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AN ECONOMY OF WASTE
AMAZONIAN FRONTIER DEVELOPMENT AND THE LIVELIHOOD OF BRAZILIAN INDIANS

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The indigenous population of Brazilian Amazonia represents about 63 percent of the country's 220 thousand Amerindians. It includes 175 Indian peoples in a total of 140 thousand individuals. From the areas of easier and older white occupation to the more remote and, until recently, fairly isolated corners of the region, the Indians have been involuntary and often unwilling actors in the long history of ransacking and disrespect for both human lives and natural resources. This paper focuses on the trajectory of white occupation of Amazonian indigenous lands, with special emphasis on the role of the military as agents of order at the service of outside economic interests. As examples, I shall discuss the latest military projects for Amazonia, Calha Norte and PROFFAO, and their consequences for the survival of indigenous peoples, with particular emphasis on the Tikuna, the Tukanoans and the Yanomami.

A residue of Brazil

"Amazonia cannot continue to be considered the residue of the country ... Amazonia is sold by marketing and politics as an ideal locus for the unresolved problems of Brazil". This phrasing by journalist Lúcio Flávio Pinto (1989) puts in a nutshell the predicament of Amazonia and its inhabitants. Historically the region has seen the largest concentration of

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wasteful measures in the whole country; throughout the centuries there has been a colossal waste of natural resources, of human lives, of social justice, of public money and of time. More than anyone else, the indigenous populations have been the victims of this centuries-old trend.

Within a century of the separation of Portugal from the Spanish Crown, in 1640, Amazonia had been effectively occupied by whites. This expansion was carried out mainly by the military, by missionaries and backwoodsmen (sertanistas) in search of spices, drugs, and wood to feed Western European needs (Sweet 1974, Neto 1979:69). Each of these agents, in their own way and for their own purposes, ensnared the Indians in activities that were totally alien to their traditions. White occupation was thus established in lowland Amazonia during the 17th and 18th centuries, having as bases the large Indian settlements (reduções) created by the Jesuits. In the mid-1600s, colonists from Maranhão turned to Amazonia in search of indigenous labor. The Indians were then hunted by these colonists as hands for the sugar and tobacco plantations. In fact, both colonists and missionaries went deeper and deeper into the Amazon forest competing for the Indians, the former looking for prospective slaves, the latter, purportedly to defend the Indians, but in fact engaged in their own hunt for prospective converts (Cardoso and Müller 1978:21), in what Darcy Ribeiro has called their "sacred fury" (Ribeiro 1970:32). By the beginning of the 18th century, the few remnants of the once numerous Omagua Indians of the floodplains had moved to the headwaters in Peru, and the Tapajós Indians of the middle and lower course of the Amazon were extinct (Meggers 1971:124, 131).

With the coming of the rubber boom, forced labor and contagious diseases wiped out yet more Indian lives and cultures.

According to one estimate, the rubber era left a toll of 30,000 dead and 10,000 permanently disabled (Cardoso and Müller 1978:35). The great wealth generated in the rubber days rather then being reverted to the public good and real development, was merely appropriated by private individuals in their mindless conspicuous consumption. The region entered the 20th century poorer than before in terms of material wealth and social justice.

The second half of this century has witnessed the installation of megaprojects and megadisasters. In the early 1970s, the Transamazônica, Cuiabá-Santarém, Cuiabá-Porto Velho (BR-364) and Perimetral Norte highways consumed large amounts of public and foreign money and exposed uncontacted Indian groups to immediate epidemics and deculturation. The Arara Indians near Altamira suffered a severe depopulation, as did the Kreenakarore of Mato Grosso, who lost about 75% of their people and had to be relocated to the Xingu Park into forced proximity with some of their traditional enemies. The Nambiquara and other indigenous peoples affected by the Cuiabá-Porto Velho highway were decimated by diseases and, having lost most of their traditional territory, were given little pockets of land already encroached upon by large agribusiness companies. The first year of construction of the Perimetral Norte killed nearly one quarter of the population of the Yanomami villages immediately adjacent to the road, not to speak of the epidemic shock waves that spread out through the more remote communities of the river basins transected by the highway. Now the abandoned Perimetral Norte is a derelict access way for gold miners to reach further and further into Yanomami lands.

Mammoth dams such as Tucurui and Balbina have ruined the environment and the lives of the Parakanã and Waimiri-Atroari Indians. Now Tucurui is underused and Balbina is a confessed engineering fiasco.

