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U R G E N T A C T I O N

JUSTICE AND PEACE OFFICE

REQUEST & UPDATE

SCARBORO FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY

2685 KINGSTON ROAD

SCARBOROUGH - ONTARIO - CANADA

M1M 1M4

M E M O

29 June '89

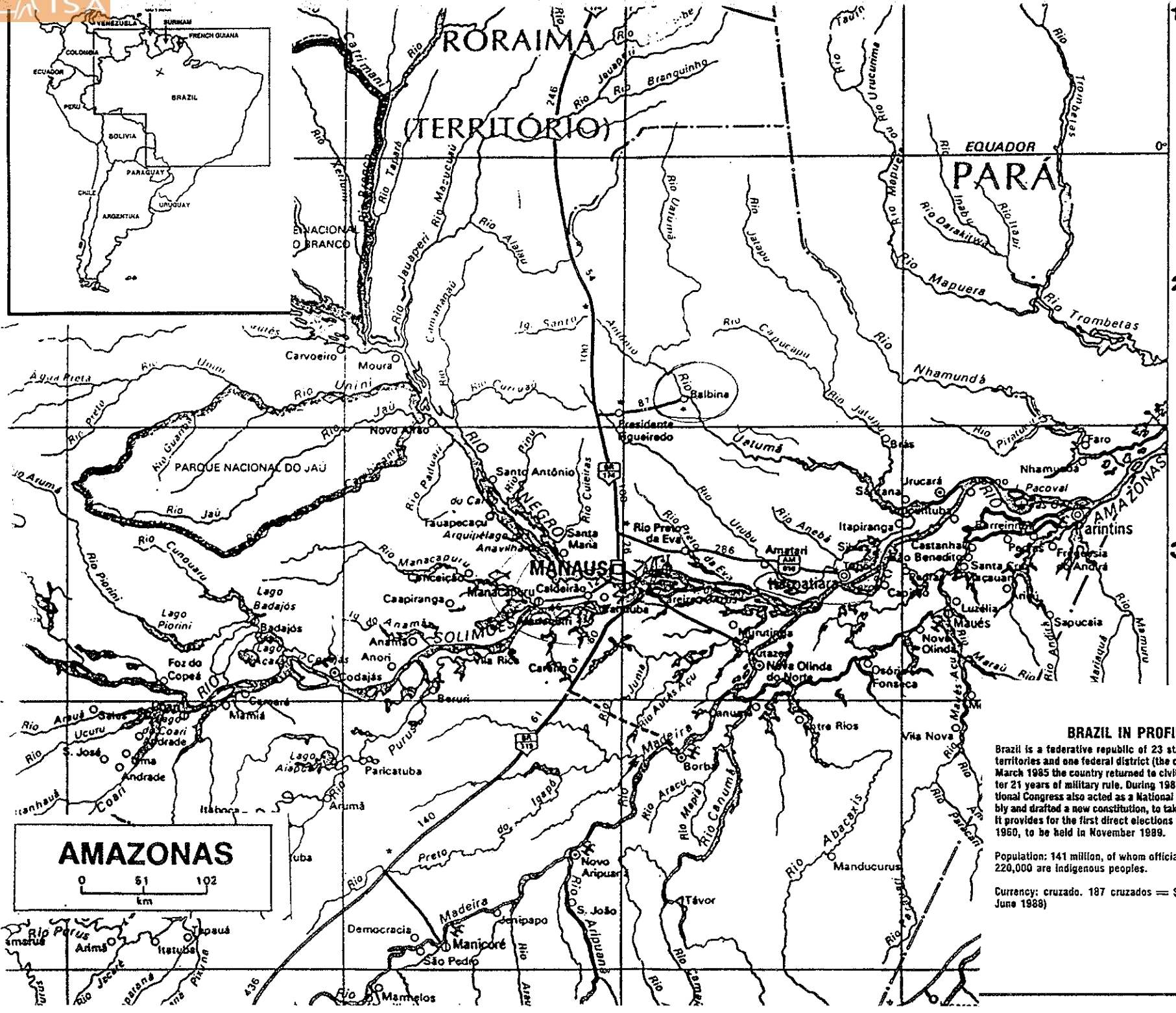
TO: Inter-Church Colleagues; Collaborators with Brazil Concerns

