, advocacy groups, bishops, concerned journalists, academics and left-wing politicians. This would not have been possible without changes in the configuration of the public sphere, which in turn were the product of changes in the political environment.

8.2.2 A new political climate

A second and more encompassing reason for the different outcomes described above relates to the change in the political climate. As demonstrated in chapter two, the civil-military coalition, which seized power with the support of the United States government, had been ruling the country by means of authoritarian

repression since 1964, as well as employing other forms of economic, political and ideological control. From 1968 onwards, following student unrest and growing protest from workers, the middle classes and the political and religious opposition, exceptional measures were taken to further institutionalize the National State Security and control private life, civil society, the media, and the political system. These procedures involved arbitrary legislation and justified extra-legal force. Among other things, they resulted in the curtailment of political rights, exile of dissidents, arrests, torture and the disappearance of a number of citizens, politicians and journalists.

Alongside the repressive means of control outlined above, censorship was imposed on major media outlets prior to publishing to such an extent that self-censorship became a common practice employed by Brazilian newspapers. Papers such as *Jornal do Brasil*, and *O Estado de São Paulo* found creative ways to inform their readership when stories had been censored, but were punished when they reacted against the excesses of the regime (Marconi, 1980). The international press was also closely monitored by Brazilian authorities, and foreign journalists were subjected to all sorts of pressure. In Brazil, the heavy use of government news management techniques has been a characteristic of periods of dictatorship. During the military governments, the Special Public Relations Division (AERP) - a unit directly linked to the presidential office - planned the distribution of propaganda and controlled communication inside the country. It also aimed to shape Brazil's image abroad (See Andrade, 1981). Later, during the transition to a democratic regime, these procedures came to be deeply mistrusted.

From 1974, following a global economic recession and the deepening of the crisis of legitimacy of the military regime that occurred after 1978, a slow and gradual transition to democracy was initiated. The social movements of workers and dwellers on the periphery were still heavily repressed by the authoritarian regime, but the limited political opening allowed more space for participation by middle-class and elite sectors of the opposition. These groups struggled to re-establish individual guarantees, civil liberties and human rights. The conflict resulted in the abolition of censorship and the granting of a political amnesty.

Nevertheless, when the Minors' Code was accepted in 1979 and the first revelations of killings of minors were published, the conditions for the functioning of a liberal public sphere as outlined in chapter one were not yet ripe. Voluntary associations concerned with the welfare of street children were at that time mainly charitable organizations, and the embryonic movement for the defence of minors did not have a broader support and organization in civil society. In this period, human rights for marginal groups were not on the agenda of the most important groups in the Opposition.

During the 1980s, with the transition to liberal democracy and the return to direct elections and civilian governments, the power of the state to control civil society and the press diminished to the extent that freedom of speech, publishing and organization (including that of political parties on the left) were guaranteed. However, the state remained the main player in the economy, meaning that state power over news organizations could still be exerted by facilitating or denying access to government information, credit, advertising and licenses to import equipment. In this context, commercial broadcasting media depended on concessions signed by the president.

But this did not prevent some quality domestic newspapers and news magazines from "scrutinizing the performance of the transitional government and denouncing corruption and nepotism" (Information Freedom and Censorship, 1991). At this time, issues that had previously been forbidden gained visibility. As Alan Riding, the then correspondent of the *New York Times* wrote in early 1989: "with press freedom restored, newspapers have also taken to exposing official violence, corruption, ... and social injustice, obliging Brazilians to see their own country in a new, crudely realistic light" (Riding, NYT 21.03.89: 1). Foreign journalists also benefited from these changes in the political climate.

Newspapers and news magazines were important actors in the rebuilding and strengthening of the public sphere, especially through investigative journalism, as practised by newspapers such as *Jornal do Brasil* (Costa, 1997a). Other newspapers such as *Folha de São Paulo* opened their columns to centre-left politicians and intellectuals, including progressive bishops. However, it was the organizations in civil society and the new social movements attuned to the periphery that were largely

responsible for raising awareness of the demands of subordinate groups and for politicizing the issues (Costa, 1997a; Paoli, 1982) later taken up by the press. The rebirth of civil society served to enable a better association of informal networks of social movements, locally, nationally and internationally.

8.2.3 The mobilization of civil society

The third important factor in the shift in social and political attitude towards the killing of street children that occurred in Brazil between the late 1970s and the early 1990s was the increasing mobilization of civil society. After the political amnesty, opposition groups returning from exile organized into non-governmental associations such as IBASE, which further contributed to the politicization of the debate that had begun with institutions such as the CNBB, OAB and ABI. Together with the Catholic Church and parties on the political left, the NGOs helped to structure the emerging social movements of neighbourhood associations on the periphery and the community ecclesiastical bases. As reported in chapter two, several groups for the defence of minors were formed in the mid 1980s and the National Movement of Street Children was organized with the support of the Catholic Church, UNICEF and progressive state officials.

The moment of drafting a new Constitution provided a favourable environment for subordinate groups to gather and associate with other sectors in society, including the press, in order to discuss human rights issues. Citizens and journalists were faced with new problems, new demands and a new role. At this time, the role of news reporters as citizens and professionals was particularly blurred. The National Federation of Journalists was engaged in the National Front of Struggle for Democratic Policies of Communication, alongside academics and secular and religious organizations such as the IBASE and the CNBB (For the proposals see Amorim, 1989). The Federation was also involved in the campaign for children's rights.

As previously reported, in the context of constitutional reform, the street children's movement campaigned for changes in policy for children and adolescents, and submitted a proposal for a new Statute for Children and Adolescents. This was approved, despite deep opposition from law and order sectors. Particularly after mid

1988, some of these groups started to survey and expose the killings. They organized acts of protest, street marches, political meetings and national conferences, as well as invading parliaments, producing reports on the murders and writing articles to mobilize street children and society and to call for the approval of the Statute. They also contacted international organizations such as the Defence for Children International (DCI) and foreign journalists in order to expose the killings abroad.