Public money in the form of fiscal incentives during successive military governments in the 70s, was abusively made available to encourage privately run agribusiness in ecological areas notoriously unsuitable for cattle raising; it has turned lust forest into unproductive deserts, such as the Paragominas region of Pará, exhausted by inappropriate cattle ranching. Large scale industrial mining at the Carajás complex has drastically deteriorated the lifeways of indigenous groups such as the Gaviões, the Guajá and Urubu-Kaapor, while gold and cassiterite mining by the Paranapanema company has directly affected the livelihood of the Tukanoans in the Uaupés area (Buchillet n.d.) and of the Waimiri-Atroari, already seriously jeopardized by the construction of the Manaus-Caracaraí road and the Balbina dam (Baines n.d.).

Just as with the rubber boom, none of these projects and activities has produced lasting benefits for the Amazonian populations, be they indigenous or not. On the contrary, they have left behind them ecological devastation, human suffering, and a bigger than ever foreign debt. "The economic 'leap'" , says Lúcio Flávio Pinto, "by means of which the mock planners thought of throwing Amazonia into contemporaneity created only a vacuum. The natives fell into it. The outsiders benefitted by sucking out the riches of the region, especially its energy |hydroelectric and fuelwood|. It is necessary to recompose this loss if the region with its inhabitants, its specific knowledge, and its history is to have its say in this project" and reverse the process which has caused the uplands to be "crisscrossed by roads, strewn with gold panning pits, perforated by mining, devastated by ranches". Amazonia, he continues, "needs a more modulated rhythm. Why destroy the largest |unacculturated| indigenous nation in the country, the Yanomami, in order to extract from their lands gold that will feed the drug traffic ..

and tin that will absurdly increase the strength of beer and pop cans just to be thrown in the garbage?" (1989:7).

From the gathering of drogas do sertão in the 17th century to gold panning in the 20th century, indigenous peoples have been the greatest victims of the pillage of the Amazon and there are no indications that this trend will be reversed, at least in the near future.

The mined fields of Amazonia under National Security

Amazonia has been an historical paradise for Brazil's military forces. Manaus, Belém, Macapá, São Luis do Maranhão were some of the towns in Amazonia that grew out of military outposts. Bastions of the military, they ensured the definitive establishment of Portuguese domain over the land and natural resources previously held by Spain, in accordance with the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas. Since then the Armed Forces have been the main "guardians" of Amazonia and one of the principal agents in making inroads into the region. One of the most spectacular examples of military action was the opening up of the interior of Mato Grosso by General Rondon in connection with the installation of a telegraph line connecting the hinterland to the coastal cities. On his way westward, Rondon contacted many indigenous villages and established a national reputation as a heroic figure who braved the hardships of the jungle and the dangers of wild Indians in the name of the Brazilian nation. It was, after all, by the initiative of Rondon, himself a military officer, that in 1910 the first official agency for the protection of indigenous peoples was created.

But if the militarization of Amazonia is not a new historical fact, it has been significantly intensified since the

1960s. "In 1966 the Federal Government begins a more aggressive policy toward Amazonia due to its being underpopulated and considered as a priority to national security, besides representing a frontier of resources for the country" (Neto 1979:75). The fallacy of the empty spaces is recaptured, and the Transamazônica highway represented the "big leap into the void". Never mind that most of Amazonia was already occupied by Amerindians and regional populations, extracting a sustainable livelihood based on the experience of generations that established the need for a sparse settlement pattern. The military, the most ubiquitous of the State representatives, put Amazonia at the disposal of the interests of big capital. In the late 1960s, the Suiá-Missu agribusiness of São Paulo and Italy laid claim to an immense area in Mato Grosso -- nine million hectares -- part of the traditional territory of the Shavante Indians. Following international protests against the displacement of these Indians, in 1969, General Costa Cavalcanti, the then Minister of the Interior, affirmed, "The Indian has to stay in the minimum space possible" (Cardoso and Müller 1979:156). The megaprojects of the early 70s, such as the building of highways, were justified by the military in terms of the need to integrate Amazonia into the nation. Rumors of foreign plans to internationalize Amazonia, periodically stirred up, provided part of the rhetoric that sought to justify the construction of the Transamazônica and other connecting roads. The other part was triggered by the extreme poverty of the Northeast which was being exacerbated at that time by a particularly severe drought. But behind these justifications was the matter of State control over an historically recalcitrant region. Among the various measures taken by the central government in Brasília was the creation of the PIN (Plano de Integração Nacional), drawing funds from various sources, from the national budget to international financing agencies, and