FROM: Dan Gennarelli

RE: Update on Situation in Brazil Amazon's Ecological Catastrophe
 The Balbina Dam's Contamination of Downstream River Communities

- 1) We received a telephone report yesterday from Urucara, Amazonas (in the prelicity of Itacoatiara, served by SFM personnel) relaying the continuing news of 1900-2000 families living in communities downstream from the Balbina Dam. (See map on reverse.) Their livelihood, entirely dependent upon the Uatuma River system, has again been threatened. Since early February '89 when the turbine plant was inaugurated, toxic-laden waters from the reservoir behind the dam have been released steadily into the Uatuma River. Fish stocks, small game animals near the river's edge and drinking wells have all been severely affected by the contaminated water. The phone call was made to confirm the desperateness of the situation faced by these families and their needs for medical and food supplies now generated by these circumstances.
- 2) Copies of the Justice & Peace Office's action to Brazilian officials and the Canadian ambassador are enclosed. Would you consider a similar solidarity action and send us copies of your message? (See Items I, II).
- 3) Recently a lawyer was sent into the area where these communities reside. He survived an attempted assassination carried out in Manaus. Among the documents attached is notice of this (Item III).
- 4) Bishop Jorge Marskell, SFM, in a letter to the communities, called attention to the ecological catastrophe manufactured by the designers of the Balbina Dam. He quotes a number of popular testimonies delivered against the effects of the dam. His theological reflection on resurrection and new life is most appropriate (Item IV).
- 5) Some of you have already received a folder of documents with detailed reports, trip accounts and documents on the Balbina catastrophe. Please add the enclosed. If you'd like the full folder please request from us.
- 6) A World Bank meeting is scheduled for upcoming September in Washington (see Item V). It provides us with another opportunity to challenge their lack of any serious application of a human and environmental criteria to rainforest-based projects. These "development" schemes provoke serious human rights violations (attested to by Amnesty International's three 1988 reports on Brazil) against indigenous, rural farmers, riverside dwellers, human rights advocates and church agents. What do we need to do to organize a strategic, structural fight for change at the World Bank and in the Canadian Government in order to have an effective rainforest policy? Let's keep in touch.

SEE MAP ON REVERSE



BRAZIL IN PROFILE

Brazil is a federative republic of 23 states, three federal territories and one federal district (the capital, Brasília). In March 1985 the country returned to civilian government after 21 years of military rule. During 1987 and 1988 the National Congress also acted as a National Constituent Assembly and drafted a new constitution, to take effect from 1989. It provides for the first direct elections for President since 1960, to be held in November 1989.

Population: 141 million, of whom official sources estimate 220,000 are indigenous peoples.

Currency: cruzado. 187 cruzados = \$US1.00 (equiv. at June 1988)

AMAZONAS



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Scarboro Foreign Mission Society
2685 Kingston Road
Scarborough Ontario Canada M1M 1M4

ITEM I

T E L E G R A M

SENT TO: EXMO. SR. AMAZONINO MENDES
GOV: ESTADO DO AMAZONAS
PALACIO RIO NEGRO
MANAUS, 69.000
AMAZONAS, BRASIL

TO: SR. CEL. DOLY BOUCINHO
ELETRONORTE
RUA 10 DE JULHO
MANAUS, 69.000
AMAZONAS, BRASIL

WE ARE AWARE OF THE URGENT NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE FROM THE
COMMUNITIES ALONG THE UATUMA RIVER BETWEEN SAO SEBASTIAO
AND BALBINA. WE URGE YOU TO RESPOND WITHOUT DELAY TO THE
COMMUNITIES' REQUESTS FOR MEDICAL AND FOOD SUPPLIES. THE
INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS OF BRASIL STRONGLY SUPPORT THE WORK
AND DEMANDS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE UATUMA.
THE BALBINA DAM IS CREATING HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL MISERY.
OFFICIALS MUST NOW FULLY ACCEPT THEIR RESPONSIBILITY AND
PROVIDE IMMEDIATELY THE MEDICAL AND FOOD SUPPLIES
REQUESTED BY THE UATUMA COMMUNITIES.