The street children's movement, supported by radical politicians, concerned journalists and academics, produced a counter-discourse which challenged common sense views about street children and the dominant definitions of their murders. These groups were able to initiate a public controversy in Brazilian society and the media and to broaden support for the cause among the more enlightened sectors of society. By mid 1990, more influential voices were starting to resonate in the public sphere. The first administrative responses, such as the opening of 200 inquests about extermination groups in Rio (JB 08.04.90) and the creation of a special group in the police to hunt down lynch mobs in São Paulo (GD 18.05.90) were initiated.

Nonetheless, the efforts of national civil society to heed the cries from the peripheries initially provoked little public outrage and no substantive reactions from the political system (see Chapter three). As the *Guardian* correspondent remarked, "it was only the international response to the crescendo of condemnation about the killings by the National Movement of Street Children that jolted the authorities out of their indifference" (Rocha, 1991: 15). In the early 1990s, an attempt by hard-liners in the courts and the police to reinstate the moral panic against 'minors', now defined as the work force of drug-trafficking, failed. This gesture was reversed by a counter-offensive on the part of groups associated with the street children's movement, whose support had broadened not only in the national domain, but also in international civil society. Thus, advocates of the street children's movement became an important countervailing force. As demonstrated above, it was the support of transnational pressure groups and intergovernmental bodies which strengthened the arms of the reformers.

8.2.4 International pressure

The fourth and most significant factor underlying the growing attention to the killing of street children in media and policy debates in Brazil is its entry into the international arena, and the national repercussions of international pressure. These were catalyzed particularly by Amnesty's campaign in the international media, which led to increased media attention both in Brazil and abroad, thereby pushing the government to respond.

However, it is important to note that this international pressure was initiated by domestic organizations, since the publicization of the problem abroad was a strategy deliberately pursued by sectors within the street children's movement (see chapter three). They believed that raising international awareness was necessary for at least two main reasons. First, as Father Piazza commented, it was necessary because street children's issues had to be perceived as a global problem since their roots and solutions were related to the world order. Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, it was recognised that in relation to issues such as these, only international public opinion could push the government, the press, and the larger society to respond. The movement understood the importance of the world stage, but as one participant argued: "for international condemnation to produce effects it was necessary to have organized sectors in civil society to amplify them, and to react to government responses. Otherwise the government would simply respond with a rhetorical discourse justifying the problem." (personal interview with Wanderlino Nogueira Neto - FORUM DCA).

In the late 1970s, UNICEF supported the policy of the military, who regarded children as "objects of intervention on the part of the state" (Swift, 1991: 8). This policy resulted in the Minors' Code, while Amnesty International campaigned at the same time for the release of political prisoners. In the late 1980s, UNICEF was engaged in the campaign for children's rights, while Amnesty, together with other human rights organizations such as Americas Watch, responded to calls from national human rights groups by revealing police violence and torture against 'criminals', focusing later on the human rights violations in land conflicts. In the early 1990s, both organizations had broadened their mandate and their campaigns focused on violence against street children in Brazil.

Chapter four demonstrated how, in April 1990, two years after the production of the first survey funded by the DCI, figures on the killings collected by the Brazilian NGOs were handed to Amnesty International by the MNMMR. From June 1990, the international human rights organization joined the campaign against the killings of poor youths in Brazil (see chapter five). Amnesty's campaign started with the launch of a report on police brutality, which also contained data collected by the Brazilian NGOs on the murders of street children (Amnesty International, 1990a), and was followed by documentaries, press conferences and international press releases. The issue was also publicized through Amnesty's newsletters and annual reports (e.g. Amnesty International, 1990b; 1990c; 1991). Campaigners set out to lobby foreign parliaments in the United States, England and many other countries, as well as to make mass appeals and exert direct pressure on the Brazilian authorities and intergovernmental bodies such as the United Nations and the European Parliament. Amnesty International's revelations represented a turning point in the development of the issue (Serra, 1993; 1996). The Brazilian President publicly reacted to the charges by ordering a full investigation of Amnesty's indictments, although the problem was the responsibility of the governments in the states. The President also sanctioned the new Statute, which was passed in Congress despite the opposition of powerful groups in the judiciary, the army, the police and businessmen's associations. As outlined above, the law was the result of a long debate in the Brazilian public sphere, but the pace of reform was influenced by international condemnation of the killings. Approval of the new policy was also facilitated by the fact that it incorporated principles of the proposed International Convention on the Rights of the Child and was sponsored by UNICEF. Presidential support was thus aimed at responding to international pressure on the one hand, and showing concern for children's rights on the other. As previous chapters have shown, the United Nation's Summit of the Child significantly influenced press coverage and the policy process in Brazil, putting children's rights in the forefront of the international stage, alongside a war on drugs launched by the United States, which promoted international concern for children as the work force of drug traffickers. These changes to the international agenda were also influenced by the wider context of the end of the Cold War and the intensification of the trend known as

globalization, with its related processes of global governance, transnational networking and transversality (see chapter one). In Brazil, the political opening described above also changed the contours of national diplomacy. The emphasis on principles of non-intervention and national sovereignty, which had been rigidly applied during the military regime and the first years of the civilian government, began to be replaced by an acceptance of the concept of the universality of human rights and a more flexible, albeit critical, attitude towards the role of non-governmental organizations and the importance of media publicity in international co-operation (personal interviews with the Brazilian Ambassador and the Secretary of Human Rights of the Brazilian Embassy, in London, 1993).