RADAM (Projeto Radar da Amazônia) in charge of carrying out basic surveys of the natural resources in several areas: geology, vegetation, soils, geomorphology, carrying capacity. The combination of new roads and news of mineral wealth precipitated phenomena such as the gold rush of Serra Pelada and the first big invasion of prospectors (garimpeiros) in Yanomami land in search of cassiterite, in a pale preview of what was to come. The 1980s saw a dramatic increase in mining activities in Amazonia. The Uaupés region, Rondônia, Roraima, Amapá, Pará attracted millions of people many of whom, landless, followed the trails of gold discovery. In some cases, such as in the Uaupés, garimpeiros were dislodged by mining companies after having been encouraged by the latter to invade indigenous lands. It was the decade of an explosion of garimpos (prospecting sites) all over Amazonia on a scale that so impressed the National Congress that in the new Constitution it legalized that activity in non-Indian areas. However, illegal mining continued in indigenous lands, the most scandalous incident affecting the Yanomami in Roraima in the late eighties.

While the military ruled the country, the Armed Forces, although present in Amazonia, were not any more pronounced than in the rest of the country. It was when the government passed on to civilians, with the advent of the so-called New Republic, that the military engagement with Amazonia stuck out like a sore thumb. The Calha Norte Project was conceived in total secrecy in 1985, was never submitted to Congress, and only came out into the open in late 1986 already substantially funded. The public at large was oblivious to its existence, not to mention its essence. Indigenous leaders and white activists in the Indian struggle were staggered by its implications.

The Calha Norte Project

In his statement (exposição de motivos Nº 018/85 of 19 June, 1985) to President Sarney, the Secretary General of the National Security Council, General Rubens Bayma Denys, states that a preliminary study done by his Secretariat of the northern border of Amazonia had concluded the following:

> the immense demographic void of the region, the hostile and little known environment, the great length of the border zone, sparsely populated, as well as the susceptibility of Guyana and Surinam to the Marxist ideological influence |are|. aspects that render vulnerable our national sovereignty.
> Analysis of these aspects and of others of an economic, a political and a social nature leads to the conclusion that medium and long term comprehensive planning is necessary, with the goal of directing government action, together with private iniative, to promote the occupation and development of the area in harmony with and in a way which is appropriate to national interests. (...) it is to be expected that the integration of this geo-economic space to the rest of the Country will reinforce relations with our neighbors, and from this Brazil may emerge as a more trustworthy option than any other alignments.

Earlier on Denys' document states that

> It is a practically unexplored area, corresponding to 14% of the National Territory and delimited by an extensive border zone inhabited almost solely by Indians.
> This last aspect, by itself, adds a new magnitude to the general problem of the area, since the well known possibility of border conflicts between some neighboring countries together with the present-day conjuncture in the Caribbean may make possible the projection of the East-West antagonism onto the northern part of South America (see Santilli n.d. and 1989).

This insidious association of the ideological cold war with the presence of indigenous peoples on the international frontier was its own instant justification for bringing all the Indian groups living within the 150 kilometer-wide strip between Brazil and its northern neighbors under the National Security Council. The project that followed Denys' document states as one of its strategies:

> Immediate actions on the frontier strip through the implementation of SPECIAL PROJECTS with the effective participation of the Ministries of the Navy, of Foreign Affairs, of the Army, the Air Force and the Interior (National Indian Foundation), |in| the following areas, with priority for the first four and their routes of access:
> a) The area characterized by the presence of Yanomami Indians, with a small population estimated as 7,500[1] Indians living in dozens of scattered malocas, adjacent to a long stretch of 900 kilometers of frontier with Venezuela, where numerous contingents of this same ethnic group reside. For a long time there have been pressures, both from nationals and from foreigners, for the creation -- at the expenses of the present Brazilian and Venezuelan territory -- of a Yanomami State. The main points in this area are: Surucucu, Auaris and Ericó.

The other three areas are the Upper Rio Negro, Eastern Roraima, and the Upper Solimões.

