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Deforestation and Popular Resistance in Acre: From Local Movement to Global Network

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I. Introduction

The deforestation of the Amazon has become international news in recent years. So too has the fact that forest communities have in some places resisted deforestation, and have proposed their own alternatives to a development model for the Amazon that has proved exceptionally costly in social and environmental terms. In this paper I discuss the social history of deforestation and land conflicts in Acre, and the rubber tappers alternative proposal, "extractive reserves", which resulted from forest communities' resistance in that process. It is undoubtedly important to recognize and detail the social and political dimensions of a process at times characterized in solely environmental terms. It is also the case, however, that the international notoriety of the destruction of the Amazon and the peoples of the forest is in part a consequence of recent elements of the forest communities' strategy of resistance. It is particularly important for anthropologists to analyze how the rubber tappers and Brazilian support organizations working with them, constructed international alliances in order to influence new and powerful international actors in the Amazon--the Inter American Development Bank and the World Bank. The alliances made, on one hand, have gained an unprecedented voice and influence for Amazonian organizations internationally. On the other hand, this influence has limited effect at the local level. On still another hand, the process of constructing this alliance has resulted in a broader understanding of the social character of natural resource and development problems, and has begun, at least at the level of nongovernmental environmental organizations, to legitimize a social view of the environment. This opens new perspectives for the uses of anthropological knowledge, as environmental protection comes to be seen less as simply management of natural resources, and more as a function of distribution of wealth, forms of land use, and the participation of local constituencies concerned with natural resource destruction in development planning.

I will here briefly discuss the occupation of Acre and the emergence of the rubber tappers movement. Much of this history is discussed in more detail elsewhere (CEDEPLAR 1979; Silva 1982; Oliveira 1985; Duarte 1987; Mendes 1989). I will then discuss the agenda of US based environmental organizations

seeking to influence the multilateral development banks. I finally analyze the operation and effect of the alliance between the US environmentalists and Amazon unionists, noting the uses of anthropological knowledge in this process and evaluating the results for the several actors involved.

## II. The Occupation of Acre

Acre was originally colonized by Brazilians at the height of the rubber boom, from 1870 to 1900. The occupation of the region was strongly influenced by rubber policy and the new development model for the Amazon initiated after 1967. The area was rich in rubber and Brazil nuts, but distant from the commercial centers and, for the purposes of the new owners of the seringais (rubber producing areas), lacking a labor force. (Weinstein 1983) The rubber baron patrons, once having enslaved, exterminated or expelled the Indians, brought workers from northeastern Brazil to produce rubber. The new labor force fell victim to the aviamento system, a form of debt peonage in which they were advanced merchandise by the patrons and paid at the end of the harvest in rubber. Euclides da Cunha on his 1905 voyage to Acre coined the now standard description: ". . . the seringueiro enacts a tremendous anomaly: he is the man who works to enslave himself." (Da Cunha 1986 [1909]) Local rubber barons also incurred debt to merchants or larger rubber buyers, and so on up the chain to the large suppliers and merchants (casas de aviamento) in Manaus and Belem--some of which, in the height of the boom, were foreign. Versions of this "traditional" form of labor relations in Amazon rubber production still exist in much of Acre (as in the rest of the Amazon), and are characterized by rubber tappers, the producers of the rubber, as "slavery" or "captivity". The rubber tapper is obliged to sell his product to a single patron, as well as to pay "rent" on the rubber trees (or trails) he works, and may be imprisoned or suffer physical aggression for selling to another patron or a merchant. (Almeida 1986; Allegretti 1979)

After 1912 and the collapse of the Amazon rubber monopoly, the population and economy stagnated. Some owners, or supposed owners of rubber estates rented their seringais; some rented rubber trails to the rubber tappers for a fixed quantity of rubber per trail, and allowed them to buy and sell where they might. Agriculture for the local market and subsistence appeared, and trade in Brazil nuts commenced. (Souto Loureiro 1986: 101 -105) There was an attempt to reactivate native rubber areas during the Second World War, with little success despite the 50,000 northeasterners who came to the Amazon in the "rubber army", many of whom died in the seringais. Were it not for government policy supporting native rubber production through credit and subsidies, Amazon rubber production would have declined even more drastically. By 1966, the debts of the rubber barons and middlemen and mismanagement of credit became unmanageable. The Amazon Credit Bank, the source of financing for rubber operations, collapsed and was replaced by the Bank of Amazonia (BASA). (Pinto 1984; Dean 1987) The result in Acre was that patrons left or abandoned many seringais, since profit in rubber for many depended on

credit. The government of Wanderley Dantas then encouraged the sale of land in the state to investors from the south, ostensibly as a strategy for agriculture and cattle development. According to some sources, up to 80% of the lands of the state were sold between 1970 and 1975. (Branford and Glock 1985) It is clear that easy credit (subsidized to the point of negative real interest rates for much of the 70s (cf. Browder 1988; Duarte 1987)), with very low land prices and the opening of roads for the first time in the region caused a very rapid increase in land prices. Between 1972 and 1976, at the height of the land boom, prices rose between 1,000% and 2,000%, depending on access to roads. (CEDEPLAR 1979)