External pressure, which led the federal government to support the reformers publicly, provoked a further division between the elites, which in turn changed the balance of power in favour of organizations involved with the street children's movement. As shown in chapters five and six, these were represented in the national commission that was established in December 1990 to deal with the problem, being equally composed of government sectors and civil society organizations. As also demonstrated, the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI) to investigate the killings, which had been demanded by the street children's movement since 1989, was finally installed in the Chamber of Deputies in mid 1991.

The impact of international pressure on the political system is further confirmed by the deputy Benedita da Silva, who stated that even after the impact of the street children's invasion of Congress, and the launching of Dimenstein's book in the Hall of Congress, she had spent a whole year trying to approve the setting up of the CPI (personal interview). As chapter six demonstrated, the deputies were only sensitized following the consequences of Amnesty International's indictments, and especially after sensationalist documentaries and other television programmes screened abroad shocked international public opinion and outraged Brazilian newspapers.

The importance of the international coverage for the domestic press was also indicated by the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry, whose final report concluded that "the Brazilian press only moved the issue from the police pages to the political pages after the foreign press did so" (Câmara dos Deputados, 1992: 18; see also

chapter seven). This raises a number of questions requiring further comment in order to understand the dynamics of the formation of the international agenda and its overlap with national processes. For example, what were the respective roles of the foreign and national media? What were the most important sources for the domestic and foreign press?

8.3 Difference and deference

Both theoretical models of the public sphere and empirical studies have shown that different media play different roles in public space (Curran, 1991b; 1996; 1998; Sparks, 1991; Dahlgren, 1995; Wolsfeld, 1997), since they are governed by different selection principles, reach different audiences and have different political standings (Cracknel, 1993). In the context of the international public sphere, the variation is even greater, since constraints on news production may pull domestic and foreign journalists in opposite directions. In this case also, journalists and their organizations did not respond to the problem, or pressures from readers and sources, in the same way, at the same time, or with the same impact.

As outlined in chapter three, the liberal newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*, for instance, was one of the first quality dailies to give a hearing to protests from the periphery, to investigate the problem and to advocate political solutions to the murder of street children. It also provided pre-publicity and what was usually favourable coverage to the domestic NGOs' efforts. Its initial coverage already contained the main themes used by the sectors in defence of children to frame the issue, such as the need to combat the impunity of the killings, the social indifference in relation to deaths of the poor, and the characterization of street children's offences as strategies of survival (see e.g. JB 06.05.88). However, although the paper was an important source for the Brazilian elite, civil society and foreign correspondents, despite its small readership, this earlier coverage did not provoke public outrage and further responses from other newspapers or policy-makers. The paper highlighted the international repercussions of the issue as a way to nudge the Brazilian media and society a step further towards addressing the problem.

The conservative *O Estado de São Paulo*, on the contrary, initially resisted the definition of the problem offered by the more radical NGOs and only gave prominence to the issue in terms of its possible negative consequences, especially after a resolution of the European Parliament indicated that the killing of street children could result in economic sanctions against the country. As chapter seven showed, the paper started to investigate the killings with the aim of contesting the figures and frames presented by the NGOs and some foreign outlets. However, such investigative stories did contribute to a better understanding of the problem and led to a change in the paper's own reporting of the issue, also provoking responses from the authorities in the state (OE 04.08.91, 06.08.91, 07.08.91).

The second largest Brazilian news weekly *Isto É*, which opposed President Collor, was mostly interested in Amnesty's campaign against the killing of street children because it represented an embarrassment for the Brazilian government. Although many of its stories aimed at criticizing the President, *Isto É* gave a lot of prominence to the problem and carried features and background articles which provided important information and analyses to their politicized readers.

The leading weekly *Veja*, which tended to respond to the concerns of their wide middle and upper class readership, and whose initial stories mostly concerned the street children as a threat to society (e.g. VE 29.05.91, 18.09.91), took longer to become sensitized to the issue. *Veja* continued to ignore the problem even after it had reached the headlines in their foreign counterparts such as *Time* (17.09.90) and *Newsweek* (24.09.90). However, its later coverage showed that a larger sector of the Brazilian society was finally responding to the national and international pressure, and it therefore contributed to raising awareness of the problem (VE 27.11.91).

There were also significant differences in the foreign outlets' attention to the problem and their respective impact. For instance, newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *Le Monde* were among the first to respond favourably to the national NGOs claims, and to carry features on the problem. Their stories influenced policy makers, civil society and other media in their respective countries, with some repercussions in the Brazilian media and society. The *New York Times* was less receptive to the NGOs's definitions (e.g. 13.11.90), but its reports after Amnesty's revelations had a much greater impact when compared to the coverage of other outlets, and was not

restricted to the United States and Brazilian society and media. This foreign reporting triggered a flurry of world-wide coverage (e.g. the Canadian *Globe and Mail*, 19.11.90, 20.11.90, 21.11.90; the Jamaican; *Sunday Gleaner*, 18.11.90; the Yugoslav *Borba* 19.11.90). As journalists and scholars acknowledge, the most powerful media, with the widest circulation, help to set the agenda and define reality for the less powerful ones (Reese, 1991; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Among the examples cited, *The Times* has a special agenda building role in relation to the media (Hess, 1996).

Television programmes broadcast in countries such as Britain, the United States, France and Italy, which followed the international press reports, brought the problem to the attention of a wider audience at a world level and prompted the indignant protests of viewers. This resulted in further cross-national exchanges between groups in civil society and global pressures on authorities from public opinion. The reporting of these reactions by the Brazilian press helped to broaden concern for the issue among larger sectors in Brazilian society, and, as a consequence, in more market-led media outlets.