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1. This number was probably based on a survey carried out by FUNAI in 1977. Two years later, the military promoted their own survey of the Yanomami territory in Roraima and Amazonas and arrived at the figure of 9,910.

Large sums of money[2] were immediately poured into the Project. Designed to be completed in five years, from 1986 to 1991, it will use decreasing amounts of funding which means that the emphasis is put on the initial impact in order to create an irreversible fait accompli. For the first two years, the Ministry of the Army kept about 46% of the budget, the Navy 21%, Interior-FUNAI 19%, Air Force 12%, and the Foreign Office, oddly enough considering the diplomatic effort proclaimed, a mere 3% (GIPCT 1987:27). For 1988, 34% of the funds were allocated to the Army, 26% to FUNAI, 24% to the Air Force, 15% to the Navy, 0.7% to the Foreign Office, 0.3% to COBAL, a food supply agency, and 0.2% to the Secretariat of the National Security Council. The money was to be spent in

> A) intensification of bilateral relations with the neighboring countries, with especial attention to commerce; B) increase of Brazilian presence in the area; C) enlargement and intensification of FUNAI's action among the indigenous populations; D) intensification of demarcation campaigns of the frontier; E) enlargement of the road system; F) acceleration in the production of energy; G) stimulus to the interiorization of poles of economic development; H) greater availability of basic social resources; and I) increase in colonization. (Report Projeto Calha Norte, mimeo, n.d.)

In yet another document, Calha Norte. A Fronteira do Futuro 1986-1991, issued by the Secretaria-Geral do Conselho de Segurança Nacional, and signed by President Sarney on 4th September, 1988, it is stated: "... in all of the 6,771 km of the frontier line, there remain indigenous problems, lack of landmarks, narcotraffic, smuggling and corruption, besides those problems originated in

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2. In view of the erratic trends of Brazilian currency and its crises of inflation and monetary freezes, it is difficult to translate the sums of money given in old cruzeiros and cruzados into present-day currency or in dollars.

external situations, which all come to emphasize the need for a greater governmental presence, including the military" (:10).

Let us now consider the first results of the Projeto Calha Norte for the lives and territories of the indigenous peoples affected by it.

Three steps in the same direction

Before even beginning construction of the 15 or so military outposts that were planned[3], and the approximatelly 10 air bases, the Calha Norte engineers concentrated their energies on the delimitation of Indian lands. Starting from the extreme West of the area affected by the Project, they have been working eastward, applying the same mold like a cookie-cutter. Given, however, the big differences in the contact situation of the various indigenous groups involved, the results in terms of reaction to the government proposal and the relationships between the Indians and the military have been very different in each case. Following the same route as the Calha Norte, I shall briefly describe what happened to the Tikuna, the Tukanoans and the Yanomami.

Tikuna. Since 1978 the Tikuna Indians of the upper Solimões river have been pressuring the Federal Government to demarcate their lands as the continuous territory traditionally occupied by their population of about 15 thousand people. In 1987, members of the National Security Council approached the Tikuna with a proposal to create a series of "Indian colonies", separated from each other by "National Forests" which, significantly enough, are open

3. To this day, of the four outposts proposed for the Yanomami area only one is partially constructed.

to the economic exploitation of both renewable and non-renewable resources. The Indians' immediate response was that they needed time to meet among themselves in order to discuss the matter before a definitive answer could be given. The military took this as a no to their proposal and "washed their hands" of the matter -- whatever trouble the Tikuna were to face, they should not count on the aid or protection of the government; they were on their own. In March 1988, a group of Tikuna were gunned down by 20 men at the pay of a local timber merchant and cocaine dealer. Fourteen Indians were killed and 22 wounded. The killers were first arrested and then released.

Three days after the massacre, the president of FUNAI, Romero Jucá Filho, declared: "Incidents such as this will certainly come to an end with the establishment of the Calha Norte project in the region. The Calha Norte guarantees financial, technical and human resources for the effective demarcation of the indigenous lands in the frontier area" (O Liberal, Belém, March 31, 1988).

In April of that year, the Governor of Amazonas, Amazonino Mendes, declared:

> If we go deep into the matter, we will find that certain federal agencies were involved in expropriations and then covering things up; they were also bankrupt, failed to act in time, and did not provide convincing explanations for the occurrence (A Notícia, Manaus, April 7, 1988).