Other transformations followed: increased deforestation, global change in land holding and land use patterns, rural to urban migration, the emergence of new categories of producers (small farmers and autonomous rubber tappers) and heated land conflicts. In the Purus river valley--the area most affected by the opening of large cattle ranches--the area deforested increased from 77,206 hectares to 664,953 hectares from 1975 to 1987, at an annual rate of increase of 33.15% from 1975 to 1978, and 16.33% from 1978 to 1987 (GT PMACI 1989). Cattle ranching, the leading cause of deforestation, is responsible for more than half of the clearance in the state, occupying more than seven times the area cleared for agriculture. (FUNTAC 1989) One report suggests that as much as 85% of the pasture was abandoned (IDB 1988), but this is very probably too high. Pasture yield is exceptionally low--one head per one and a half hectares, or .66 head per hectare.

Land conflicts and overlapping claims to land title increased. In the 1960s, with the withdrawal of the rubber baron patrons, the area worked for extraction (or native rubber and Brazil nut production) diminished by 65%, but the number of establishments declaring extraction as their economic activity grew more than 1,000% (GT Planacre 1989). This signaled the emergence in force of the "autonomous" rubber tappers, that is, rubber tappers who remained in the forest after the collapse of the traditional rubber estates, planting small gardens, hunting, fishing, collecting, and selling rubber and Brazil nuts to travelling merchants, or marreteiros.

As Mauro Almeida has brilliantly shown, the diversified resource use strategy of the autonomous rubber tappers has been a form of resistance against patrons at least since the end of the rubber boom. (Almeida 1988) The patrons' interest is in maximizing rubber production (and after the collapse of rubber credit, in maximizing short term rubber production even at the cost of degrading the resource base). In the most extreme cases--the upper rivers, such as in Acre and Amazonas--where labor was most scarce, patrons prohibited rubber tappers from planting their own gardens and discouraged them from spending time hunting, to increase both rubber production and the tappers' dependence on the patrons' stores (barracao). The autonomous rubber tappers' resistance strategy has been to diversify, so as to meet subsistence needs through family and community labor, while producing enough rubber and Brazil nuts to meet minimal market needs. It is this strategy that has allowed rubber tappers to remain in the forest through extended periods of very low rubber and other extractive commodity prices. Rubber tapper resource use is a kind of "everyday resistance" (Scott 1985), a kind of structure of the long run, which

does not preclude open confrontation with patrons or cattle ranchers, as the experience of the 70s in Acre shows.

Through the 70s, land concentration in Acre became more acute. In 1982, the fifteen largest landowners surveyed occupied more than 26% of the territory of the state, and 80% of the state was classified as latifundia (Duarte 1987). The rural property situation has not changed. About 76% of the state has been classified by the Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). This area in 1986 was distributed in the following manner:

Figure 1 Distribution of Landholdings in Acre 1986 (1)

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88%	of the landholdings are <u>minifundia</u> , occupying	7.5%
	of total area surveyed.	
10%	of the landholdings are <u>latifundia</u> , occupying	82%
	of total area surveyed, which includes:	
0.05% (12)	of the holdings are <u>latifundio por extensao</u>	occupying 26%
	of the total area surveyed.	
2%	of the holdings are "rural enterprises", occupying	11%
	of the total area surveyed.	
	area	

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(source: Acre Statistical Yearbook,  
1983-1986)

This process of land concentration unleashed serious land conflicts and the expulsion of thousands of rubber tappers to the rubber estates of Bolivia and the urban shantytowns. Much of the land bought by the paulistas (southerners) in the 70s was obtained through falsification of land title, "stretching" of areas (extending the boundaries of an area purchased to include neighboring areas), or other forms of land fraud. (Duarte 1987) The old owners of the seringais often held irregular or imprecise titles, since the exact extent of a rubber estate was of little importance in the extractive economy. Titles issued by Bolivia, the Republic of Acre, the state of Amazonas, the state of Acre, and the Federal Government all had potential validity and at times overlapped. Conflicting land titles, and land conflicts arising from them, are nothing new in Acre: Souto Loureiro notes one proposed solution to the problem dating from 1919 (1986: 104). Some counties (municípios) registered claims to more land than they physically occupied (up to 160% of the total area), a clear index of overlapping land claims (GT Planacre 1985). The presence of rubber tappers or small famers with legal rights of possession (posse) (as opposed to property rights) on the land represented a threat to the profitability of land obtained for cattle ranching

or speculation. Operations of "cleaning the land", or removing the rubber tapper and small farmer communities, became common starting in 1973, as the new owners bought out rubber tappers for very low prices, burned houses and crops, or used hired gunmen to intimidate those unwilling to sell out. (Duarte 1987)

One result of deforestation and expulsion of the rural population, as well as transformation in land holding and productive relations in Acre from 1960 to 1980 was a massive rural to urban migration. Even where conflicts and conversion of forest to cattle pasture did not force people off the land, the decay of the extractive economy--or, in fact, the shift in government investment policy, away from the extractive economy, toward the agricultural frontier, particularly toward cattle ranching--meant that many people left the land.