Most national journalists interviewed, including *Veja's* Brazil news editor, confirmed that the international press reports had wide repercussions in the domestic press. This was also evidenced by the impact of the stories about foreign media coverage of the killings in Brazil, written by Brazilian correspondents based in central countries (see e.g. "Death of children: a scandal on British TV," OG 30.01.91; "Death of children in Brazil shock British people", OE 31.01.91). Nonetheless, these also provoked the indignant reactions of sectors of the press who complained they reflected vested interests and top-down pressures on the country from central foreign powers ("False Picture", OG 30.01.91).

However, both the analysis of the press coverage and the interviews with domestic and foreign journalists are in keeping with studies which argue that the local press is the basic source for foreign correspondents (Hess, 1996). For instance, Roberto Gazzi, the city editor of *O Estado de São Paulo*, recalled that when the NGOs publicized the issue, foreign correspondents telephoned the paper for confirmation. All the foreign correspondents interviewed judged that in Brazil there

were quality newspapers and news weeklies with high standards of journalism and confirmed that they counted on the domestic press as a fundamental source.

The textual analysis and their statements revealed that the national media was not only a source of information but also of frames for interpreting the problem, and an indicator of national opinion. Correspondents and stringers such as Mac Margollis of *Newsweek*, John Maier of *Time*, Aldo Gamboa of *UPI*, Claire de Oliveira of *France Press*, and Ricardo Soca of *El Pais* stressed the importance of the national press in setting the agenda for foreign correspondents. They said they usually waited for the reaction of the domestic press, although this was denied by *Le Monde's* correspondent Hautin-Guiraud. Nonetheless, in this case, killings of poor youths initially had no salience as a social problem and a political issue and warranted only small crime news reports in the main Brazilian outlets, despite pictures of their bullet-riddled bodies appearing daily on the front pages of more sensationalist popular newspapers.

Jan Rocha of *The Guardian* claimed that although the national press was a very important source, most of her information on the specific problem came through direct investigation in the field and from her close contacts with the Catholic Church and local and international human rights groups. It has already been shown that the British correspondent was, in fact, one of the first foreign journalists to mention the problem (e.g. GD 20.08.86) and that she usually interviewed relatives of the victims. As seen, Rocha criticized the selective reporting of the Rio press for highlighting crimes in the smartest areas, and relegating murders on the outskirts to "bottom-of-the page footnotes" (GD 04.06.87: 10). *The Guardian* was the foreign paper in this sample, which carried more stories on street children. As compared to other British dailies, the paper also published many more stories on human rights issues and social problems in Brazil, according to a research by the former Press Secretary of the Brazilian Embassy in London (personal communication Conselheiro Eduardo Prisco Paraiso Ramos).

Important differences in the press coverage of the killings can be related to differences in journalists' motivations, including their professional commitments, their place in civil society, their personal histories and their links with the social movement or other sources. Brazilian journalists such as Tim Lopes of *Jornal do*

Brasil and Gilberto Dimenstein of *Folha*, who acted as advocates for the issue, played an important role in the development of the problem and became protagonists in the events themselves. The impact and direction of the journalists' stories varied according to their professional roles and status in their more or less influential news organizations. But their values were also important. Some did so moved by missionary ideals or a sense of citizenship, while others acted because they felt that this was a potentially newsworthy story that could interest foreign editors. In the foreign press, substitutions of correspondents sometimes resulted in changes to their paper's reporting. For instance, there was a significant change in the reporting of the issue of the killing of children in *Le Monde's* stories when they were written by Daniel Hautin-Guiraud, as compared to the earlier stories by Charles Vanecke.

Nonetheless, there were also variations related to specific editorial policies of both national and international news organizations. Proprietorial concerns were important in determining news content in some Brazilian news outlets (Lima, 1989) whose journalists had a 'licensed autonomy' (Curran, 1990). And, as seen, ideological reasons and political aims influenced their coverage of the issues examined in this thesis and the selection of sources, who are "opportune witnesses" (Hagen, 1993) for journalists. Although journalists have their own agendas, "sources themselves can help to bring or to keep an issue at the forefront of the news" (Miller & Williams, 1993).

However, what is more significant for understanding differences in press coverage of the issue, is the fact that there were broader influences related to the socio-economic formation and the geopolitical position of Brazil (marked by the experience of slavery and colonialism), which accounted for important differences in the news value respectively attributed to the problem by the domestic and foreign press.

As Brazilian journalists themselves acknowledged, for a significant part of the elite press in Brazil, killings of poor youths were not considered newsworthy, either because they "were so used to the problem that they could not see it", as Roldão Arruda of *O Estado* pointed out, or, in Paulo Leite of *Veja's* words, because they "closed their eyes" to something that was not an existing interest for their readers. In such an unequal society as Brazil, the low social status of the victims,

alongside historically and ideologically constructed images of street children as social threats, help to explain why their deaths were initially regarded as 'natural' and blamed on the victims themselves. Popular acceptance of practices of retaliation also contribute to this view. Rhetorical devices which identified the *trombadinhas*, (young pick-pockets) as deserving bandits or guilty victims had become part of the repertoire of the primary levels of public opinion formation, and of the 'discursive reserve' (Ferguson, 1998) of journalists.

On the other hand, as foreign journalists claimed, this was the type of issue that the international media were used to looking at, either because "on purely journalistic grounds it was a strong story", as Stephen Powell of *Reuters* commented, or because of "an unthinking bias" against a country such as Brazil. In the words of Margollis, Brazil "is seen most when it is worst".

For Sue Brandford, who substituted Jan Rocha as a stringer for *The Guardian* during some months from late 1992, the paper's focus on human rights issues and social problems was in large part related to Rocha's biography. Brandford was more interested in writing about economic and political issues, but she realized that although her editor thought that *The Guardian* had been carrying too many "exotic stories", and thus asked her to provide a more balanced coverage, it was much easier to sell stories on issues such as violence against street children. Killings of street children generate stories which "activate existing chains of cultural meaning" (Hansen, 1991: 453) and reaffirm cultural beliefs about Third World countries as places of barbarism, which the selective coverage of Western media has helped to construct and reinforce (van Dijk, 1989; Philo, 1993).

