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AMAZONIA COLONIZATION: KIDNAPING & MOBILIZATION

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SUMMARY

On March 29, 1971, President Médici signed a decree law which provides authorization for the expropriation by the GOB of approximately one-third of Brazil's total land area. The decree was effected to facilitate the colonization of the Amazon basin, a major goal of the GOB-announced National Integration Program. The Instituto de Colonizacao e Reforma Agraria (INCRA) was assigned responsibility for implementing the decree, and its President has ordered the mobilization of his agency's resources to undertake an ambitious colonization program. The program will begin in earnest at the end of May with the onset of the Amazonian "dry" season. The results achieved by the end of the year should provide a good indication as to INCRA's ability to colonize on a large scale and the likelihood of success of the GOB's crash program to colonize and integrate the Amazon Region with the rest of Brazil.

On March 29, 1971 at a ministerial meeting held in Brasilia, President Médici signed a decree authorizing the expropriation of a huge (64,516 square kilometers, equivalent to 1/19 of Para), polygon-shaped block of land in central Para running from the Kingu River to the Para/Amazonas state line and straddling the Transamazonian and Guisaba/Santarém highways. The decree was one of several government actions announced to commemorate the 7th anniversary of the March, 1964, Revolution. At the same time 100 kilometers along each margin of 17,635 kilometers (give or take a few

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hundred) of Amazonian highways (already built, under construction or planned) were also earmarked for incorporation into the federal domain. The responsibility for implementing the decrees was assigned to the Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (INCRA), whose president, Sr. José de Moura Cavalcanti, heralded the total mobilization of his agency to colonize Amazonia.

The Transamazonica polygon, which includes the major settlements of Altamira and Itaituba, was declared a priority area for colonization. Initial investigations reportedly indicate that some of the best lands for farming (said to be comparable to northern Paraná) in all of the Amazon basin are located within the polygon. Its coordinates are POINT A - $4^{\circ} 18' S/57^{\circ} 15' W$ (right bank of the Rio Uruguai in Amazonas state near the village of Bom Jesus); POINT B - $3^{\circ} 13' S/55^{\circ} 00' W$ (a little east of Aveiro on the east margin of the Rio Tapajós); POINT C - $2^{\circ} 55' S/51^{\circ} 55' W$ (near the settlement of Sumama on the west bank of the Rio Kingu); POINT D - $3^{\circ} 26' S/51^{\circ} 56' W$ (near Tapera-Cururu on the left bank of the Rio Kingu); POINT E - $3^{\circ} 32' S/52^{\circ} 20' W$ (an island in the Rio Kingu near Novo Acordo); POINT F - $4^{\circ} 23' S/53^{\circ} 45' W$ (right bank of the Rio Iriri, dam across from the Rio Novo); POINT G - $4^{\circ} 50' S/57^{\circ} 15' W$ (in the middle of nowhere); and back to POINT A to complete the polygon.

The indicated highways along which land will be expropriated on both margins were:

- TRANSAMAZÔNICA. Estreito/Altamira/Itaituba (Pará). 1,330 kilometers. Completion scheduled January, 1972.
- BR-319. Porto Velho/Abunã/Guajará Mirim (T.F. Rondônia). 270 kilometers. Completed.
- BR-236. Abunã (T.F. Rondônia)/Rio Branco/feijó/Cruzeiro do Sul/Japin (Acre). 610 kilometers. Completed to Rio Branco.
- BR-317. Lábrea/Boca do Acre (Amazonas)/Rio Branco/Xapuri/Brasileia/Assis Brasil (Acre). 600 kilometers. Completed from Boca do Acre to Assis Brasil.
- BR-406. Lábrea/Humaitá (Amazonas). 170 kilometers. Completed.
- BR-319. Porto Velho (T.F. Rondônia)/Humaitá/Maués (Amazonas). 650 kilometers. Completion scheduled 1971.
- BR-173. Maués (Amazonas)/Caracará/Bos Vista (T.F. Roraima)/Venezuelan frontier. 800 kilometers. Completed Maués/Rio Uatuma & Caracará/halfway to Venezuelan frontier.