Figure 2 shows percentages of rural and urban population in the state over the two decades.

Figure 2: Rural and Urban Population in Acre, 1960-1988

	(in %)			
	1960	1970	1980	1988 (estimated)
Urban	21	28	44	45
Rural	79	72	56	55

(sources: Anuario Estatístico do Acre, 1982; Anuario Estatístico do Acre, 1983-1986).

The decade 1970 - 1980 saw an abrupt change in the composition of the state's population with greatly accelerated rural to urban migration. The last date for which empirical data are available is 1980; the 1988 figures are based on estimated growth rates furnished by IBGE. The rate of change for the rural and urban populations between 1970 and 1980 is marked:

Figure 3: Annual Rate of Increase in Rural and Urban Population in Acre, 1970 - 1980

	1970	1980	70/80 (%)
Total	215,299	301,605	3.4%

Urban	59,307	132,174	8.3%
Rural	155,992	169,431	0.83%

(Anuario Estatístico do Acre, 1982).

About 68% of the growth in the urban population of the state by 1980 can be accounted for by migration. (2) These figures do not account for migration to Bolivia: Catholic Church and other sources in Acre assert that between 10,000 and 50,000 rubber tappers migrated to Bolivia in the 70s. The higher figure is probably an overestimate; nonetheless, this population appears in neither the Brazilian nor the Bolivian census counts. It is quite possible that actual fertility is higher in rural areas than the 3.4% overall increase (CEDEPLAR 1979; Table A-6, Appendicies), and urban rates perhaps lower. This would be consistent with observed rural to urban migration plus additional outmigration to Bolivia.

All of the studies on this process concur that the rural population in the 70s and 80s was displaced by transformation of landholding and productive relations--the replacement of the remnants of the obsolete extrative-export system by the agricultural-livestock frontier--and fled to the urban areas more from lack of option than from any real possibility of economically improved circumstances in cities with no industrial economy. (CEDEPLAR 1979; Sawyer and Carvalho 1986; Oliveira 1985; Silva 1982; Duarte 1987) Rural union leaders in Acre assert that migration is an act of desperation that impoverishes and marginalizes an already poor rural population. (see Mendes 1989) Flooding regional cities with essentially no economic base and insufficient infrastrucutre with a displaced peasantry is surely one of the great social costs of this transformation.

The response of the rubber tappers was initially spontaneous resistance, which led to an organized resistance movement. Confrontations with rubber baron patrons are widely, if summarily, reported since the rubber boom (Allegretti 1979). One local newspaper commented in 1921, after the collapse of the export boom: "With the extinction of the patron, the risings, escapes, the impositions and jailings will cease. Acre will live again." (Gazetta do Purus Souto Loureiro 1986: 105) The modern era of rubber tapper resistance to expulsion began around 1974. The first empate, the rubber tappers collective demonstration to halt expulsions or deforestation, was in Brasileia county, on Seringal Carmen in 1976. The conflicts and evictions, denounced by the Catholic Church, came to national attention.

The National Confederation of Agricultural Workers sent a delegate to the state in 1975 and began organizing unions. In 1980 there were unions in the majority of counties in the state, and a state federation of agricultural workers' unions was created. It was in this process that leaders such as

Wilson Pinheiro, Jesus Andre Matias, and Chico Mendes became known. It is not by accident that all of these leaders have been assassinated--to the extent that the movement succeeded in interfering in land holding relations, large landowners reacted by attempting to eliminate its leadership. Mobilization reached most of the state, and confrontations were common especially from 1978 to 1980, until the assassination of Wilson Pinheiro. It was between 1976 and 1980 that most the expropriations of land for agrarian reform in the state were decreed--some 24 seringais, totalling 990,994 hectares (Duarte 1987:77-78). The majority of these lands were used to create "Directed Settlement Projects" (PAD)--852,892 ha.--which were intended to settle rubber tappers and colonists from the south.

The government, partially in response to grassroots pressure did expropriate some lands in order to resolve chronic land conflicts. But the form that the expropriations took often led to the same result as expulsion. The areas where the land agency (INCRA) intervened were divided up into individual lots, often of 50 to 100 hectares, and individuals received title. This typically disrupted the resource use patterns of the seringal, such that some rubber tappers lost part of their rubber trails, others lost Brazil nut trees, and so on. Common resource use patterns changed--one could not exploit resources on someone else's property. This made the diversified resource use strategies of autonomous rubber tappers inviable. Colocacoes de seringa (rubber holdings) became colonias (agricultural smallholdings) and these frequently proved unsustainable. Many rubber tappers in the settlement projects sold out to large landholders or simply left, for other areas or the cities.