Foreign and national journalists, the NGOs and government sectors all complained of the stereotypical coverage of the international media, which was also reflected in most of the themes mostly present (brutality, impunity, corruption, social indifference) or absent (foreign debt connections, unjust international relations, domestic government efforts) from the coverage. In contrast, the traditional mistrust displayed by international media about authorities in less developed countries (e.g. Miller & Beharrell, 1998) contributed to the fact that in the international coverage, non-government organizations were more represented than official sources (Serra, 1996). If the latter usually enjoyed privileged access to the domestic press, while not

always receiving favourable coverage, the same did not happen in the foreign press. As James Brooke of the *New York Times* pointed out, Brazil's sensitivity to outside pressures was also influenced by its present position in the world scenario.

Nevertheless, the international pressure exerted by human rights organizations such as Amnesty International over the Brazilian government was only effective because they had gained publicity in the national and international media. The foreign press attention also had the significant role of upgrading the coverage in the Brazilian press, and legitimating the claims of domestic non-government organizations, thereby contributing to a change in the balance of power between sectors for and against the reforms.

The responses of policy-makers and the media were differentially affected by their standing in relation to the status of the different actors. Collective actors in opinion-forming associations have unequal opportunities to influence media content in relation to corporate actors and political elites. As Habermas (1997) has argued, in order to do this, they may need sponsors with more material or organizational resources or influence. The national and international press coverage reflected hierarchical differences between the NGOs, and Amnesty's statements had a much greater and more immediate effect when compared to the national NGOs' revelations and those of other international organizations. An analysis of a sample of the foreign coverage showed that the event which received the most coverage was Amnesty International's statement in September 1990 (Serra, 1996).

Habermas also states that in the struggle to influence public opinion and acquire political power in the public sphere, the reputation of the actors comes into play. Well-known groups such as Amnesty International and office-holders who have already acquired political influence enjoy accreditation. But, as this thesis has shown, by coming together and establishing links with organizations with more influence at the centre, especially central global powers, peripheral groups can gain access to the international public sphere and influence the national political system. Nonetheless, Habermas also admits that even these accredited groups need to dramatize their claims and produce convincing propositions to capture media attention and sensitize the actors in both the political system and the general public.

8.4 Debate and drama

The contest between the law and order groups and the reformers involved attempts to manage the news by creating media events and newsworthy frames. On one side, the police and minors' courts released statistics of escalating crime by youths, providing the media with sensational images of spectacular operations to chase drug-traffickers in the slums, and feeding the press with dramatic stories of violent young criminals portrayed as 'deserving bandits' and 'guilty victims'. On the other side, the NGOs produced dramatic figures of the killings. The media salience of the campaign conducted by the non-governmental organizations and especially Amnesty International was related to a certain extent to their efforts to change primary definitions by challenging these representations with frameworks suggesting "innocent children versus cruel authorities" and "wicked killers versus brave defenders of street children".

The street children's movement also staged highly emotional protests, promoting street marches and large meetings and attempting to create an impact with political demonstrations about which they gave advance warning to the press. Yet as noted earlier, these were not simply 'pseudo events' (Boorstin, 1967) designed to make news, but political facts in their own right. They used interactive forms and means of communication aimed at better organizing and articulating the movement and raising consciousness among the media and the public.

The initial representation of the issue of the "killing of children" contained some exaggerations and misconceptions that provoked emotional responses. This can be related in part to the vested interest of groups taking different sides in the dispute, alongside the marketing strategies of news sources and the preconceptions of editors. The representations also reflect a limited knowledge of what was actually a complex reality, with multiple features. The construction of the problem of violence involving children and adolescents under the label "killing of street children" or "extermination of children", which was generated through the release of large figures of violent deaths of minors and exaggerated statistics of children living on the streets, served to obscure different processes requiring alternative solutions,

thus providing a distorted view of the real dimensions of different aspects of the problem.

Extra-legal killings effected by the police and hired killers on youths who were mostly poor and suspected of criminal activities, along with violent policing which victimized children and innocent people, were part of a shameful reality in Brazil, while not representing an organized campaign to kill 'street children' as some accounts suggested. In support of this, subsequent studies concluded that among children under eleven years old, the family was responsible for most of their violent deaths; whilst among older adolescents, especially those between fifteen and seventeen years old, the majority of murders were related to organized crime and, in certain areas, increasingly to the dynamics of drug-trafficking (Milito, Silva & Soares, 1993; Soares, 1994).

Some welfare officials rightly complained that the international scandal of the 'killing of street children' created some distortions in the definition of public policy and allocation of funds by national agencies and international organisms. They also stressed that most media reports only addressed the effects and not the larger causes of the problem (Interview with Luigi Bataglia - CBIA). However, as members of the children's defence groups argued, this spotlight on the most shocking aspects of the plight of poor children and adolescents nevertheless helped to approve legislation to establish better mechanisms for dealing with their problems as a whole. It also created the conditions for the emergence of other related issues as matters of public concern. The killing of street children was an 'agenda-leading issue' (Nelson, 1984), which made possible the recognition of other problems surrounding the lives of poor children and adolescents, such as child prostitution and child labour. The rise of such issues followed similar patterns and resulted in a relative decline in attention to the issue of violence against street children because of the limited 'carrying capacities' of the media, children's defence groups and other public institutions (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988).