GENERAL COUNCIL
SCARBORO FOREIGN MISSIONS
TORONTO/CANADA
28 JUNE 1989

(PORTUGUESE TEXT ON REVERSE)



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Scarboro Foreign Mission Society
2685 Kingston Road
Scarborough Ontario Canada M1M 1M4

T E L E G R A M

SENT TO: EXMO. SR. AMAZONINO MENDES
GOV. ESTADO DO AMAZONAS
PALACIO RIO NEGRO
MANAUS, 69.000
AMAZONAS, BRASIL

TO: SR. CEL. DOLY BOUCINHO
ELETRONORTE
RUA 10 DE JULHO
MANAUS, 69.000
AMAZONAS, BRASIL

FICAMOS SABENDO DA NECESSIDADE URGENTE DO POVO NAS
BEIRAS DO RIO UATUMÁ ENTRE SÃO SEBASTIÃO E BALBINA,
NO AMAZONAS.

PEDIMOS QUE O SENHOR RESPONDA SEM DEMORA AOS PEDIDOS
DAS COMUNIDADES PARA ASSISTÊNCIA ALIMENTAR E MÉDICA.
OS AMIGOS INTERNACIONAIS DO BRASIL APOIAM TOTALMENTE
OS TRABALHOS E REIVINDICAÇÕES DA COMITÉ PARA A
DEFESA DO UATUMÁ.

A BARRAGEM DO BALBINA ESTÁ CRIANDO MISÉRIA PARA GENTE
E PARA O MEIO-AMBIENTE.

AS AUTORIDADES TEM QUE ASSUMIR AGORA SUAS RESPONSABILIDADES
E PROVIDENCIAR OS RECURSOS DE COMIDA E MEDICAMENTOS
NECESSÁRIOS PARA AS COMUNIDADES DO RIO UATUMÁ.

(REV.) ALAN KING, S.F.M.
PARA O CONSELHO GERAL
SOCIEDADE MISSIONARIO DE SCARBORO
TORONTO/CANADA
28 JUNE 1989

(ENGLISH TEXT ON REVERSE)



Scarboro Foreign Mission Society
2685 Kingston Road
Scarborough Ontario Canada M1M 1M4

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

TELEGRAM

SENT TO: AMBASSADOR JOHN P. BELL
CANADIAN EMBASSY
AVE. DAS NACOES, 16
SETOR DAS EMBAXADAS, SUL
70.410, DF BRASILIA
BRAZIL

WE WISH TO APPRISE YOU OF AN URGENT SITUATION IN BRAZIL. OUR MISSIONERS IN URUCARA IN AMAZONAS STATE, BRAZIL HAVE CONVEYED TO US THE DREADFUL CIRCUMSTANCES BEING FACED BY THE 1900-2000 FAMILIES ALONG THE UATUMA RIO BETWEEN SAO SEBASTIAO AND BALBINA. THE OPERATION OF THE BALBINA HYDRO-ELECTRIC FACILITY IS RELEASING CONTAMINATED WATER INTO THE RIVER. THESE DOWNSTREAM COMMUNITIES ARE EXPERIENCING WATER-RELATED SICKNESSES AND A SHORTAGE OF FOOD--DUE TO LOSS OF FISH AND SMALL GAME BY THE RIVER'S EDGE--AT A RATE NEVER BEFORE FELT. CALLS FOR RELIEF ASSISTANCE IN THE FORM OF MEDICAL AND FOOD SUPPLIES HAVE GONE UNHEEDED BY THE STATE GOVERNOR AND THE REGIONAL PRESIDENT OF ELETRONORTE. OUR MISSIONERS ARE COOPERATING WITH THE COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE UATUMA, WHO ARE ORGANIZING THESE COMMUNITIES AND PRESENTING THEIR NEEDS TO THE OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BALBINA CATASTROPHE. CANADIAN FATHER RON MACDONNELL IN URUCARA (TEL 92-571-1204) CAN VERIFY THE CONDITIONS FACED BY THE PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITIES ALONG THE UATUMA AS WELL AS THE LEGITIMACY OF THEIR REQUESTS FOR MEDICAL AND FOOD RELIEF.