By 1985 the rubber tappers movement could point to a series of victories--the existence of rural unions in the state, many demonstrations against deforestation and expulsion, a number of expropriations of areas in conflict, popular education projects that brought community-run schools to seringais in Xapuri. Successful mobilization and direct action against summary evictions elicited a violent response on the part of the local landholding elite, however. In 1980 Wilson Pinheiro, president of the rural workers union of Brasileia was assassinated; in 1982, Jesus Andre Matias, in 1983, Raimundo Raulino, and in 1988 Ivair Higino and Chico Mendes. In addition, the highly centralized and state-controlled structure of the rural unions meant that once a state-level federation was installed (in 1980), it was extremely difficult for activist local unions to gain a majority and control the federation. Funds for the local (municipal unions) came from the Ministry of Labor, through the national Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG) to the state federation (FETACRE), and then to the locals. But by the time the federation was created, grassroots activism was in essence restricted to a few municipalities--Xapuri, Brasileia, Assis Brasil. Divisions introduced by political party factionalism, and by state government manoeuvres to coopt leaders, through government jobs or political support, weakened the movement. The conflicts between ranchers and rubber tappers that sparked local resistance were most marked in the Acre River valley, while much of the rest of the state remained under the control of local patrons. The result was that the state union federation adopted a relatively passive stance in relation to government.

There were at the same time new and powerful actors arriving on the local scene. In 1982, the World Bank financed the Polonoroeste project, a road paving and agricultural colonization scheme in Mato Grosso and Rondonia that brought Rondonia the fastest rate of deforestation in the Amazon as well as land concentration and rapid rural to urban migration. In 1985, the Inter American Development Bank (IDB) approved the continuation of this project from Porto Velho in Rondonia to Rio Branco in Acre. The rubber tappers were aware of the effects of road paving and migration in Rondonia, and had their own decade of experience with the 317 road in the Acre River valley. In a calculated effort to break out of their regional isolation and to seek new allies nationally and internationally, the rubber tappers decided to hold a national meeting in Brasilia, in October of 1985. Some 120 local union leaders from Acre, Rondonia and Amazonas attended, as well as researchers, NGO activists, and government representatives engaged in planning for the IDB project. The rubber tappers called for a more open planning process, and for their participation in planning decisions. The result of the meeting was the creation of a National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS) and the launching of the extractive reserves proposal. The rubber tappers argued that areas of forest inhabited by rubber tappers and similar populations should be guaranteed to them collectively, rather than giving government support to unsustainable agriculture projects or unproductive cattle ranching. This they argued would be more economically productive over the long run, as well as more socially equitable.

Euclides Da Cunha, concluding his observations on the living conditions of rubber tappers in Acre in 1905, made several urgent recommendations: "... a labor law that ennobles human effort; an austere justice that halts abuses; and some form of homestead that definitively ties (the rubber tappers) to the land." (Da Cunha 1986:38) The resolutions approved by the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers (October 11 -17 1985), as well as the Second National Meeting of Rubber Tappers/ First National Meeting of Peoples of the Forest (March 31, 1989) include "Immediate end to all forms of oppression of peoples of the forest, in particular debt slavery", "Immediate investigation of crimes against rural workers, and an end to violence against the defenders of the Amazon forest," and "Immediate creation of Extractive Reserves in Amazonia, in the areas indicated by extractive workers through their associations." (II Encontro nacional dos seringueiros e I Encontro dos Povos da Floresta, Rio Branco AC, 31 de marco de 1989). The organized rubber tappers have given conceptual depth, as well as concrete social expression, to Da Cunha's precocious democratic vision of the Amazon frontier.

### III. Environmentalists and The Multilateral Development Banks

By 1985 environmental organizations in the US and Europe had for several years been developing a campaign to influence the policy and programs of the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs). It had been common currency in international environmental circles since 1972 that environmental protection and development were but two sides of the same coin, since poverty was in instances a major cause of environmental degradation in the third world (World

Conservation Strategy). Starting in about 1983 a small group of environmentalists began to investigate the mint. They noted that the MDBs, in particular the World Bank, had an unparalleled influence over the development process, and hence in environmental problems of development, and further that these institutions were susceptible to citizens pressure from the major donor countries. (Rich 1985; Aufderheide and Rich 1988)

The World Bank, its sister institution the International Monetary Fund, and the three regional MDBs, are central to international development lending. The World Bank the largest single public development assistance institution in the world loaned over \$21 billion in 1989, much of it for projects in the environmentally and socially sensitive agriculture, transport and energy sectors. Every dollar loaned by an MDB raises two to three more in cofinancing and counterpart funds from borrower governments, other aid agencies, and private banks. The banks' influence is further extended through research, training programs, and technology transfer. In many developing countries, World Bank country lending studies and sector review studies are the most important economic planning documents.

The MDBs are susceptible to citizen pressure through their boards of directors. The World Bank, for example, has 151 member nations. The five largest stockholders in the bank (the US, Japan, UK, West Germany and France) each appoint an executive director to represent them on the Bank's board. Smaller stockholders compose constituencies that elect an executive director among them. For example, Greece, Italy, Malta, Poland and Portugal elect one executive director among them. Each country's vote reflects the number of shares held by that country. The US alone has almost 17% of the votes on the Bank board. The board must approve all loans as well as major policy changes.