A wave of hostility against the Indians swept the local town of Benjamin Constant in reaction to the police investigations and the wide publicity. Anthropologists and other whites working among the Tikuna were prohibited to go into any Indian area in Brazil. In a telex of May 5th to Manaus, Jucá ordered the ban from Brasília:

> From this date FUNAI prohibits the Center of Documentation and Research of the Upper Solimões (...) from entering all the Indian areas in the country in view of their behavior in the Tikuna area being incompatible with the orientation of the Brazilian government's indigenist policy (Magüta 1988).

In October 1989, the government returned to the upper Solimões now no longer with a proposal, but with the decision to disregard all earlier proposals and to demarcate two discontinuous areas for the Tikuna, reducing their original territory by 47% and leaving out three communities (CEDI 1989a). The indignation of the Indians can be measured in the statements by Pedro Mendes Gabriel, the Executive Secretary of CGTT (Conselho Geral da Tribo Tikuna):

> ... if we put a rotten egg under a hen will it hatch? I don't think it will. It is so with the official indigenist policy: it's useless, harmful in wanting to impose 'integration' and make anyone believe that the Tikuna are willing to accept Indian colonies (CIMI-Norte 1989:16-17).

Tukanoans. In January 1988, an interministerial decision granted to a number of different indigenous groups of the Uaupés region the "permanent possession" of three Indian colonies in the Pari-Cachoeira area; surrounding them, two National Forests were to be "preferentially used" by the Indians, but were intended for economic exploitation by outsiders as well. Fifty-eight percent of their traditional lands as officially recognized by FUNAI in 1986 were lost to them by the creation of these three Colonies. Other reductions were later made in the lands of the Uaupés Indians, involving the loss of a further 14% of their lands. (Buchillet n.d.).

It must be pointed out that here the notion of "Indian colony" was being linked to the status of "acculturated Indian", a category created by decree Nº 94.946 (of September 1987) a few

months before the new Constitution precluded any such distinction. The difference between non-"acculturated" and "acculturated" Indians was accompanied by the decision to guarantee "Indian areas" to the former and provide "Indian colonies" to the latter. Whereas these "Indian areas" would have been for the exclusive use of their Indian inhabitants, the "Indian colonies" would have been open to colonization by non-Indians, thus providing a legal justification for the invasion of their lands (Teixeira de Carvalho and Carneiro da Cunha 1987:90). Even though totally unconstitutional, this classificatory device was maintained by FUNAI and the military and was applied to the Uaupés population with the rationale that the Tukanoans already speak Portuguese and are conversant with national society. Never mind that also included in this land partition are most of the Maku, an Indian population with little contact with whites and with their own way of life[4]. In November 1989, a new interministerial document changed "Indian colonies" to "Indian areas", but the fragmentation of the lands was maintained (Buchillet n.d.)[5]. All this tampering with these concepts was obviously a way of evading legal impediments to the cutting up of Indian lands, taking advantage of the political conjuncture of that time when decisions about the Indian issue in the new Constitution were still being made in Congress. It also added fuel to the serious cleavages that occurred among the Tukanoans, dividing those who were negotiating with the military from those who resisted any interference with their land rights.

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4. There is only one Maku "Indian Area" of 48,000 ha in the Iauareté region (interministerial "portaria" Nº 25 of 6 March, 1989).

5. In a curious contradiction, the decree that confirmed Pari-Cachoeira I, II and III as Tukanoan (and Maku) areas designates these as "Indian areas", "due to the degree of contact" of these Indians !

Some members of AUCIRT (Associação da União das Comunidades Indígenas do Rio Tiquié), the faction that accepted the Calha Norte plans, gambled on the benefits promised by the military (land demarcation, infrastructure for health, education and economic development) in exchange for the expulsion of garimpeiros and the installation of the Paranapanema mining company. They incurred the heavy criticism and censure of other regional and national indigenous organizations and white NGOs only to find out a few months later that the military promises were being broken by a different sort of action from that initially proclaimed.

> The three "hospital-boats" acquired by the Projeto Calha Norte are already abandoned in the harbor of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, two of them seriously deteriorated. The health posts that were actually built cannot operate for lack of equipment, medicines and qualified personnel (...)
> Of the much talked-about "progress" the Projeto Calha Norte was supposedly bringing to the Nort Amazon region, it is clear that the Indians benefitted slightly if at all, and only in the form of development projects that are ecologically predatory (cattle raising, selling of lumber, etc.), and of aid structures that are materially spectacular but technically unfeasible, designed to make them sedentary in minuscule parcels of their earlier territories transformed into Indian Colonies, besides being taken away from the political influence of the Catholic Church (Buchillet n.d.).