GENERAL COUNCIL/SCARBORO FOREIGN MISSION
TORONTO/CANADA
28 JUNE 1989

Attempt Made on Life of Lawyer for Land Pastoral Committee

News Update taken from *Paneiro*, the publication of the Land Pastoral Commission (CPT/Brazilian Catholic Bishops' Conference)

April 1989/Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil

Translated by Justin MacInnis, S.F.M.

Circulated by Justice & Peace Office, Scarborough Foreign Missions

"Information Bulletin"

The lawyer Antonio Eder John de Souza Coelho was victim of a cowardly attempt on his life. In the early morning of March 29 when he was returning to the house where he was staying as a guest in the sector Praca 14 de Janeiro in Manaus, was caught by surprise by a shot fired by persons inside a black car of Gol make. After firing the shot at the lawyer, attackers sped away. The victim's abdomen was perforated by the projectile, managing even in this state to arrive at the house of his sister on 1332 Duque de Caxias Street from where he was immediately taken to the Emergency Department of Getulio Vargas Hospital, where he underwent delicate surgery.

Antonio Eder is the lawyer for the Land Pastoral Committee for the States of Amazonas and of Roraima and of some Rural Workers Unions of the State of Para. He was in Manaus to give juridical assistance to the victims of the Uatuma River ecological tragedy provoked with the commencement of operation of the turbines of the Balbina Hydro Plant.