In the US, MDB executive directors are appointed by the Treasury Department, which, with other agencies, determines US positions on MDB projects and policy issues. The Treasury, however, is authorized to participate in the MDBs by the Congress, and when the banks seek capital replenishments (necessary if their loan portfolios are to grow) US funds for shares in the banks must be appropriated by the appropriations committees of the Congress. The environmentalists noted that specific projects and general policies of the banks could be influenced through the Congress. (Ibid)

By 1983 there were various indications that many World Bank projects were causing grave environmental and social problems, in spite of explicit bank policies mandating environmental protection and protection of indigenous lands. The environmentalists selected the World Bank Polonoroeste project as an example to demonstrate to key members of the Congress, US agencies, and the public, that MDB financed development was indeed ignoring environmental and social considerations and so risking the destruction of the ecological and social basis of any sustainable development.

The Polonoroeste project, approved in 1982, was a \$1.6 billion road paving and agricultural colonization scheme in the northwestern states of Rondonia and Mato Grosso. The World Bank loaned \$435 million in a series of loans to pave 1,500 kilometers of the 364 road from Cuiaba in central Brazil

to Porto Velho in Rondonia, and to provide services credit, agricultural extension, basic infrastructure to the colonist population arriving over the road. The Bank's loan contract included conditions requiring the demarcation of Indian lands in the project area, as well as the creation of protected natural areas and other measures to protect the fragile tropical forest environment in the project area.

The loan however, had been approved over the objections of Bank agronomic and anthropological consultants, who pointed out that the agricultural studies exaggerated the availability of good land, and that the indigenous peoples component painted a radically optimistic picture of the Indian agency's capacity to effectively defend Indian interests in the project area. Indeed between 1982 and 1986 at least some 500,000 migrants arrived in Rondonia, many more than expected. Colonist attrition rates in government sponsored colonization areas reached 80%, as small farmers found poor soils, no services or infrastructure, and rampant malaria. (Millikan 1988) For many colonists, clearing and planting for a few years, then planting pasture and selling off to cattle ranchers or speculators was the only economic option (Browder 1988a). The perspective of creating a yeoman peasantry on the frontier was rapidly displaced by land concentration and rural to urban migration, while deforestation increased with alarming speed, and invasions of Indian lands and protected areas proliferated.

The environmentalists made contacts with Brazilian nongovernmental organizations and researchers with current information on the project area (the Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information (CEDI) was a key contact) and mounted a dossier detailing ongoing violations of Bank policy as well as of contractual conditions. Working simultaneously on the press, Bank staff, and key members of the Congress and the US Treasury, the environmentalists turned the project into a test of the Bank's willingness and ability to implement the environmental and social policies it professed. With the support of the Foreign Operations Subcommittees of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees (especially the support of Senator Robert Kasten (R WI), chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee), pressure on the Bank mounted until in 1985, at the end of the military government, the Bank suspended remaining disbursements on the loan pending steps to rectify some of the worst problems. The government agreed to various measures, including the demarcation of a 1.8 million hectare reserve for the Uru-eu-wau-wau Indians, in order to restart disbursements. The hypothesis that it was possible to influence the Banks through citizen pressure was, in some measure, demonstrated.

Perhaps more importantly, it was also demonstrated to the environmental organizations that social concerns were an integral part of their agenda. Indigenous rights organizations, and indigenous groups, presented themselves as a constituency opposed to an ecologically destructive development model. But on closer examination, it was evident that the colonists--the poor and landless from other parts of Brazil, in whose name the project was justified--were hardly beneficiaries of the project. The Polonoroeste case became a key example not of conflict or "trade offs" between environment and development but of the opposite: a kind of development with large and widely distributed

social and environmental costs, and restricted benefits concentrated upwards. At least for the organizations directly involved in the Banks campaign, (EDF, National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Policy Institute, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club) discussion of the Polonoroeste Project and subsequent work on the IDB project marked a shift of priorities, or provided a new content to ongoing discussion of environment and development, or "sustainable development". Polonoroeste suggested that unsound development could have heavy costs for the environment, displace and marginalize traditional occupants of the land, while also failing to provide benefits for the supposed beneficiaries. The rubber tappers response took the the discussion a step further, by providing an alternative.

IV. Rubber Tappers and Environmentalists

The first national meeting of rubber tappers was perceived as an opportunity for environmentalists concerned with multilaterally financed development. The rubber tappers were not only an organized constituency with a decade of experience fighting deforestation, but actively sought a voice in development planning, and had their own alternative proposal. Following this meeting, EDF, in collaboration with the Institute for Amazon Studies, began a research project on the economic and social viability of extractive reserves, and began advocating consultation with local populations in the IDB's project. The bank negotiated an environmental protection plan, the PMACI (Project to Protect the Environment and the Indigenous Communities), calling for demarcation of Indian areas and other measures to mitigate the impacts of the road. However through 1985 and 1986, road paving proceeded, and little was done to implement the PMACI.

