

Making the slum communities part of the cities

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AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF the security policy that installed Pacifying Police Units (UPPs) in Rio's slums, José Mariano Beltrame opens a new debate: He proposes that government and society discuss without partisan political ideology urbanizing the slums. Beltrame argues forcefully that reducing crime is directly linked to making structural changes in slum communities, which as they stand are a hideout for criminals, guns, and drugs. He disagrees with the idea that slums are always police cases and argues the importance of providing other public services there, such as health and education. The UPPs, he says, have created opportunities to carry out major surgery to heal the slums.

***The Brazilian Economy*—Last month was the fifth anniversary of the launch of the UPP. How is the initiative doing and what challenges lie ahead?**

José Mariano Beltrame—I see several positive aspects. Ensuring public safety has created an opportunity to effectively transform the slums through social services, health care, and all the factors involved in reducing poverty ... The UPP creates opportunities to proceed with major surgery to heal the slums.

What would this major surgery consist of?

This would be a true transformation that would integrate slums with the rest of the city. This surgery should even touch the urbanization of the slums. This has been a taboo here in Rio. People argue about it ideologically, but I think society must discuss it and recognize that the government will not be able to do everything.

And how do we achieve this?

I believe it will take a great deal, involving not only the judicial, legislative, and executive branches but also society as a whole in order to create a new structure for the slums. And we must hurry to solve this. What will be a slum 20 years from now? People think that the executive branch can solve everything. Hudson Braga, Secretary of Public Works of the State of Rio de Janeiro, has 211 actions in court against him for carrying out public works! ... Instead of opening an avenue, which costs much less, the government builds a cable car line, which has much higher construction and maintenance costs. It's time we looked at the situation differently in order to integrate the slums into the city.

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What kind of differential treatment is needed?

A person who is pleading [not to be disturbed by construction of public works] has the right to do so in court, but courts should also take into account the hundreds of thousands of people who would benefit from the construction. Therefore, the issue [of making the slums part of the city] cannot be seen as taboo ... These changes are absolutely necessary. Currently, we always end up using more police; everything falls back into a punitive approach. Leaving the slums as they are means they will always serve as hideouts for outlaws, weapons, drugs, ammunition—always demanding more and more police.

The way the drug lords were acting in slum communities was the most contentious issue in Rio. After the UPPs, did trafficking decrease?

Yes, because drug-dealing activities were disrupted, but obviously crime has reorganized itself. But the UPPs had considerable impact because they destroyed the bunkers of traffickers in major slums.

Have criminals migrated to other communities or cities?

Very few criminals have migrated because they have little income and often have no way to be received elsewhere. We arrested many drug lords, and others migrated. Fabiano da Silva, who headed the drug trade in the slums of Penha and Alemão, moved to São Paulo city, where we arrested him. Criminals that remained in Rio can try anything but they will always be confronted by the police. The UPPs are responsible for most arrests—more than the military or civil police—but these are now for more minor offenses.

Many regard the security policy adopted in Rio as a success. Do you believe the model could be adopted in other cities?

I believe other cities could learn some lessons from the UPP, but they were developed for Rio's unique reality. The problems of Rio I have never seen elsewhere. I think many of the problems of public secu-

rity in the country—and Latin America—would be solved more effectively by addressing deep-rooted social problems.

Here in Rio you adopted a new model for the police that emphasized the training of new officers.

We changed the entire curriculum of the police, focusing the police force on the needs of citizens. We had a very serious problem of violence in Rio: The police force and society had turned away from each other. The police would enter slums only to make war on criminals. The UPPs ended the war, and the consequence is that the presence of a new police force is gradually changing the situation. People see that the police are there to help and know the community better. We are not going to change 40 years of history and police ills in 10 years—I have no such illusions. When will we really see results? Maybe in four or five more years we will see how the behavior of these new police officers has changed things.

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Has the government made efforts to check and punish corrupt cops?

Yes, we have now a very active regional internal affairs department. Nearly 1,600 corrupt police officers have been expelled. We shattered the paradigm that no police officer would be arrested. I believe that we have acted well in this area, but no doubt it is a vice, something that came with the drug lords' empire. We still have corrupt cops.

There was a significant reduction in homicides in the areas pacified by the UPPs. How was that accomplished?

There is greater confidence in the police, but the reduction in homicides also occurred because the drug empires ended. If something was stolen from a grocery store in a slum, the drug lord would solve the problem. Today drug lords do not rule anymore, and people feel at ease in going to the police station. Before the UPPs, very few crimes were reported at the 15th Police Station of Rocinha. With the UPP, many more crimes are reported.

This year, are you planning more UPPs?

We are planning to establish 40 new UPPs. Our focus now is to invest more in training and preparing police officers to deal with the people because it is fundamental to end the estrangement between citizens and police.

And what are your plans for the rest of Rio de Janeiro state?

We are operating with a strategic plan. Police academies are forming new police officers every month, which will allow us to increase the policy force and establish the remaining UPPs. We do not yet have the ideal numbers of troopers in any part of Rio de Janeiro state. We also intend to subdivide the areas to which trooper companies are assigned so they can better serve the population.