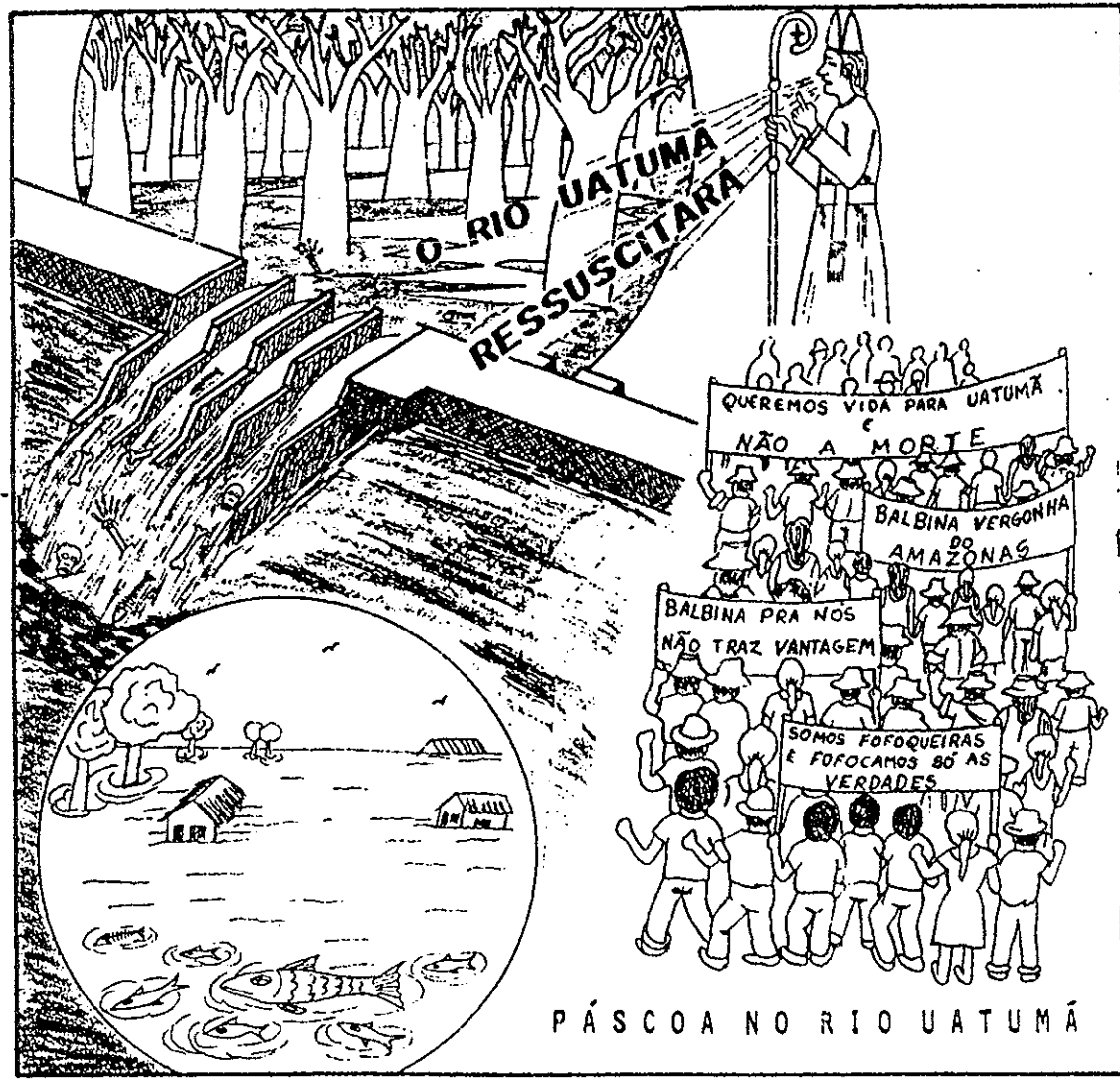
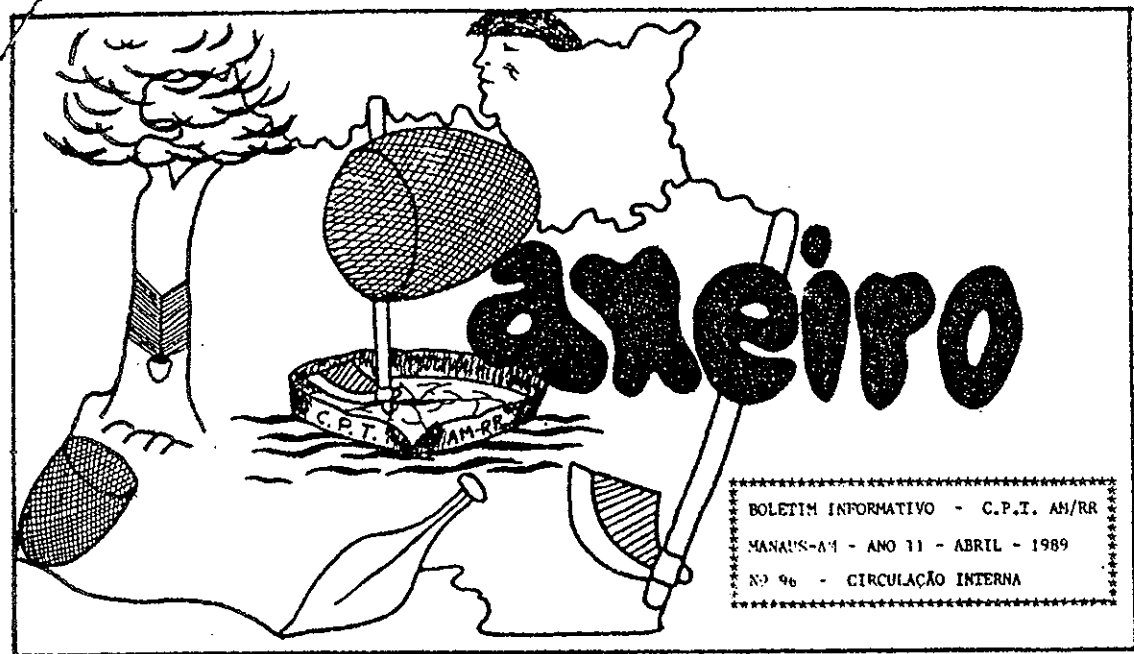
On March 31 Luiz Marcos Cavalcante, lawyer for the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights (CDDH) and Lenda Coelho gave witness to the fact at the local police station. On this occasion the deputy of the local police station solicited the Secretary for Public Security to apprehend all cars that are of Gol make and black in colour and to identify the owners. With evident interest she sent an investigator that instant to the place of the attempt to identify witnesses.

Until noon of April 04, no police authority has taken a statement from Antonio Eder John de Souza Coelho. Likewise no doctor with experience in legal medicine has yet made the examination of the body of the victim (*corpus delicti*).

This attempt on the life of one who is trying to defend the poor people of Amazonia who are the victims of a continuing process of violence unmask and reveals clearly the interests involved and the methods of intimidation employed by the enemies of Amazonia.