But if the dramatization of the murders of poor youths was part of the struggle for public recognition of the problem, it also involved more discursive forms of publicity, and finally resulted in a better understanding of the different issues involved. Participants on different sides of the dispute wrote analytical articles

and gave interviews that were carried by the press, while the NGOs conducted surveys and issued informative reports and books. In the campaign for the approval of the Statute for Children and Adolescents in Brazil, successful public relations work by UNICEF also included talks with journalists and involved feeding them with substantive information to enlighten them about the issue.

It has already been suggested that there was a certain ambivalence in the press subjected to this cross-fire and also to the arguments of readers. The latter contested the NGOs definitions based on the violent behaviour of some street children. But the Brazilian press, which approached the issue from the point of view of their own perspectives and interests, carried independent investigative stories producing important knowledge about the issue, and contributed to public opinion formation and even that of the children's advocacy groups. Journalists were subjected to unequal pressures and were exposed to alternative discourses, but they also reacted critically to the contradictory frames.

It is argued here that some quantitative and qualitative changes in the coverage over time were the result of public debate. This raised the consciousness of some journalists as well as that of some readers and even their sources, although this debate was both emotionally influenced and rationally oriented, and continued to be structured by power.

Many studies point to the mediatization of contemporary public life and argue that public relations techniques have become pre-requisites for successful intervention in public debate and policy-making (e.g. Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994; Deacon & Golding, 1994; McNair, 1995). However, these analyses lead to different conclusions about the public sphere. Some authors investigating forms of political communication such as electoral campaigns, contend that the media has been transformed into a simulacrum, and argue that the contest in the public space merely reflects the symbolic manipulation of spectacular images, which replaces the content of discourses and political action. Nonetheless, research with pressure groups indicates that their preferences for the quality media still "conforms to a largely implicit model of a rational public sphere" (Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994: 103).

In the case examined here, news management techniques and discursive capacities were both important tools for the political actors involved, but these

included more interactive and political forms as well. As this chapter has demonstrated, the success of the social movement of street children was especially dependent on their articulation in transnational networks with access to the media and intergovernmental bodies. This contributed to a change in the balance of power in the public sphere, and thus also influenced the representation of the issue of the murders of poor children and adolescents in Brazil.

8.5 Press, publics and policies

In this recapitulation of the rise of the issue of the killing of street children and related policy changes, one last point needs further comment: What was the relation between the news agenda and the policy and public agendas? The centrality of the media for the policy-making process has been largely accepted (Miller & Williams, 1998; Deacon & Golding, 1994; McNair, 1995; Protess et al, 1991), although some authors doubt whether media attention *per se* translates into significant changes in policy (Negrine, 1989; Cracknell, 1993), arguing instead that the political process is more likely to influence the news media than vice versa (Negrine, 1996; Wolsfeld, 1997). The role of public opinion in influencing the media agenda and the policy process remains an even more intricate issue.

Brewer & McCombs (1996: 8) provide a critique of the traditional view of public opinion by stating that "the policy agenda is subsequent to the public agenda in a linear model that traces the flow of influence from the media to the public, who subsequently influence policy makers." Such a linear model of mobilization, as in the case of earlier media crusades, has also been challenged by authors such as Protess *et al.* (1991: 254), who argue that an outraged public is not a prerequisite for changes in policy, since investigative reporting can be a "catalyst for public policy reform without necessarily being a vehicle for mass mobilization or enlightenment".

As regards the relationship between the press and public opinion; although some authors clearly state that media agendas lead public opinion, rather than performing the opposite (Gitlin, 1980), recent empirical studies have found "contradictory effects" (Kitzinger & Miller, 1998) showing both the "dependence

and independence of public perceptions on media representations" (Deacon & Golding, 1994). While confirming the agenda-setting role of the media, such studies indicate that the progress of issues includes a more dynamic interaction between the public and the media and more feedback between different arenas than elitist models would suggest. Hilgartner and Bosk's (1988) public arenas model in particular draws upon the linkages between different arenas, although the authors have been criticized for disregarding the centrality of the media arena (Deacon & Golding, 1994), and failing to provide a clear model of the role of public opinion. Indeed, the media should be seen as special arenas because: a) they give publicity to what happens in all other arenas; b) they are the space where political actors can regularly meet or exchange information publicly c) they decisively influence the framing of issues, the setting of players and the political strategies of other actors (Serra, 1991). However, as demonstrated above, the role of the press is not simply to provide a platform for powerful groups. In addition to being a forum for public debate, the news media are themselves important political actors in this debate.

In the case examined here, the historical reconstruction of the problem and the opinion of the journalists, NGOs and policy-makers interviewed indicate that press publicity was a crucial element in the process which led to changes in policy. As has been argued, this happened even before large sectors of public opinion were sensitized to the issue. But this assertion must nevertheless be qualified. The previous sections demonstrated that differences and hierarchies between the political actors involved, including news organizations, were important aspects in the development of the issue. In the same way that it thus makes no sense to discuss the media as a "single generic category" (Curran, 1996:136), this study shows that it is not useful to refer to public opinion as a single concept, as this involves heterogeneous publics. One should at least distinguish between directly interested publics, influential publics, latent publics and the general public of the mass media. Class segmentation of the press (Sparks, 1991; Costa, 1997a) also creates important distinctions between publics and media. In representative democracies mediated by mass media, and especially in unequal societies such as Brazil, the public(s) of the mass media and particularly the press is (are) different from the public which is

temporarily reflected in public opinion surveys, which seek to represent the electoral body of the nation.

More importantly, this study demonstrates that in globalized societies, publics extend beyond nation states. In the same way that it is necessary to take into account, differentiate and define the relations between domestic and foreign media, it is also essential to consider, distinguish and observe the interactions between domestic and foreign public opinion. These can also pull in opposite directions as they are subjected to different constraints. The circumstances of being in a different cultural context, of not having direct experience of the problem, and of having less information about the issue serve to influence the latter's reactions, making them more dependent on accounts of campaigners and the media. Hierarchical differences between public opinion in peripheral or central countries also must not be forgotten.