So far the net result of the Calha Norte in the Uaupés area has been securing the definitive presence of the Paranapanema mining company on Indian lands with the backing of the military.

As in the case of the Tikuna, no anthropologists have been allowed to do research in the Uaupés area.

Yanomami. The cookie-cutter model continued eastward and reached the lands of the Yanomami -- a traditional territory of nearly nine and a half million hectares according to FUNAI's evaluation of 1985. In this case there was no way the military could justify the creation of Indian colonies, as the Yanomami cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be classified as "acculturated Indians". So the designers of the Calha Norte divided the Yanomami lands into 19 "Indian areas" interspersed among two National Forests and one National Park. From September to November 1988, a deluge of "portarias" and decrees by FUNAI and President Sarney established and then amended the status of Indian rights of access to the National Forests. First, the Yanomami were robbed of 13% of their original lands, while still having exclusive rights to the resources of the National Forests. Next, those rights of access to the Forest areas were withdrawn. Thus, in the space of two months, the end result was a net loss of about 70% of their traditional territory (Albert n.d.).

Plans for military presence in Yanomami lands include the construction of four Army garrisons and seven Air Force airstrips. So far only one garrison is in partial operation at Surucucus and three airstrips have been enlarged (at Surucucus, Paapiu and Auaris). The justification for this apparatus was initially to better control the frontier zone and maintain order in the colonization of the area. The deception behind this rhetoric was, however, exposed when the Armed Forces failed to either prevent or control the disorderly activities of about 40 thousand garimpeiros who, since August 1987, had been invading Yanomami territory both inside and out of the 19 "Indian areas".

In June 1989, after nearly two years of bleak news from the area regarding the health situation of the Yanomami and the environmental damage caused by this massive gold rush, a group of congressmen, Church members, representatives of

Brazilian scientific associations and NGOs went to Roraima to gather first hand information. On that occasion, the military commanders of the Second BEF (Batalhão Especial de Fronteiras) and of the Sixth BEC (Batalhão de Engenharia e Construções) were contacted. The statements by the BEF commander, Colonel Lima Mendes, leave no room for doubt as to the real reason for the presence of the military in the Yanomami area. He estimated that there were about 50 thousand garimpeiros in the jungle and some 80 to 100 thousand in town. That being so, he added, it would be impossible to remove the miners by force. Therefore, it was absolutely necessary to reach a negotiated solution with them and the government of Roraima. The governor Romero Jucá, a former President of FUNAI, while strongly in favor of gold mining in the area, wanted to bring the mining operations under his government's control and stop the smuggling of over 80% of all the gold being mined. He also wanted to show that there are Yanomami who actually prefer to have the garimpeiros on their land. The undeniable fact, continued Lima Mendes, is that the quantity of gold is very "rewarding" and, therefore, a solution must be found so that extraction can continue. Some questions were raised:

> What is the Army doing about the clandestine airstrips |built by the miners all over the Roraima forest|? Answer: that is the Air Force's problem; the airstrips are not clandestine, they are simply not ratified; there is nothing that can prevent an airplane from taking off. What does the Army do about the uncontrolled invasions by garimpeiros in the frontier zone? Answer: "we are here as an executive division; the boss is the Air Command of Amazonia". What does the Army do to curb gold smuggling? "the Army does not interfere in cases of contraband, that is the problem of the Internal Revenue Service". What does the Army do about the cases of violence and murder in the gold-panning camps? Answer: that is a problem for the Federal and Civil Police (...)

> What is it then that the Army does in the area? Answer: it takes care of internal security, external security, and gives support to the development of the communities. What does this internal security consist of? Answer: to do the groundwork for the communities to develop; Surucucus is a development pole for the settlement of populations. But, it was questioned, Surucucus is an Indian area! Lima Mendes' reply: "this doesn't concern me; it is up to the government to decide" (Ramos 1989).