We hope that this cowardly and arbitrary act will not remain as well on the lists of unpunished crimes. The assassins of the Ticuna massacre, of Chico Mendes and of many indians, rubber tappers, riverside dwellers (peasant farmers) and their defenders continue to live freely among us unpunished.

The defence of Amazonia will only be possible if those responsible for the violence against the natural world and the human person (the ecology) be punished in an exemplary way.



Update on the Balbina Dam and Down-River Complaints, 02 April 1989
Letter from Bishop Jorge Marskell, S.F.M., Prelacy of Itacoatiara
Itacoatiara, AMAZONAS, BRAZIL
Translated by Justin MacInnis, S.F.M.
Circulated by Justice & Peace Office, Scarboro Foreign Missions

Letter to the Communities, to Friends and to All of Good Will!

ANOTHER BROTHER THEY KILLED

In the month of February (1989) the first news arrived that there had been a huge dying off of fish in the Uatuma River as a result of putting into operation the first turbine of the Hydroelectric Plant of Balbina. The waters of the Balbina Dam were stagnant now for more than a year. This contaminated water now passes through the turbines downriver killing the fish, destroying the life of the river and extinguishing the life of the river-dwellers in its foul onrush.

THIS RIVER IS NOT OURS

Holy Thursday, late in the afternoon, Maildo and Manuel of the Missionary Brotherhood, Sister Joana, Antonio Paladar, Bosco and myself arrived at the mouth of the river inlet of Jacarequara at the little community of Santa Luzia, which is about four hours by boat above Sao Sebastiao on the Uatuma River. Senhor Antenor, his wife, children and grandchildren receive us with joy. The boys right away go in their canoes to tell their neighbours of the bishop's arrival and to invite everyone for the Mass.

Here in Jacarequara is where the re-telling of suffering, pain and death begins. It is repeated for three more days - Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

We visited the communities of Flechal, Caranatuba, Caribi, Santa Ana and Sao Sebastiao. We talked with people who lived at the mouth of the Abacate River and Pedras also. They all said the same thing: "This river is not ours (anymore)." "This water is not ours (any longer)."

DECLARATIONS OF RIVERSIDE DWELLERS ALONG THE UATUMA RIVER

"The situation is truly dangerous for us. This water is in a horrible state."

"Nobody can drink the water; it's not fit to drink."

"I took a bath in the water and it gave me an itch all over."

"Mama doesn't let us go in the water."

"We can't wash our clothes in this filthy water. The only way is to wash them in the pool."

"The water has a bad smell."

"Sickness is arising all over the place."

"There is a large-scale destruction of the fish. The killing is of every type and every size. I saw even 'sucuriju' (water-boia constrictor) dead in the water. It was a good six metres long. It was floating on the water."

"We can't catch fish with a hook anymore. We can only get stunned fish with their heads above the water. We have to eat them or go hungry."

"The little boys brought some 'jaraqui' (fish). I cooked it for supper. It had a bad taste. Nobody ate it."

"Up there near the headwaters is where it's really bad. That's where the fish are heading. They end up dying there. You can't stand the smell. Nobody will go there to see. Only ourselves. The mayor said that he went around here and upriver and only saw two dead fish. He didn't go up there at the headwaters where he would see the enormous quantity of dead fish."

"An animal has a good sense of smell. Arriving at the riverside, he doesn't drink the water anymore. He goes far away into the heavy forest. Hunting is very difficult now. The animals all disappeared."

"I am here now since 1950. I never saw such a flood as this. My neighbour's planted field (of manioc) is flooded."

"We won't be able to put the manioc root in the water to soften it." (This is the first stage in processing manioc meal and flour, and the root will be contaminated by the water.)

ASSISTANCE TO RIVER-DWELLERS - MORE DECLARATIONS (STATEMENTS OF WITNESSES)

"An engineer from Eletronorte passed by here. He came from Balbina. He said the water was alright to drink. But he didn't drink it himself. On his boat there was mineral water and 'SKOL' (beer)."

"Eletronorte had wells made for the river-dwellers but only as far as the mouth of the Abacate River."

"A social worker was here and told us the firm (Eletronorte) is now going to make wells up to Caribi River. But it's not going to be like above the Abacate. There they have manual pumps. Our well will have only a hand-winch."

