



*Brazilian novelist Euclides da Cunha once called the country's interior "the very core of our nationality." Much of it has never been explored. Brazil plans to send two homemade "remote sensing" satellites into orbit by the early 1990s to help map the Amazon Basin. On the ground, an ambitious effort to exploit the Amazon's riches has been under way for a decade.*

# Brazil

"The first thought that arises in the mind of those who are possessed, as in this age we all more or less are, by the passion for the development of natural resources, is a feeling of regret that a West European race, powerful by its numbers and its skill . . . has not, to use the familiar phrase, 'got the thing in hand.'" That was how Lord Bryce appraised the Brazilians in 1912, and it is probably what he would say if he visited their country today. On the one hand, Brazil boasts the world's 10th largest economy and manufactures everything from computers and jet aircraft to tanks and rockets. On the other, at least one-third of Brazil's people live in poverty, and at least a third cannot read or write. Thanks partly to high OPEC oil prices, the country is deeply in debt. It faces a period of turmoil as its politicians make the delicate transition from military rule back to democracy. "In five years Brazil will be a great power," the last democratically elected President, Jânio Quadros, predicted in 1961. The Brazilians are still waiting and hoping. Here Riordan Roett surveys the current scene in Brazil and reviews the events of the past two decades. Brian Kelly and Mark London focus on the vast Amazon frontier and what it may mean for the nation's future.

## STAYING THE COURSE

*by Riordan Roett*

During the 1950s, a few years before the suspension of democratic government by Brazil's military, the citizens of São Paulo on one occasion went to the polls and, after considering the choices, elected a hippopotamus, a write-in candidate, to the city council.

The hippo, a popular attraction at the city zoo, was never sworn in. But the episode illustrates the streak of good-humored cynicism that has helped Brazilians endure a century of political ups and downs. Over the past 95 years, the country has seen a monarchy, a republic, a dictatorship, a republic again, and, since 1964, a military regime that in recent years has advertised itself as a protectorate bent on restoring democracy.

What is remarkable is that Brazil's current military govern-

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ment, now pursuing the policy of *abertura*, or "opening" to democracy, first advanced by General (and President) Ernesto Geisel in 1977, seems to be making good on that commitment, albeit not without occasional backsliding. Brazil is hoping to show, as Nigeria has already demonstrated, that it is possible to dismantle a military government without violence. Succeeding Geisel as President in 1979, João Figueiredo, then the head of the National Information Service (SNI), reaffirmed the regime's commitment "to make this country a democracy."

### Casting Ballots

Last November 15, in a major advance toward democratic rule, more than 50 million Brazilians flocked to the polls to elect 22 state governors, 25 Senators (one-third of the federal Senate), all 479 members of the Chamber of Deputies, 947 state assemblymen, 3,857 mayors, and some 60,000 municipal councilmen. It was the first free election in Brazil in 17 years, and Brazilians approached it with a mixture of seriousness and high spirits. Every flat, vertical space in the country, it seemed, was plastered with campaign posters. The field of candidates offered something for everyone: blacks, feminists, Indians, sports stars, adherents of *macumba*, the Brazilian version of voodoo.

Throughout the fall campaign, many of the leaders of Brazil's four opposition parties remained skeptical. Some denounced *abertura* as a "farce," reminding voters that the Presidency, the most powerful office in Brazil, would not be decided by direct vote a few years hence.\* (The term of the incumbent expires in 1986.) Nevertheless, opposition candidates gained a strong foothold. They were aided by public sentiment aroused over recession, persistent underemployment, nearly triple digit inflation, chronic trade deficits, and an \$84 billion foreign debt. The four parties opposed to the government's Social Democratic Party captured 10 governorships and 244 seats

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\*The current plan is for Figueiredo's successor to be chosen by an electoral college consisting of all members of Congress plus six representatives from each state legislature. This arrangement gives voters in sparsely populated rural states, where the government party tends to be strong, a disproportionate voice in the selection of the next President.