Three telltale events reinforce these hints of the real reason for the military presence as a spearhead for economic interest groups. One is the fact that the Air Force enlarged the airstrip at Paapiu where originally there was only a small landing strip for the one-engine aircraft of the Protestant missionaries, which later was used by a FUNAI outpost. At no time was there any plan for the building of an Army garrison at Paapiu. From August 1987, this airstrip became the heart of the gold mining operations in the forest. We can only infer the purpose of improving the landing conditions in that location which was known to be rich in gold. Another fact is the total inaction of the Armed Forces during the invasion of Brazilian garimpeiros into Venezuelan territory. Considering the great emphasis given in the Calha Norte Project to the maintenance of good relations with Brazil's northern neighbors, it is intriguing that the formal complaints by Venezuela were ignored even after the repressive action taken by their National Guard against the intruders and their mining equipment. Commander Lima Mendes explained that the invasion of Brazilian garimpeiros into Venezuela was not the responsibility of the Brazilian Army: "if our people invade Venezuela, it is their problem; if their people invade Brazil, the problem is ours". This simple minded talion system appears rather odd in the face of the elaborate descriptions of the diplomatic intentions of the Calha Norte Project. A third and particularly

revealing fact is the participation of the military (both BEF and BEC) in a committee created by the government of Roraima to control the settlement of the garimpeiros in Yanomami territory. Governor Jucá's Meridian 62 Project aimed at organizing gold panning operations within the "Indian areas" as defined by the governmental decrees. The remainder of the area -- the National Forests -- would be managed by the Roraima state company (CODESAIMA) which would subcontract other companies to exploit the gold deposits. Royalties would be transferred to FUNAI to be passed on to the Yanomami. Roraima's governor would have the task of supervising and controlling the whole set of operations. The triad private interests/local government/military was thus explicitly exposed.

The gold rush of the late eighties is costing the Yanomami the loss of lives the total number of which is still to be properly reported. Since August 1987 no researchers have been allowed into the Yanomami area, and no independent witnesses have had the opportunity to survey the devastation in any extensive, let alone intensive, way. Journalists have made short visits to some mining areas, bringing back images of malnutrition, dead Yanomami bodies lying around on trails, patronizing gold miners distributing medicines and canned foods. Accusations of genocide have poured in to the federal government from within Brazil and from abroad and the crisis has reached such catastrophic proportions that the Judiciary, by means of a restraining order of October, 1989, has told the Executive to put a stop to it. For two months nothing at all was done. Then, in a response to this restraining order, the government made plans for the removal of the garimpeiros, and the financing of both the evacuation and the medical work. The Ministry of Health and FUNAI were to be both involved in this attempt to help curb the malaria epidemics that have been caused by the influx of the gold

miners, and have been virtually wiping out entire Yanomami communities. Until August 1987, when the gold miners' invasion began, the Paapiu area had been entirely free of malaria[6]. In fact, what happened was that, rather than removing the garimpeiros, in January 1990, the authorities (from the Ministry of Justice to the governor of Roraima, the Federal Police and the Department of Mineral Resources) made a pact with the miners' leaders and simply offered other Yanomami areas -- in the so-called National Forests -- for the garimpeiros to transfer themselves to, under the astonished eyes of a legion of foreign and national journalists. As one of the latter said, the miners were given the present of leaving destroyed forest areas and entering virgin ones. Influenced by this quick reaction of public opinion, a ping-pong of decisions and counter-decisions, one day in favor of the Indians, the next day in favor of the garimpeiros, filled the news media for weeks. Approximately one and a half million dollars was released for an operation which has not actually occurred. What has happened to that money, like so many other instances in the history of Amazonia, is not known.

Coming up on the list of the Calha Norte cookie-cutter are the Makushi, Wapishana and other indigenous groups of the savannas and northeastern uplands of Roraima already badly disturbed by cattle ranching (Ramos 1989). Next will be Amapá's turn affecting the Waiãpi and other Indians and so on toward the Atlantic in a sinister domino pattern of dominating indigenous people by cutting up their most basic resource -- their land.

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6. Between 1983 and 1987, in a series of visits by medical teams of CCPY (Committee for the Creation of the Yanomami Park) and of Médecins du Monde, in the detailed medical records that were kept, there were only three or four cases of malaria, all contracted by individuals who had travelled to other regions.