In 1987, EDF brought Chico Mendes to Washington D.C. to meet with environmental groups, members of Congress, and IDB staff, and to Miami for the IDB's annual meeting to meet with IDB executive directors. Mendes held that the rubber tappers were not against the road, which after all could represent benefits for them, but were against the way the road paving was proceeding, without demarcation of Indian lands, and without any concrete measures to resolve the ongoing land conflicts between rubber tappers and cattle ranchers.

The eventual result, following heavy pressure from the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, was bank suspension of the road paving loan, at the beginning of 1988, for failure to comply with environmental conditions--the first time the IDB had ever suspended a loan on environmental grounds. The suspension was covered in both the Brazilian and international press. The diverse actors interested in the project--rubber tappers and Indians, environmentalists, federal and state government officials, IDB staff, US congressional representatives, the US Treasury, the press--had quite different readings of this event, based in their respective agendas and on the information to which they had access.

Local government in Acre reacted in terms of its immediate interest in securing funding for the road. When Chico Mendes returned to Acre in April 1987 he was excoriated in the local press and by local politicians for halting the progress of the region.

Mendes himself not only thought that delaying the road paving was a valuable conquest, but also that international publicity could serve to protect him, and other local leaders, threatened with assassination.

To sectors of federal government directly involved with the IDB (planning and finance), US pressure on environmental issues was one element in US strategy for gaining greater control (indeed veto power over all loans) in the IDB, in a direct attack on the multilateral character of the institution. Brazil is the largest and most influential Latin nation in the bank, while the US is the largest shareholder. Through 1987 and 1988 a power struggle developed between the Latin block and the US over increased capitalization of the bank (dependent on US hard currency contributions). The US sought veto power over all loans in exchange for a 75% increase in US capital subscriptions to the bank. (Gazetta Mercantial 3/24/87)

The US Treasury had in fact long held that the IDB had a poor record in enforcing its loan conditions in general, and approved bad projects as a result of the borrower country majority on the Bank board. The US noted that while it held nominally about a third of the bank's capital (and hence had a third of the votes on the board), its contributions were in dollars, so that its shares actually represented over 70% of the bank's "usable" capital, i.e., its hard currency, which could be used to guarantee bond issues on international financial markets. The Treasury did view the Acre project as a test case of the bank's willingness to enforce loan conditions, and pressed for bank to cancel the loan in 1987. Bilateral conflicts over trade policy between Brazil and the US no doubt contributed to Treasury's decision in 1985 to abstain on the IDB loan, the first time the US had ever failed to support a loan to Brazil in the IDB.

To Brazilian government officials, such considerations were (and largely continue to be) far more real than the political pressure mounted by environmental groups in the US Congress. There is in Brazil no analogy to the non-profit, non-governmental environmental groups of the US. Nor are the arcana of the operations of the US Congress widely known. The actual mechanisms of influence in this project, as in others (large membership organizations, of potential political importance in terms of state level electoral politics, working with the key appropriations subcommittees of the House and Senate, and generating press attention) were novel and, even though described in the Brazilian press (cf Jornal do Brasil 7/8/87), remained largely unintelligible to a public and policy makers bereft of any adequate frame of reference. Supposed geopolitical considerations were a much readier frame of reference.

The suspension and events leading up to it had in fact been closely watched at high levels of Brazilian government. The Brazilian National Security Council, in a memo delivered to a Congressional investigating committee, (3) entitled "Indigenous Question- Environment- International Demands", (Memoria No. 092/3a SC/ 86, August 1986) expressed concern with "surprising and very specific demands in relation to environmental policy and the protection of ecosystems" on the part of the IDB and the World Bank, and notes that "these banks have even interfered in the size of indigenous areas that are supposed to be demarcated." The memo attributes to the coordinator of the PMACI the claim that "the demands of the Banks result from explicit environmentalist pressure from the United States and Europe, but behind which are economic and political interests of foreign groups with power to influence the financial institutions." (By "foreign groups" the authors mean multinational corporate interests.) The memo concludes proposing that National Security Council agreement be obligatory for the approval of the PMACI.

National Security Council concerns with MDB pressure on environmental issues expressed in the memo cited above were no more than a footnote to a much broader military development plan for the Amazon. The outline of this strategy is contained in the Calha Norte (Northern Channels, i.e., the northern tributaries of the Amazon river) project, designed in 1985 by the Foreign Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the Planning Secretariat, and the General Secretariat of the National Security Council (CSN). The plan sought to increase bilateral relations with Amazon pact nations, increase Brazilian military presence on the borders (to secure national borders, and combat drug traffic and potential guerilla activity), repair or redo the physical demarcation of the borders, and "define an appropriate indigenous policy for the region", (Projeto Calha Norte), as well as supporting increased infrastructure development (airports, roads, hydroelectrics) in the region.

The "appropriate indigenous policy for the region" conceptualized by the CSN was expressed in presidential decrees 94.945 and 94.946 of September 23, 1987, which established the CSN as member of the Interministerial Working Group charged with defining the dimensions of Indian areas to be legally demarcated, and which created the new category of Indian land--colônia indígena (indigenous colony)--for so-called acculturated Indians. These decrees were vigorously opposed by the indigenous movement, first on the basis that the attempt on the part of the state to determine who was and who was not "acculturated" was only a step away from an arbitrary determination of who was and who was not an Indian, and second because the practical effect of the decrees was the reduction in size of Indian areas and/or the transformation of land formerly recognized as Indian land into National Forest, in order to permit mineral or other economic exploitation in the area.