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Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

*Brazil occupies almost one-half of South America's land mass. With 125 million people, it is the sixth most populous nation on Earth.*

in the Chamber of Deputies. "Brazil will not be the same from now on," observed Leonel Brizola, a maverick socialist and the brother-in-law of former President João ("Jango") Goulart. Brizola, a controversial figure in Brazilian politics before the 1964 coup sent him into exile, was elected governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro.

How the Brazilian military will deal with such opponents as Brizola and Franco Montoro, his less radical counterpart in São Paulo, remains to be seen. And yet, while it is too early to say precisely how the November elections have altered the na-

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ture of Brazilian politics, altered it they have. The mere fact that free elections took place is itself grounds for optimism. If the process of "opening" is allowed to continue, the consequences could extend far beyond Brazil's own borders.

A democratic Brazil would undoubtedly cheer up the governments of three neighboring democracies—Colombia, Venezuela, and Peru. It would offer other Latin military regimes (notably in Argentina and Chile) an example of how to withdraw from power—without bloody reprisals and without dividing the armed forces into competing factions. And a democratic Brazil, its authoritarian excesses a thing of the past, would be poised to play a more active role in world affairs—as indeed it has already begun to do, notably at the "North-South" summit at Cancún, Mexico, in 1981.

### Coffee with Milk

The size and importance of Brazil notwithstanding, North Americans have generally either ignored or misunderstood the country. President Reagan, on a state visit there in November 1982, referred to it as Bolivia, a slip-of-the-tongue that prompted a local advertising agency to run the next day a newspaper advertisement headlined: "The people of Bolivia welcome the President of Canada." Lumping it in with other South American states, Americans sometimes forget that Brazil was colonized by the Portuguese, whose language it retains.

While the American empire of the Spaniards fragmented into individual nation-states during the 1820s, often after bitter wars of independence, Brazil remained unified and achieved independence without violence. As republican presidents supplanted viceroys throughout the Americas, Brazil became an empire, ruled by the son of the Portuguese king, and it remained a monarchy until the peaceful ouster of the emperor by the armed forces in 1889.

By the end of the 19th century, many of the Spanish American republics—Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, for example—had made considerable strides toward creating democratic, middle-class societies. By contrast, again, the Brazilian republic was a lopsided affair with an economy dominated by coffee. Rich planters were so heavily concentrated in São Paulo that that state, both politically and economically, was like an engine pulling 20 empty boxcars. Joined by the cattle barons of neighboring Minas Gerais, the São Paulo coffee aristocracy succeeded in shaping a weak (and rather venal) republican government in Rio; the leadership echoed the indifference of the *café com leite*

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(coffee with milk) alliance to the need for industrialization and to the social welfare of most of Brazil's population. The right to vote was restricted by literacy and property requirements high enough to exclude the average small farmer. "The aristocracy of rank is now almost gone," wrote Britain's James Bryce in 1912, "but the aristocracy of wealth remains and is in control of public affairs. In most parts of the country, it stands far above the labouring population, with little of a middle class between."

The overthrow of the Old Republic in 1930—once again by the army, allied with supporters of populist governor Getúlio Vargas—was as bloodless as the fall of the empire had been. During the 15 years that Vargas (who became President) ruled Brazil, the modernization of the country was begun.

Vargas was no social reformer; he was an economic nationalist who pointed Brazil down a path that, in many ways, it has continued to follow. The Brazilian economy had always been heavily dependent on a single export—initially brazilwood (from which the nation took its name), then sugar, then coffee, then rubber. During the 1930s, although Brazil remained very much an agricultural country, Vargas promoted diversification. Rich iron ore deposits were tapped, a steel industry was created, textiles assumed new importance. In all, despite the worldwide depression, Brazil's industrial product grew by 40 percent between 1933 and 1938.

### 'Doomed to Greatness'

Progress slowed after Vargas imposed an outright dictatorship (the *Estado Novo*) in 1937 and after the onset of World War II. After the war, during which Brazilian troops fought (in Italy) alongside the Allies, the *Estado Novo* was toppled by the military in another bloodless coup. Popular agitation for democratic government simply could no longer be ignored.