As demonstrated above, the mobilization of international civil society was the driving force behind the changes in the policy agenda. As newspaper editors and columnists such as Gazzi and Dimenstein claimed, national public opinion as measured by polls tended to be against the reforms, being more outraged by the criminal behaviour of street children. For this reason, some outlets only responded to the issue after changes in policies had already taken place. In the case examined here, what pushed the government and other policy makers into action was the response of an outraged international public opinion. This was brought into play especially by influential transnational non-governmental organizations connected to local interested publics, which pressurized foreign states, supra-national bodies and international media and thus sensitized a global audience of readers, listeners and viewers. As seen above, these external flows of opinion gradually impacted on the Brazilian media and society in a dynamic and interactive process.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter, which concludes this thesis, has attempted to sum up the factors which contributed to the rise of the issue of the killing of Brazilian street children and the related policy outcomes by focusing on the influences which shaped the press coverage of the problem and the role it played on the unfolding drama. In

doing so, it has also aimed to ground the arguments presented in the opening chapter, about the rise of the international public sphere and the best framework to discuss the political roles of the press in contemporary globalized societies, in a specific social, cultural and economic context.

Different models have been proposed for the production of news and how they represent reality. These range from passive models of media representation of an unmediated reality to a differential focus on influences arising from a) internal factors involving proprietors and the editorial policies of news organizations, professionals with biographical motivations or occupational values, routines and other organizational constraints; b) external pressures from readers, advertisers or sources and c) wider socio-economic, cultural and ideological conditions. (For different models and influences which shape the media see e.g. Garnham, 1992; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Gans, 1980 ;Curran, 1996; 1998; Galtung and Ruge, 1973; Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988).

Nevertheless, as these and other empirical studies show, news is the outcome of a varied set of relationships that take place inside and outside news organizations, and that are dependent both on structural conditions and human agency. Several determinants of news production skew the media towards powerful interests and accredited sources (Hall et al., 1978; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Curran, 1996; Habermas, 1997). However, as Curran (1996: 154) argues, the media are also exposed to countervailing pressures and "what actually happens depends on the particular configurations of society at a given point in time."

Hall et al.'s (1978) study about the rise of 'mugging' on the political agenda in Britain, which coined the concept of 'primary definition', is an example of a top-down process of the formation of public opinion and decision making. As discussed in chapter two, it therefore has some similarities with the process which led to the policy changes in the earlier phase of the struggle to reform the legislation for children and adolescents in Brazil. The notion of 'primary definition' has been challenged by authors who argue that the concept implies that "counter definitions can *never dislodge* the primary definition" (Schlesinger, 1990: 66, emphasis in original). Hall and his colleagues have also been criticized for disregarding the fact that political elites are not homogeneous and also that their success relates to public

relations efforts which are not always successful, as well as the fact that the media can themselves contribute to changes in the definitions of the powerful (For this line of criticism see also Miller, 1993; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994; Kitzinger & Miller, 1998). However, as Hall et al. commented and this study has confirmed: "dominant definitions command the field relatively unchallenged", and "where there seems to be wide consensus, and counter-definitions are almost absent" (1978: 69). This is more likely to occur during authoritarian periods and in areas such as crime, which creates conditions for more closed reactions to events, especially when there are few organizations to advance contextual explanations (see Curran, 1996, 1998 for further comment on this debate).

A certain tradition of research emphasizes that "public debate occurs mainly by virtue of interactions between elite political actors and their attentive spectators, facilitated ... by the press" (Price, 1992: 91). For Prosser et al. (1991: 245) "policy-making agendas are catalyzed by the formal transactions between journalists and officials", and the influence of pressure groups, when it happens, only takes place later in the process. It has also been argued that disagreement between these elite sources is the most significant element in creating media diversity and enabling non-dominant interests to arise in the public debate. But what this study highlights is that in this case, in the context of the redemocratization of the country, and following the emergence of the street children's movement, the division between the elites, the openings in the media and the consequent polarization in the public debate were greatly influenced by efforts of these subordinate groups and their advocates organized in transnational networks.

Another significant point made by Hall et al's (1978) study is that the label 'mugging' appeared in the country prior to the crisis, when the press announced these occurrences in the United States, anticipating that the same could happen in Britain. One should also note the global contours of the authoritarian backlash which followed the cultural revolution unleashed in 1968 with student unrest and black militancy and, at the same time, the rise of issues such as urban violence and the drug problem as related to immigration, moral permissiveness and the consequent appeal for law and order measures on the international agenda.

The historical reconstruction of the campaign against the killing of Brazilian street children presented in the second part of this thesis indicates that the rise of issues must be examined in the context of the dynamic operation of the public sphere. The public space in contemporary societies must also be seen as a "highly complex network that branches out into a multitude of overlapping international, national, regional, local, and subcultural arenas" (Habermas, 1997: 373). By focusing on the mobilization of national civil society, the international outcry and the subsequent repercussions in the Brazilian society, media and political system, this thesis has shown that, in this case, the formation of the international agenda and its repercussions in the national arena involved complex mediation and representations, accompanied by top-down, bottom-up and cross-wise relations between pressure groups, authorities, civil societies, and the media at the local, national and transnational levels.

A central argument of this thesis is that the international public sphere is not a monolithic unit and, although it is hierarchically organized, it can again represent a defence mechanism for groups outside the structure of power. It demonstrates that peripheral groups can influence the definition of issues that are debated in the media and dealt with by the political and administrative system via the international public sphere. In this way, it supports and extends Habermas's central arguments, as outlined in chapter one.