In March of 1988 the General Secretariat of the National Security Council assumed the executive coordination of the PMACI, and in April, the IDB received a telex proposing creation of four extractive reserves and demarcation of 26 indigenous areas, as well as other measures, to bring the loan into compliance with the contract and restart disbursements. This was the first time the government had proposed creation of extractive reserves in the

context of the PMACI. After consultation with US environmentalists, the Bank sent a mission to Acre, to discuss the proposal not only with state and federal agencies, but with the local nongovernmental organizations.

The meetings held in early May in Rio Branco among the federal agencies on the PMACI working group, Acre state agencies, and Union of Indigenous Nations North Regional (UNI) office and the National Council of Rubber Tappers were unprecedented in the history of multilateral loan negotiations in the Amazon, in that local social movements had never before had any voice in loan decisions. The center of controversy in this case was the issue of indigenous colonies: the government, in particular the CSN, insisted on the legality of the figure and its sovereign right to dispose of Indian land as it saw fit, and UNI, as well as the support organizations, insisted with equal vehemence that the creation of colonies was absolutely unacceptable to the indigenous communities. (cf "Open Letter from UNI-North to PMACI and IDB", Cultural Survival Quarterly, 13, 1, 1989) The agreement reached was that the government would not demarcate any Indian lands in the project area without the written consent of the community in question to the form of demarcation (i.e., whether colony or area indigena). A series of other actions--health, education, and community development projects were to be undertaken first in the indigenous areas. The intervention of the IDB in the case, responding to and to some extent assimilating criticisms made by the US environmental groups and the rubber tappers, had the effect of permitting the local Indian organization to temporarily halt a government initiative it found inimical to Indian interests.

In September of 1988 the government presented its definitive action plan for the PMACI to the IDB in Washington, and met with a group of US environmental organizations. Despite the government's express will, the plan was not approved immediately. The National Council of Rubber Tappers objected to aspects of the extractive reserves projects in the plan (essentially an attempt by sectors of the Ministry for Agrarian Reform and Development to legitimize an unnecessarily centralized, complex and expensive model for the creation of the reserves). These aspects were removed from the plan. The Indian organizations questioned the good faith of the government in preparing surveys and decrees for demarcation of some 10 indigenous colonies without consulting the communities, as well as transforming large areas of land formerly recognized as Indian territory into National Forests. The decrees creating colonies were not published or signed by the relevant ministers, technically upholding the letter of the agreement. The approval of the plan, the condition for resuming disbursements on the loan was again delayed.

It was only in June of 1989, under threat of government withdrawal from the PMACI that the IDB resumed disbursements. By this point the local organizations, while not withdrawing their criticisms, had concluded that it was preferable for the IDB to remain involved in the project rather than allowing the government to proceed with road paving while discarding the PMACI altogether. Disbursements restarted in July of 1989.

The local organizations demonstrated that in alliance with US environmental organizations it was possible to influence the contents of development plans--the IDB is funding the creation of four extractive reserves in the project area--as well as to buy time in the face of government initiatives unacceptable to the local communities. Institutionalizing mechanisms for local groups to monitor and review the project--a central concern of the local NGOs--was rejected out of hand by the government, even though the proposal implied no decision making power for the NGOs.

Events in the interim between the suspension and restart of the project dwarfed the PMACI, and made apparent serious contradictions not only in the IDB's presuppositions, but in those of the environmentalists. The assassination of Chico Mendes in December of 1988 highlighted the fragility of government institutions in the region, (Acao Pela Cidadania 1989) made even more apparent by the failure of the massively publicized federal investigation unleashed in response to initial media coverage of the assassination to apprehend the guilty parties or incriminate anyone involved in what is widely acknowledged on the local level as a conspiracy to murder Mendes. The two defendants in the Mendes case presently in prison awaiting trial both gave themselves up to the police; one of the participants in the ambush remains at liberty. In all of the discussions of paving the road and environmental protection between the IDB, local social movements, federal and state governments, environmentalists, and members of the US Congress one key actor remained absent--the regional landholding elite. This elite made itself present--beyond occasional denunciations in the local press of delays in completion of the road or criticisms of Mendes' trips abroad--in intimidations, shootings and assassinations of union leaders and activists. The Mendes murder trial is only one of four homicide or shooting cases in course in the municipality of Xapuri alone stemming from events in 1988.