- BR-401. Boa Vista (T.F. Roraima)/Guayanese frontier. 110 kilometers. Completed.
- BR-364. Cuiabá (Mato Grosso)/Vilhena/Pôrto Velho (T.F. Rondônia). 1,800 kilometers. Completed.
- BR-016. Cuiabá (Mato Grosso)/Cachimbo/Sentaram (Pará). 1,300 kilometers. Completed Cuiabá/Pôrto Arthur (Mato Grosso).
- BR-156. Macapá/Diapoque (T.F. Amapá). 680 kilometers. Two-thirds from Macapá completed.
- BR-080. Rio Araguaia (Mato Grosso)/Cachimbo/Jacareacanga (Pará)/Manaus/Içana (Amazonas)/Colombian frontier. 3,200 kilometers. Planned.
- BR-153. Belém-Brasília highway from Pôrto France (Maranhão) to a point 800 kilometers south in Goiás. Completed.
- BR-010. Carolina (Maranhão/Aruama (Goiás). 600 kilometers. Planned.
- BR-070. Rio Araguaia/Cuiabá (Mato Grosso). 470 kilometers. Under construction.
- BR-307. Cruzeiro do Sul (Acre)/Benjamin Constant/Içanã (Amazonas). 885 kilometers. Planned.
- PERIMETRAL NORTE. Macapá (T.F. Amapá)/Caracarái (T.F. Roraima)/Içana (Amazonas/Mitã, Colombia). 2,450 kilometers. Planned.
- BR-158. Barra do Garças/Xavantina/São Felix do Araguaia (Mato Grosso). 650 kilometers. Under construction.

Data on status of various highways: 1970 DNHR Federal Road System map (M-11-09-70). "Completed" indicates only that road is in use and does not refer to type of surfacing.

Altogether the Transamazonian polygon and the land along the respective highways total approximately one-third of Brazil's territory. Most of the land scheduled for expropriation belongs to the various political subdivisions. Pará, for instance, where state authorities were deluged with numerous petitions for land, had frozen the sale of all state lands as a result of the construction of the Transamazonian Highway and was in the process of attempting to establish a rational land policy. The GOB

action, however, now makes state action an academic question. Interestingly, there are a number of areas where people are already settled upon the land (i.e. Estraito in Maranhão, areas in northern Mato Grosso and Goiás and in and around the major Amazonian population centers). According to Dr. Albino Fonseca da Silva Netto, INCRA Regional Coordinator in Belém, such situations will be judged on merit and in most cases the occupants will not be bothered. The apparent rule of thumb will be that land for speculative purposes is out. Those who are living on and improving the land as well as the many large cattle project being established under SUDAM's auspices will not face the threat of expropriation.

Colonization Efforts.

Until recently government-directed colonization in Amazonia was basically a piecemeal effort because of fund limitations and the low priority given it by the GOB. This shotgun approach has ranged from settling approximately 2,500 families in Ouro Preto, T. F. Rondônia, to placing a dribbling of families at a number of locations along the margins of several Amazonian rivers. The announcement of the National Integration Program, of which the Transamazonian Highway and the colonization program are basic elements, presages a radical change, requiring a major departure from previous patch work practices and a herculean effort on the part of INCRA.

The major branch of the Transamazonian Highway between Estraito and Itaituba has been under construction only since September, 1970 (almost seven months), aiming for a completion date of January, 1972. Nevertheless, detractors, particularly some in the Northeast, have been chortling about the slow progress of the colonization effort. The delay (as of the end of March, only 50 families had been resettled between Altamira and Itaituba), or lack of impressive results as some in the Northeast would have it, can be attributed to a number of unavoidable factors including initial difficulties in finding suitable colonists in the Northeast, transportation and other logistical logjams and the weather.

Some initial difficulty has been experienced in selecting qualified colonists. When the GOB first announced the construction of the Transamazonian, a point that was ballyhooed was that the first colonists would be the highway construction workers and their families. Now it is quite apparent that this announcement was somewhat unrealistic since the number of fulltime construction workers, many of them skilled technicians with no farming background, is quite small (about 1,250 fulltime and 2,600 transitory) and few, if any, have any intention of remaining in Amazonia following the completion of their job. Apparently, this idea was stressed in the beginning to support the Transamazonian project because the GOB still had not formulated its colonization program. In selecting settlers the

original plan was to concentrate on Ceará (reportedly 3,320 families have been chosen in the municipalities of Coité and Cajazeiras) and other northeastern states. In fact, particular attention was to be given to tenant farmers in the Northeast, who would be screened on the basis of Bank of Brazil credit information as well as the set standards of age (21-45 years of age), capacity for work, past experience, mental health and the number of children. Local officials are also allowed to nominate prospective colonists. To date a small number of colonists have been selected and this fact has been noted accordingly in the press. Following these initial efforts, INCRA's president announced that while the major stress will continue to be placed on resettling people from the Northeast, the search for prospective colonists would be expanded to all of Brazil. This decision was reportedly based on a realistic appraisal of the number of qualified farmers in the Northeast available for resettlement. Since the announcement, the newspapers have carried stories of colonists having been selected not only from the Northeast, but from Espírito Santo, Paraná, São Paulo, Pará and Rio Grande do Sul.