The Republic established in 1946 constituted the first modern political system in Brazil's history, with competing parties and relatively free elections. Thanks partly to U.S. investment, industrialization began in earnest, and the emergence of a new urban working class made social welfare a matter of government concern for the first time. The plight of the backward Northeast received national attention, while the frontier spirit embodied in the construction of Brasília, the new capital deep in the interior, excited international interest. All signs pointed to Brazil's "coming of age" at last.

Unfortunately, Brazil's democratic government was more fragile than many outsiders imagined. During a short period of



*Carrying Coffee, an early 19th-century rendering by Jean Baptiste Debret.*

overheated growth—Brazil’s flamboyant President, Juscelino Kubitschek (1955–1960), called it “fifty years of progress in five”—steel production doubled, hydroelectric power tripled, and new highways brought the promising Amazon frontier within reach. But if Brazil was “doomed to greatness,” as Kubitschek believed, it was also doomed to massive budget deficits and an inflation rate that approached 30 percent a year. Corruption was widespread.

Jânio Quadros was elected President in 1960 on a promise to clean things up (his campaign symbol was a broom). He got nowhere and resigned in frustration in August 1961. Vice-President João Goulart took office only after senior army officers suspicious of his leftist leanings had brought the country close to civil war.\*

Facing an economic slowdown—Quadros had deliberately applied the brakes—coupled with political stalemate and rising demands from the new working class for a greater share of the pie, Brazil lurched from crisis to crisis during the early 1960s.

\*The dispute between the military and the “constitutionalists” was resolved when Goulart agreed to accept a constitutional amendment changing Brazil’s presidential system into a parliamentary one, thereby greatly curbing the President’s powers. In practice, this arrangement proved unworkable and a 1963 referendum restored a presidential system.

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Inflation soared to 80 percent in 1963 and foreign investment plummeted. Goulart, a tragically ineffective figure, in desperation sought support from a coalition of radical students, intellectuals, and politicians—*esquerda festiva*, the “festive left,” as it was called. He called for “basic reforms” such as giving the vote to illiterates, expropriation of many large landholdings, legalization of the Communist Party, and creation of new state monopolies over such commodities as coffee. Not only those on the far right but also moderate democrats began to worry about a radical takeover of Brazil.

### Cracking Down

In March 1964, Goulart announced a mild initial land-reform program and the nationalization of all privately owned oil refineries, engendering a wave of protest from the right, a rush to organize on the left, and demonstrations in the streets by middle-class Brazilians opposed to the government’s direction. Later that month, Goulart’s demagogic appeals to noncommissioned officers and enlisted men to stand up to their superior officers—and his amnesty of 2,000 sailors who had mutinied—persuaded reluctant commanders of the armed forces that they had little choice but to remove the President. On March 31, a civilian-military uprising signaled the end of the 1946 Republic. Goulart and his allies, unable to rally significant support, fled into exile or were arrested.

It was generally assumed by most Washington observers of Latin American politics that the coup of 1964 would simply give Brazil a repressive military regime like that of so many of its Spanish-speaking neighbors. Indeed, for about a decade it did. The tenacity of the Brazilian generals was unprecedented. For, despite the military’s active involvement in political life since the overthrow of the empire, the leaders of Brazil’s armed forces had never before held on to power after having forced a change in government. Traditionally, Brazil’s military commanders had usually seen themselves as guarantors of the Constitution. But in 1964—self-confident, committed to modernizing Brazil, and sharing an esprit, as well as training in political science and economics acquired at the Superior War College (created after World War II with U.S. assistance)—the generals decided to govern the country themselves. Shortly after the coup, they issued an Institutional Act, the first of a series, that began the transformation of politics in Brazil. This act did not rest on any constitutional justification; its preamble stated that the revolution “is legitimized by itself.”



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In the view of the military high command, as initially of most middle-class Brazilians, the revolution was a moral one—"born out of the indomitable will of the people not to allow themselves to become dominated by communism or by the corruption which was undermining our national life," as one general put it. Politicians, labor and student leaders, journalists, and military officers identified as ideological enemies or as incompetents were purged from their positions. While no one was executed, some were jailed and the first reports of torture began to surface. Hundreds lost all political rights for a period of 10 years. A widely respected four-star general, Humberto Castello Branco, was named President.