Cobb, Ross and Ross, quoted in Habermas (1997: 380), argue that the 'outside initiative model' of agenda building, in which a group outside government enunciates a grievance and tries to broaden support from other groups in society in order to pressurize policy makers to deal with the problem, is "likely to predominate in more egalitarian societies". Nonetheless, in this example, which involved one of the most inegalitarian societies, Brazil, and one of the most marginal groups, 'street children', this was possible due to the mobilization of international civil society.

Although there were progressive elements in play in the Brazilian political culture, as demonstrated through the experience of the communist newspapers, which acted as schools of journalism (Serra, 1988), and the alternative press (Caparelli, 1980), which were further liberated during the rebirth of the public sphere; in the cultural background of Brazilian society, an unequal social formation

allowed elements which worked against the emergence of the problem of violence against poor youths to predominate as a matter of public concern. For this reason, only cases of murders of youths of higher status initially received prominent coverage. The election of representatives identified with the problems of street children was very important in advancing their concerns, but it was the pressure of international organizations and the publicization of the issue in the international media, echoed in the domestic media and the national political system, which empowered the local children's defence groups and other advocates and helped to neutralize the powerful constraints represented by social inequalities.

Chapter three has suggested that this was a strategy pursued by the street children's movement, which understood the importance of appealing to international public opinion and the world media to influence national policy-making. As Hallin (1998) and others (e.g. Castells, 1997) note, this association of local movements with global public opinion is becoming increasingly common.

In contemporary societies there are obviously distinct paths to reform, and the way the public sphere is structured in different countries affects the role of the media, social movements, public opinion and other institutions (Hallin and Mancini, 1984), but this further demonstrates the importance of considering the broader framework of the international public sphere and the need for a more adequate elaboration of notions of international civil society and global public opinion for any model of the media's role in the rise of issues in public arenas.

This thesis has shown how the dynamics of the international public sphere enabled a local problem to rise onto the international agenda and bounce back with significant repercussions for the national political agenda. The other part of the story, which requires further research, is the impact of this international publicity on national processes in other countries, including developed ones, as it relates to similar problems. These are usually more acute and visible in peripheral societies, but are not absent from central ones. This is increasingly the case, as globalization processes continue and the agenda of social problems, although asymmetrically constituted, becomes truly global.

Appendix: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

For reasons of space, many of the interviewees were not quoted. But all provided invaluable data and comments that informed my understanding of the facts and issues discussed in this thesis.

Foreign Press

El Pais - Ricardo Soca

The Guardian and *BBC* - Jan Rocha

Sue Brandford

The New York Times - James Brooke

Le Monde - Denis Hautin-Guiraud

Newsweek - Mac Margollis

Time - John Maier

AP - Cristina Mueller

AFP - Claire de Oliveira Neto

UPI - Aldo Gamboa

Reuters – Stephen Powell

Bill Shonenberg

Tova Chapoval (Phone)

BBC World Service – Carlos Magno Santos

International Organizations

Amnesty International – Alisson Sutton (International Secretariat Brazil Team)

Francisco Panizza (International Secretariat Brazil Team)

UNICEF (BR) – Ruy Pavan

Cesare de La Roca (also Projeto Axé and CBIA)

Childhope UK – Nicholas Fenton

Brazilian Press

Veja - Paulo Moreira Leite

Mario Simas Filho

Isto É –João Santana

Gabriel Ramalho

Jornal do Brasil- Tim Lopes

Israel Taback

Octavio Guedes

Antonio José Mendes

O Estado de São Paulo - Roberto Gazzi

Roldão Arruda

Renato Lombardi

Percival de Souza (also *Jornal da Tarde*)

Folha de São Paulo – Gilberto Dimesntein

A Tarde - Jorge Calmon

Cristovaldo Rodrigues

Berna Farias

Tribuna da Bahia - Gabriella Rossi

Liliana Peixinho

Jaciara Santos

Ana Celia Guedes

Mara Campos

Brazilian Government Agencies

Brazilian Embassy in London – Ambassador Paulo Tarso Flecha de Lima

Cicero Garcia

Foreign Ministry- Itamaraty Eduardo Prisco Viana (Diplomat also former Press Secretary Brazilian Embassy London)

CBIA – Ivanisa Martins

Luigi Bataglia

Chamber of Deputies - Deputy Benedita da Silva (CPI member)

Deputy Fatima Pelaes (CPI member)

Juvenile Courts - Siro Darlan (Minors' Judge Rio de Janeiro)

Maria Helena Maia (Minors' Judge Salvador)

Military Police - Major Antunes (Rio de Janeiro)

Civil Police – Valquiria Barbosa (Salvador)

Brazilian Non-Government Organizations

MNMMR – Volmer do Nascimento (Rio de Janeiro)

Maria Tereza Moura (Rio de Janeiro)

Mario Volpi (Brasilia)

CEAP – Ivanir dos Santos (also ASSEAF)

Ele Semog

CNBB – Sister Maria do Rosário Cintra

Pastoral do Menor – Rute Pistori (São Paulo)

NEV-USP – Paulo Sergio Pinheiro

Sandra Carvalho

NEPI – Rosilene Alvim

São Martinho – Roberto Santos

IBASE - Almir Pereira Junior

FORUM DCA and CEDECA – Wanderlino Nogueira

ABRAPIA – Lauro Monteiro

MAHATMA GANDHI – Deodato Rivera

IBISS/IBRADES – Carlos Nicodemus

OAF and Pastoral do Menor (Bahia) – Father Clodoveo Piazza

Projeto Axé - Aurélio Laborda

Cruzada do Menor – Belmiro Nunes

SACI - Eleonora Ramos

Movimento Nacional de Direitos Humanos - Augustino Veit

ANDI-Agencia de Noticias da Infancia- Ambar de Barros

Geraldo Vieira

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