Tomorrow's Calha Norte

To complete the rounds of "Pan Amazonia", the Secretaria de Assessoramento da Defesa Nacional (SADEN), the military organism that replaced the National Security Council even before this was extinguished by the new Constitution of 5th October, 1988, created the PROFFAO (Programa de Desenvolvimento da Faixa de Fronteira da Amazônia Ocidental). It is, supposedly, designed to provide the regional infrastructure necessary to large capital investments in the area -- along the frontier with Peru and Bolivia, all the way from Benjamin Constant in the state of Amazonas to Cáceres in the state of Mato Grosso. Differently from the Calha Norte Project that was brought into existence solely by the military and the President of the Republic, Proffao, in order to comply with the new Constitution, will have to go through Congress. Its purpose is to link the region to the rest of the country and to the neighboring nations by means of road systems, hydroelectric schemes, and the "rationalization" of extractive activities. There is also a concern to "regulate questions of land distribution, Indians and garimpeiros".

With regard to indigenous peoples, the experience of Calha Norte leads one to expect the same pattern of drastic reduction of Indian lands and the installation thereon of military units. The creation of the so-called National Forests has been used by the military to placate national and international protests against the devastation of the rain forest. While stressing environmental protection, the government rhetoric minimizes the aspect of economic exploitation of both renewable and non-renewable resources in these very same forests. They are, in fact, an insidious maneuver to get away with expropriation of Indian lands and destruction of Amazonian ecology, as the recent events in Yanomamiland have so

dramatically exposed.

Calha Norte and Proffao are only two manifestations of the military agenda for Amazonia.

> They are part of the strategy called Pan Amazonia, designed by the Army some years ago. The theme was developed by General Meira Mattos in his book Uma Geopolítica Pan-amazônica published by the Biblioteca do Exército Editora in 1980.
> In his conception, Amazonia, including the area in other countries, is an 'isolated and poor South American hinterland'. This immense region deserves a strategy of development which considers it as 'a geographic unit and presents plans for sub-regional and multinational development'.
> (...) As other plans already introduced in the region, the Proffao will be one more step in the militarization of Amazonia and of the Indian issue, as well as in the promotion not of development, but of the favoring of interests other than those of the Indian nations and of the non-Indian populations that inhabit it (CEDI 1989b).

Waste

Wasting away as a result of various waves of development fever, Amazonia has become a wasteland of mismanaged resources. While private enterprise has rapaciously depleted these resources, the actions of the Brazilian State have contributed nothing to generate wealth and stability for the region. One critic of these actions points out that

> The depopulation, environmental disruption, and demographic extraction created the conditions for both large-scale capitalist enterprise and government economic planners to treat the Amazon as an empty frontier from which profits could be rapidly and wastefully extracted with little regard for, or sustained economic participation by, existing socioeconomic or environmental systems. Contemporary modes of extraction in the Amazon have increased gross regional income, but they have done so in ways which will lead to their

> own collapse and which are so disrupting ecological and human systems as to limit the possibility of future modes of production to respond to new opportunities for either economic exchange or social reproduction (Bunker 1985:77).

Decimation of indigenous populations and loss of indigenous lands have been the constant companions of this ecological abuse of Amazonia by inappropriate exploitation activities. Philip Fearnside (1989:9) estimates that until 1988 nearly 590 thousand square kilometers of forests and savannas had been cut down, representing 11.7% of the total area of Amazonia in Brazil. As if this were not enough, Indian lands have been further reduced with the creation of National Forests -- 12 million hectares -- and areas reserved for the "special use" of the Armed Forces -- 10 million hectares (CEDI 1989b:10) -- thus depriving virtually all the Indians in Amazonia of essential sources of their livelihood.

If all this devastation an suffering had as a positive result the improvement of the country's economic situation, or the betterment of the living conditions of the rural and urban poor, one might consider the sacrifice somewhat worthwhile. But that is not the case. The sad conclusion is that the hardships inflicted on the Indian and regional populations of Amazonia amount to precious little benefit for the nation. Dennis Mahar of the World Bank makes the following devastating assessment: "despite the case of intense development, Amazonia still accounts for only an insignificant 3% of the national income" (Mahar 1989:46).

The development assaults on Amazonia have systematically ignored the experience of Indian peoples who have been occupying and exploiting the forest for centuries on end. Long-standing indigenous practices of agriculture, hunting and gathering have,

no doubt, transformed the environment, and yet, as it can be easily verified, they have not destroyed it. The irony of it is that these same Indian peoples who have proved themselves to be so competent in their treatment of the forest are too often disparaged as obtuse and backward by those who have proved themselves to be so wanting in their ability to handle Amazonia.

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