### Miracle Workers

The new regime's first goal was to get control of the economy. Roberto Campos and Octavio Bulhões presided over a stabilization program that received strong financial support from the United States: curtailing government spending, increasing tax revenues, tightening credit, and squeezing wages.\* Three years later, the successor military government, led by General Artur da Costa e Silva, inherited a house that was more or less in order. New loans and grants were forthcoming from Washington and the World Bank, and foreign investment surged. Inflation had been cut in half.

While the cost of economic stability appeared to weigh most heavily on Brazil's lower classes, the government argued that the poor would ultimately profit from the creation of new jobs, the construction of new housing, and the extension of social security. That was undoubtedly true for a small minority of urban laborers. But the government's refusal to undertake land reform, to sanction rural labor unions, or to extend workers' benefits to the countryside (where 40 percent of the population then lived) left a large proportion of the Brazilian people with no stake in the country's economic progress. Many have gained no stake in it to this day.

The regime's second order of business was to alter the political system. After initial hesitation, the government rewrote the Constitution, further strengthening the decision-making powers of the President. The Supreme Court was enlarged—and packed

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\*Campos had achieved prominence during the 1950s as one of a new generation of young economists, engineers, and civil servants concerned about national planning and development. He had served as president of the National Bank for Economic Development and Ambassador to the United States. Bulhões had led Brazilian delegations in postwar economic discussions with the United States and had served as director of the Brazilian monetary authority (SUMOC) and as Minister of Finance.

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with the regime's sympathizers. Brazil's 13 political parties were distilled into two: the pro-government National Renovating Alliance (Arena) and the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), an opposition grouping. The real difference between the two parties, the joke went, was that whereas Arena said "Yes, sir!" to the regime, the MDB merely said "Yes." Elections continued to be held for some offices (direct election of state governors and big-city mayors had been eliminated in 1965), but both political parties were strictly controlled; the legislature became little more than a rubber stamp.

The Costa e Silva administration brought to prominence Antônio Delfim Netto—sometimes described as a "fiscal Merlin"—a stocky University of São Paulo economics professor who remains a controversial figure in Brazilian life. Capitalizing on the gains of Campos and Bulhões, Delfim, as Minister of Finance, reigned over the Brazilian "miracle years" of 1968–1973. Exports soared and the economy grew at rates of 10 to 12 percent each year. An urban middle class acquired growing economic and political importance. Global prosperity, cheap petroleum (Brazil must import over 70 percent of the oil it uses), and heavy public investment in development projects helped account for the boom. It all appeared to justify the generals' contentions: that political order would lead to economic stability, that a strong central government was the prerequisite for a healthy economy.

### Widening the Gap

Costa e Silva, incapacitated by a stroke in 1969, was succeeded by a third four-star general, Emílio Garrastazú Médici, who reaped the miracle's political rewards. A tide of nationalism swept Brazil. *Grandeza*—greatness—became the theme of the moment, mesmerizing everyone but the poorest of the poor and a scattering of standoffish intellectuals.

Construction began on the Trans-Amazon Highway and vast new mining and industrial projects were undertaken. In foreign affairs, Brazil showed a new independence, emphasizing among other things its historical and cultural affinity with Black Africa, in particular with the five former Portuguese colonies on the African continent. Trade with developing nations increased. And almost as important, Brazil retired the world soccer cup in 1970, convincing the nation's middle class that perhaps God was, indeed, Brazilian.

Amid general prosperity for those Brazilians whose good opinion mattered most to the regime—the relatively well-off

### RELATIONS WITH THE ESTADOS UNIDOS

"Friendship does not mean total agreement," President Ronald Reagan remarked in a toast during his two-day state visit to Brasília and São Paulo in November 1982. "Instead it suggests shared values, ideals, mutual respect, and trust."

In truth, the respect and trust had not been much in evidence for several years, and Reagan's trip was largely designed to patch up some of the many differences that had arisen between the United States and Brazil. At least on the surface, it succeeded. The tangible tokens of friendship the President brought along did not hurt: \$1.2 billion in short-term U.S. loans, for example, and a waiver of U.S. import quotas on Brazilian sugar. (Reagan also offered to send a Brazilian astronaut into orbit aboard the space shuttle.)