Even though a goodly number of colonists have been selected, their resettlement has been delayed because of the lack of adequate transportation facilities. At present the only means of reaching the Transamazonian polygon is by airplane or boat. FAB, the Brazilian Navy and ENASA (Empresa de Navegação da Amazonia S. A.) have assisted in moving families and their effects to various colonization sites. Come June, 1971 and the projected opening of the Estrada/Marabá stretch of the Transamazonian from the Belém-Brasília Highway and the utilization of the recently inaugurated PARÁ 70 Highway between Ligação on the Belém-Brasília and Marabá, the use of trucks to move settlers will come into play and the transportation bottleneck should ease somewhat.

A further hindrance has been the necessity of transporting needed lumber for the construction of housing from a saw mill at Breves, Marajo Island to Altamira. Plans are to set up two lumber mills in the Altamira area by May of this year which will provide enough lumber for the construction of thirty houses daily.

Weather has also played a major role in limiting INCRA's activities. Since January over 50 inches of rain have fallen in central Pará, curtailing somewhat work on the Transamazonian as well as making use of existing roads extremely difficult.

Lastly and probably the most important element governing the pace of settling people has been the construction progress on the Transamazonian itself. INCRA moves in only when a section of the road is complete. Accordingly, what little that has been accomplished as of this writing has been in the Altamira area.

Colonisation Program.

Under present plans, each colonizing family is scheduled to receive official assistance, most of which will be given during the initial six months settling-in period. INCRA is to provide a basic wood house or the materials for the construction of one. The settler in return will provide INCRA with logs from his property equal to what he has been given. Of the 100 hectares allotted to a colonist, two will be cleared for him, enabling the planting of a survival crop. Seeds, tools, domestic utensils and technical orientations will be provided. In addition, a pioneer will receive the equivalent of five minimum salaries (figured at the prevailing local rate) during the first months. The financing arrangements of farm crops is still to be worked out by the Banco de Brasil and the Banco Nacional de Crédito Cooperativo. Thereafter, with the harvesting of the first crop (emphasis will be on rice, beans, corn, manioc, citrus fruits, pepper, peanuts and pineapples), the farmer will be free to sell his produce to the highest bidder. INCRA, however, will oversee a price support program which will guarantee a minimum price. Purchases made by INCRA will be marketed by COBAL (Companhia Brasileira de Alimentação) by means of a yet-to-be-created river/road distribution system. Prefabricated storage structures are already on order from Holland.

Beginning in May with the slowing of the rains, INCRA has projected the settlement of 5,000 families between Altamira and Itaituba, within the Transamazonian polygon; 1,000 more in the Marabá-Jatobá stretch along the Tocantins River; and another 1,000 more between Altamira and Marabá for a total of 7,000 families by January, 1972 and the commencement of the rainy season anew. Funds for the resettling have already been earmarked. In addition, INCRA is talking with the Ministry of Finance about the possibility of funding the resettlement of another 13,000 during this period. If funds can be found, INCRA is aiming for 20,000 families in 1971, 30,000 in 1972 and 50,000 in 1973. Figuring an average of five to a family, the total number would be approximately 500,000 inhabitants which would comprise approximately 20% of the population of Pará.

INCRA has already elevated its local office in Belém to that of a Regional Office. As the pace of colonisation activity increases, INCRA technicians (reportedly there are from 5,000 to 6,000 to draw upon elsewhere) will be brought in from other regions to support the effort. Two sites for settlements or "agrovilas" have already been selected, each located approximately 50 kilometers from Altamira in either direction. Farm to market roads running at right angles are to be built every 10 kilometers. Thereafter, as warranted, additional roads will be cut every five kilometers. One hundred plots of 100 hectares each will be staked out from each square kilometer. Parallel farm-to-market roads will be bulldozed at intervals of two kilometers to provide access. Presumably, a checker-board pattern

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reminiscent of the U. S. Midwest will result. Fifty per cent of the land will be left as virgin forest as required by the Brazilian forest reserve law.

COMMENT: The next eight months should provide a good indication as to the ability and the likelihood of success of the GOB's projected crash effort to colonize and integrate the Amazon region with the rest of Brazil. It is an extremely ambitious program, demanding a high degree of coordination between the various government ministries. While many aspects of the undertaking remain to be clarified, developments since the first of the year provide insight as to the GOB is approaching the whole project. An apparent major consideration has been to seek to avoid the creation of a chaotic situation such as that which followed in the tracks of the construction of the Belém-Brasília Highway ten years ago. Some spontaneity, is unavoidable, particularly because of the amount of publicity generated by the GOB's Amazonian program. However, it appears that the emphasis will be on controlled colonization in an effort to implant a viable agricultural-based society. Nobody at the local INCRA office claims to have all the answers. In fact, Dr. Albino Netto, INCRA Regional Coordinator has realistically pointed out that there are numerous unknowns and that the initial effort will be one of trial and error until a successful pattern can be developed.

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