

Social Inequality

12

READING 1

David E. Kaplan. "Letter from Rio: The Law of the Jungle," *U.S. News & World Report*, 14 October 2002, 35.

-- Discussion of Reading 1 -----

1. What passes for law in the Maré complex of slums in Rio de Janeiro? (What passes for law is a kind of jungle rule enforced by roving bands of drug traffickers, most in their teens and 20s, who patrol the streets heavily armed with Uzis, AK-47s, and even hand grenades.)
2. In 2002, how many people lived in the 764 favelas (slums) within Rio de Janeiro? (1.2 million people)
3. What do the favelas reveal about Brazil's progress? (They stand as a grim reminder that despite Brazil's progress—the nation boasts the world's eighth-largest economy—it remains a developing nation with striking disparities in wealth.)
4. Why do children from the favelas join gangs? (They have no jobs and few prospects.)
5. How did the International Monetary Fund help Brazil in August of 2002? (It gave Brazil a \$30 billion loan.)
6. What was the key election issue to many Brazilians? (The key issue was crime and their own security because violence has

spread throughout the city, and the police and prosecutors are seen as corrupt and ineffectual.)

7. Explain what happened to the journalist Tim Lopes. (In June 2002, Lopes sneaked into a favela to document sexual assaults by the local gang. He was hauled away at gunpoint, sentenced to death by a kangaroo court, and his head was sliced off with a sword.)
8. What are the roots of favela violence? (They stem from the 1980s, when the cocaine boom in America's inner cities steamrolled into Brazil's ghettos. The drug lords were running the favelas.)
9. What did the young men from the favelas learn while they were in jail? (From the Marxist guerrillas they learned how to organize themselves, how to face official power, how to form cells and communicate clandestinely.)
10. Who dominates Rio de Janeiro, according to many of its residents? (drug dealers)
11. Write a one-sentence statement in your own words of the main idea of the article. (Powerful drug dealers and their gangs control Rio de Janeiro by spreading violence and fear throughout the city.)

READING 2

Mario Osava. "Politics—Brazil: Social Problems Are Lula's Biggest Challenge," *Global Information Network*, 30 October 2002, 1.

-- Discussion of Reading 2 -----

1. What factors contributed to Lula da Silva's presidential victory in October 2002? (Brazil's grave social problems, including profound inequalities in income and rising violence and unemployment rates, were factors that contributed to his victory.)
2. What favored Lula's campaign call for change? (The deterioration of the economy and of social conditions along with it, particularly over the last few years, favored his call for change.)
3. What social and economic problems was Brazil facing in 2002?

(One-third of the 171 million inhabitants lived in poverty; unemployment and crime were rising; infant mortality was four times higher than in industrialized countries; there were dengue and malaria epidemics, a deficit of 5.5 million homes, and an enormous gap between the rich and poor.)

4. How did the percentage of Brazilians who lived in poverty change from 1993 to 2001? (In 1993, 41.7 percent lived in poverty; in 1998, 31.7 percent; in 2001, 33.6 percent.)
5. Describe the zero hunger initiative. (The Workers' Party intends to wipe out undernourishment in Brazil within four years.)
6. List the top priorities of Lula's policy platform. (The social arena is the focus of Brazil's new development model: job creation, improved distribution of income, and expansion of the social infrastructure.)
7. Why was it important for Brazil to win the trust of the international financial market? (It was essential if Brazil hoped to prevent further depreciation of its currency and to revive foreign credits.)
8. Is the tone of this article objective and unbiased or subjective and biased? (The article is objective and unbiased in tone. The author reports the facts and statistics of the situation.)
9. What economic and social changes have taken place in Brazil since this article was published in 2002?
10. In 2003, the Brazilian film *City of God*, which was directed by Fernando Meirelles, was shown in theaters around the world. The theme of this innovative movie is the violent lives of the young drug dealers in a favela in Rio de Janeiro. See this film, and discuss it with your classmates.

Vocabulary

Fill in the blanks with the correct words. Use each word only once.

Ineffectual	traffickers	notorious
disparities	slum	prospects
prey	roving	bandits

Violence in large cities has been on the increase in the 21st century. The murder, kidnapping, assault, and robbery rates in most urban areas have been rising. Social scientists have linked the rise in crime to inequalities of income distribution. In Latin America, Brazil is notorious for the enormous disparities between the rich and the poor, “with less than 10 percent of the population controlling about half of the nation’s wealth.”¹ According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, in 2001 the poverty rate was 33.6 percent, which meant 58 million people living in poverty, with 44 million lacking sufficient food.² To many of these poor people, drug trafficking offers a relatively easy way to earn a living wage.

One of the most crime-ridden cities in Brazil is Rio de Janeiro, which means river of January. In Rio, a beautiful city surrounded by mountains on one side and the Atlantic Ocean on the other, a violent network of drug trafficking gangs has gained control of the entire metropolitan area. These gangs in Rio, which are known as “the parallel power,” are winning the war against the government.³ They began by controlling the favelas, heavily populated slum areas, and have since moved into the middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, where they terrorize the population. The most powerful federation of gangs, the Red Command, has turned Rio into a city of fear, even closing down all commerce on September 30, 2002.⁴

Sao Paulo, the largest city in Brazil with a population of 20 million, is also run by gangs of drug traffickers. These roving gangs of bandits and killers are better organized and equipped than some of the armies in Latin America, and they prey on the wealthy citizens of Sao Paulo.⁵ Rival gangs fight each other for control of territory and are responsible for many

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1. Larry Rohter. “Departing President Leaves a Stable Brazil,” *The New York Times*, 29 December 2002, 10.
 2. Mario Osava. “Politics—Brazil: Social Problems Are Lula’s Biggest Challenge,” *Global Information Network*, 30 October 2002, 1.
 3. Anthony Faiola. “Brazilian Gangs Take Turf Wars Out of Slums,” *The Washington Post*, 15 December 2002, A37.
 4. David E. Kaplan. “The Law of the Jungle,” *U.S. News & World Report*, 14 October 2002, 35.
 5. Faiola, A37.

homicides and other violent crimes. In October 2002, the First Capital Command, which is the leading gang in Sao Paulo, attempted to bomb the city's stock exchange, the Bovespa, as a warning to the police to leave the gang alone.⁶

Today, the buying and selling of drugs and the related gang violence are inherent parts of Brazilian society. Although Brazilian drug traffickers originally transported cocaine to other world markets, today there is a thriving domestic market for cocaine. The drug lords have made Brazil into the second largest consumer market for cocaine after the United States. Brazil consumes 40 to 50 tons of cocaine a year, according to a State Department Report.⁷ Despite increased government attempts to deal with the escalating situation, the ineffectual Brazilian police departments, weakened by corruption, have been unable to end the violence. Citizens are disillusioned and fearful because prospects for ridding the cities of Brazil of drug traffickers are not good. Brazilian officials say that it will take a combination of local, state, and federal law enforcement to confront this problem of gang violence, which is one of the major challenges facing President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.⁸

6. Ibid., A37.

7. Ibid., A37.

8. Ibid., A37.