Indeed a close reading of the PMACI project documents reveals that the interests of this elite played a fundamental role in the project design, apparent less from the contents of the plan, but in what is absent from the plan. The areas selected for creation of extractive reserves, as well as for the various other protected areas proposed or created, have in common that they were areas already in the possession of INCRA when the plan was designed, that is, that they are areas where the landholders agreed to, or sought, government expropriation (PAP 1986:82). The government was willing to take or at least propose, extensive steps to protect the environment and Indian lands, insofar as these do not impinge directly on the property interests of the landholding elite, except where local mobilization creates intolerable social tension. Of the four extractive reserves the IDB is supporting, none were priority for the rubber tappers for creation of reserves, because none were areas of conflict. The only reserve actually a priority of the movement that has been expropriated was Seringal Cachoeira--the area in part claimed by Darly Alves, and site of the conflict that led to the assassination of Chico Mendes. Government unwillingness to alienate the regional elite may explain why the majority of Indian lands proposed for demarcation in the final version of the PMACI are in Amazonas and not in Acre: in Acre the vast majority of the lands are claimed by private owners,

while Amazonas has not yet undergone the land boom that characterized Acre in the 1970s. In the final analysis the PMACI recalls the model of agrarian reform promulgated ten years ago by GETAT (Executive Group on Land in the Tocantins-Araguaia), as analyzed by Alfredo Wagner: ". . . the question of agrarian reform, beyond being conceptualized as a national security question, comes to have its implementation directed by the repressive apparatus of the state. The objective proposed is to carry out a land reform, foreseeing distribution of public lands and expropriation of private lands. This implementation further seeks to neutralize social movements of rural workers and indigenous groups that have posed themselves against agriculture and cattle ranching, mining, and logging projects . . . To achieve these ends, the State . . . intends to build a local political base capable of strengthening its bureaucratic and authoritarian measures. (Almeida 1980: 125 - 126).

V.

Conclusion

The experience of the PMACI and the Porto Velho - Rio Branco road paving project suggests several conclusions with respect to the relations between third world social movements and first world NGOs. The US environmental groups operate in a field of institutionalized politics, whereas the third world organizations do not. The transformations of land holding relations in Acre through the 1970s, as well as the more recent history of the creation of extractive reserves shows this to be so. Consequently it is possible both for first world groups to make apparently impressive gains in the sphere of institutional politics, and for their third world allies to gain prestige, publicity and substantive influence at international or even national level, without this power translating directly into increased power at the local level. The environmental groups, partially as a result of their alliances, were able to successfully promote a structural reform of the World Bank, announced in 1987, involving the creation of a new central environment department, greatly increased environmental staff positions, and environmental units in the Bank's regional divisions to screen all new projects. (Aufderheide and Rich 1989) The IDB has undertaken similar, if more modest, reforms, and the polemic surrounding its Acre project was an important factor in starting this process. The rubber tappers, partially as result of their alliances, (in particular with the Institute for Amazon Studies) were able to create a legal mechanism in Brazil's land legislation for the creation of extractive reserves. These initiatives have involved new uses of anthropological knowledge: knowledge of the situation and legal status of Indian areas, of the capacities and aspirations of local social movements, of local resource use patterns, of the performance of local government agencies. The novelty lies not in the knowledge, but its application in the context of a campaign mounted by organizations with the political weight to gain a hearing in the Congress and the US government agencies, and with the will to use their weight. The history of extractive reserves as a development alternative, proposed by the rubber tappers movement and eventually endorsed by the MDBs and National Security Council, is a history of making a specific cultural and historic reality comprehensible as a general principle. From the local conflict of the Acre river valley in the 70s and 80s comes a specific proposal

for environmental conservation and development, which leads to a general conclusion: the most effective forms of environmental protection in threatened ecosystems may come from the experience of local constituencies with a direct interest in preserving the resources.

But this alliance, and the technical and general knowledge it has generated has not resulted in the expropriation of the approximately 90 seringais in Acre affected by land conflicts, nor has it mitigated rural violence, as the assassination of Chico Mendes showed only too clearly. This contradiction results from obvious structural differences in the political institutional contexts in which the distinct movements operate. But it is not perhaps insurmountable, or at least not static. Although it is perhaps too early to judge, there are strong indications that the rubber tappers movement has reached a level of mobilization not attained since the early 80's. The new relations created since 1985 between local social movements, national movements and support organizations, and international institutions and organizations continue to offer ample ground for reflection, analysis and action.

#### Notes

1.) Under the legislation in force up to 1988 (the Land Statute of 1964) landholdings over specified sizes or unproductive landholdings were defined as latifundia, which were legally susceptible to expropriation for agrarian reform. A latifundio defined by size was determined in terms of the "rural module" (modulo rural), or the minimal landholding held to be productive over the long run. The rural module varies from one geographic region to another. In Acre, the rural module was 60 hectares, and a landholding over 600 rural modules in size was a latifundio because of size. A holding under one rural module is a minifundio, that is an area held to be too small to sustain a family over the long run under regional conditions. A rural enterprise is held to be a sustainable, productive landholding, neither latifundio nor minifundio. Since the Constitution of 1988 prohibits the expropriation of any productive land for agrarian reform, the category of latifundio because of size is null. The key issue of what constitutes productive land, however, is not defined in the Constitution, and awaits the elaboration of so-called ordinary legislation. This is an extremely important, and polemical, point, since the possibility and prospects for agrarian reform depend on this definition.

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