"We dug a pool ourselves. One day the mayor arrived here at the river port. He didn't disembark. He remained on the prow of the boat, looked at the pool and said it was good. He didn't even talk to us to find out how we were getting along."

"We are lacking everything, food supplies, medicines, fish. The river merchant never came up this way again. He's afraid of the water."

"The mayor made a distribution of fish. It was a good deal of 'curimata' (common fish), but it's all gone."

"The Brazilian Institute for Protection of the Forests is not even present. They arrest a working man for cutting a tree to fix up his wood-frame house. Eletronorte won't go to jail. Why is this? It was Eletronorte that destroyed our river. It wasn't ourselves."

"Our companions were at this meeting in Manaus. They spoke of the situation we are enduring. If it wasn't for them we would be totally desperate, without anything."

"The padre (priest) is going to send the parish boat so that we can go to Sao Sebastiao on Sunday (for a meeting about the crisis)." "Let's all go to Sao Sebastiao. We will hold a meeting there. In God's sight, it's only together that we can resolve our situation. The communities of the region are going to unite. Together we will have more strength."

THE PEOPLE DO NOT ACQUIESCE TO DEATH

The residents of the Uatuma River, like all poor and humble people everywhere, easily identify themselves with the Passion and Death of the Lord. During Holy Week the people prayed fervently, listened to the reading of the Passion of Christ, and venerated in faith the Holy Cross.

On Easter Sunday, the joy was prevalent. In the chapel of Santa Ana the children brought a cross in procession into the church. The cross was all decorated with flowers - a symbol of the victory of life over death.

In the afternoon of Easter Sunday, we held a meeting in the church square at Sao Sebastiao. People from all the communities of the Uatuma River came to attend as well as from the communities of Urucara, Itapiranga, Silves, and Itacoatiara, and Presidente Figueredo. Persons from Manaus as well, union representatives, scientists from the National Institute of Research in Amazonia and professionals were present giving their sign of solidarity in a public act that began at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and ended with a protest walk through the streets of the little town.

The public act was a protest against the pollution-death of the Uatuma River. Still more than a simple protest, it was a public outcry in favour of life for the people and for nature.

With enthusiastic spirit the people sang:

"Why such a thing as Balbina? Why more dams
If the energy it generates brings no advantage
To the river-dwellers of the Uatuma?"

The mayor elected to defend the people, did not attend. His absence appears to approve the action of the power company Eletronorte. A councillor of the municipality of Sao Sebastiao denies responsibility by saying that the company Eletronorte and the Secretary of Health (State Department of Health) must assume their responsibility and help the people; that the situation has nothing to do with the municipal government.

"May this public act be for (us) all
Who believe in the Resurrection
A New day - that doesn't end tomorrow, so soon!
Nor is just a utopian dream!"

Thus it was that the people sang and still sing. And there is being formed a Committee for the Defence of the Uatuma River. A growing awareness is prevalent that only by organizing and through a community consensus will it be possible to straighten out what was destroyed.

The Union of Rural Workers is preparing a civil court action against Eletronorte. This action is for indemnization for losses and damages suffered, and to try to secure an embargo on commencing operation of the other turbines of the Balbina Hydro Plant.

"Why are you seeking among the dead for him who is alive?
He is not here, He is arisen!" (Luke 24)

Having terminated the public act (of protest) we now have come back to our communities. The families who live along the Uatuma River returned to a life of suffering and pain. They came back to their communities along the shores of that lethal, toxic-laden river. But they went back with faith in Jesus risen from the dead and with the will to struggle against the pain, the suffering and death that is there.

The Christian cannot remain in the world of death. In spite of being buried under domination, manipulation, lies and injustice, the Christian knows that he has the strength to liberate himself from the clutches of the grave. Just as Christ has risen, we also, through Baptism and through the grace of God, have the strength of the life of God to rise again.

I invite everyone to assume the cause of the families living along the Uatuma River. They are not going to give in to the power of death. They are going to struggle for life, for dignity, for nature itself and its integrity. Let's place ourselves in solidarity with them and remain with them at their side. May the Risen Lord be our strength in our struggle for life!

Jorge, Bishop of Itacoatiara
Amazonas, 02 April 1989
1st Sunday of Easter

ITEM V

JUSTICE AND PEACE OFFICE
SCARBORO FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY
2685 KINGSTON ROAD
SCARBOROUGH - ONTARIO - CANADA
M1M 1M4

June 27, 1989

Angela Gennino
World Rivers Review
301 Broadway, Suite B
San Francisco, CA
U.S.A. 94133

Dear Angela:

Many greetings from neighbours to the north. I am writing at the advice of Pat Adams, Probe International/Toronto. Our offices have collaborated on joint support for issues and concerns raised by the Canadian Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility. TCCR is organized similarly to the Inter-faith Community for Corporate Responsibility/ICCR in the States.

Scarboro Foreign Mission is a Catholic missionary society quite similar to Maryknoll. Our Justice and Peace Office responds to requests for international solidarity raised by overseas partners. For over a decade our missionaries working in and around Itacoatiara (east of Manaus in the Brazilian Amazon, see map, Item I), have raised concerns and objections over the construction and operation of the infamous Balbina Dam (Item II). Recently both Probe and TCCR have pursued research on Canadian government and corporate links to Balbina. I was again at the site of the dam in November '88 (Item III).

Our missionaries cooperate fully with two movements in the vicinity of Balbina:

- Movement in Support of the Resistance: Waimiri-Atroari (MAREWA). They have documented proceedings of the construction and operation of Balbina, with special attention to the invasion of Indigenous lands (Item IV, V).
- Committee for the Defence of the Uatuma. This popular group organizes the communities along the banks of the Uatuma River which was dammed to form the reservoir for Balbina. Some 1900-2000 families are now adversely affected by the toxic-laden waters being discharged from the dam into the downstream path of the Uatuma. The Uatuma has been the traditional source of livelihood for these communities along the 200 kilometer distance between Balbina and the mouth of the Uatuma at Sao Sebastiao (Item VI).

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Pat noted that you are preparing an issue of the "Review" aimed at the upcoming September meeting of the World Bank. She suggested that we make available to you the documents in translation from both these movements. I have referred to them by item.

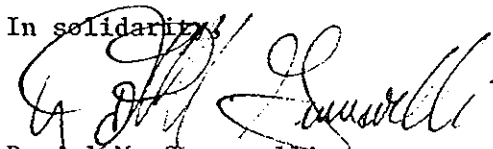
Of special note are two additional items: the "Letter to the Communities", (Item VII) of Bishop Jorge Marskell citing the testimonies of the river community dwellers downstream from Balbina; the attempted assassination of a lawyer who was investigating the conditions of these dwellers now that Balbina is "functioning" (Item VIII). Both are indicative of the desperate level to which the resisters and supporters of Balbina have fallen.

Please feel free to use or make available any of the documents. One of the principal authors of material prior to the opening of Balbina is Egydio Schwade from the municipality of Presidente Figuerado where Balbina is situated. He, during the '70s, was national executive director of CIMI (the church's commission on indigenous mission) before moving north to work with the pastoral team of Itacoatiara under Bishop Marskell. He and the bishop are nationally known and respected for their resistance to Balbina in particular, and Plano 2010/Calha Norte, the projects which call for an additional 130 dams in the north.

A "renegade" group within the National Institute for the Preservation of the Environment (INPA) recently completed a study on Balbina's effect on the Uatuma and environs. They declared the river "dead" for the next 6-10 years. Once the study became known, the group was isolated and attempts were made to discredit their study, but not before they could produce and circulate a video version of their findings. Later in July we hope to be in possession of both the study and the video. Do you have any access to rapid translation from Brazilian -- portuguese? We have a reliable translator but I hardly think we'd be organized to move rapidly through a 20-page text and video sound track.

Anyway, we'll keep you posted. Things are desperate. Yesterday one of our missionaries called from Urucara, east of Itacoatiara, requesting international support for their petition to the Governor of Amazonas and the regional president of Eletronorte (Item IX). Local people held these two responsible to address the urgent need for medical assistance and food supplies occasioned by the contaminated substances introduced into the Uatuma. I hope that we'll be able to raise enough objection to the continuing destruction caused by these ill-conceived hydro projects so that deliberators at the World Bank are forced to deal with the tragedies of their designs.

In solidarity,



Daniel M. Gennarelli
Director

Enclosures

cc: Pat Adams, Probe International
Maira Hutchinson, TCCR