As it happened, President João Figueiredo's regime improved the atmosphere by holding free elections—the first in two decades—only days before the President's arrival. While sharp disagreements between Washington and Brasília persist—notably over Reagan's policy in El Salvador, the sufficiency of U.S. economic assistance to the Third World, and the fairness of Brazil's export subsidies—outwardly, relations between the two governments are better now than at any time since the mid-1960s.

Washington had welcomed the 1964 coup that swept the military into power in Brazil, and the foreign policy goals of the Castello Branco government—"to defend the security of the continent against aggression and subversion, whether external or internal"—found favor in Lyndon Johnson's White House. In 1965, Brazilian troops joined other Latin contingents and U.S. Marines in restoring order in the Dominican Republic. Between 1964 and 1967, Brazil received some \$900 million in U.S. grants and loans.

With Brazil's economic boom in 1968 came a relative lessening of dependence on American aid and a new sense of autonomy. As Yale's Albert Fishlow puts it, "Brazil now had the economic credentials required to assert its independence more seriously." It refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, claimed a 200-mile coastal limit, and strengthened its ties with Portuguese Africa. While the Brazilians continued to oppose Fidel Castro's Cuba, they refused to join Washington's effort in 1975–76 to thwart a victory by Marxist MPLA guerrillas in Angola (where Cubans were fighting).

The quadrupling of world oil prices in 1973–74, which shook Bra-

readers of *Jornal do Brasil*, for example, rather than the nation's 50 million or so illiterates—it was easy to overlook an increasing polarization of income. It was estimated in 1960 that the poorest 40 percent of the population took home 11.2 percent of the national income; 10 years later, the figure was nine percent. Dur-

zil's economy, brought new strains. Seeking to reduce its oil import bill, the regime in Brasília pursued an ambitious nuclear power program. In 1974, however, the U.S. government, citing an overload on domestic capacity, decided it could not guarantee processing of nuclear fuel for the Brazilian reactors being built by Westinghouse. Brazil took its business elsewhere.

In 1975, the Brazilians signed a \$4 billion agreement with West Germany, with the Germans undertaking (among other things) to build 60 nuclear power plants and a plutonium reprocessing facility. In 1977, the Carter administration objected to the arrangement—fearing the spread of weapons-making capabilities—and vainly sought to scuttle the deal. President Carter and his aides also periodically chided the Brazilian regime for its sins against human rights, a tactic that may have had some good effects but did nothing to endear Mr. Carter to the generals in Brasília. In 1980, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Brazil refused to participate in the grain embargo directed at the USSR or to boycott the Moscow Olympics.

The current "thaw" in Brazilian-American relations, such as it is, does not quite live up to all of its reviews. ("Brazil and the United States: Partners at Last," ran an exuberant headline in *Correio Braziliense* during the Reagan visit.) In Third World conclaves, in its dealings with Latin neighbors, and on such touchy matters as Law of the Sea, Brazil has its own objectives and will continue to pursue them. Though anticommunists to a man, the generals do not share Washington's alarm over Soviet threats in the hemisphere and have no wish to become involved in East-West disputes.

The words of former Foreign Minister Antônio Silveira (currently Ambassador to the United States), spoken in 1976, remain an accurate formulation of Brazil's diplomacy: "An emergent power, with a wide range of interests in many fields, cannot allow rigid alignments, rooted in the past, to limit her action on the world stage."



*President Ronald Reagan and Brazil's President João Figueiredo, November 1982.*

ing the same period, the share taken by the wealthiest five percent grew from more than 27 to more than 36 percent. "The economy is going well," President Médici once conceded, "the people not so well." Yet, in a naturally congenial society where Brazilians of all colors and sizes mingle in the streets day and

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night, visions of condominiums, second Volkswagens, and vacation homes bought the acquiescence of the middle class.

The disparities in good fortune were accompanied by a level of political repression not seen in Brazil for decades. During the late 1960s, a wave of urban terrorism, highlighted by the kidnapping in 1969 of the United States Ambassador, Burke Elbrick, convinced the government, and many ordinary citizens as well, that a well-organized Marxist guerrilla movement was attempting to plunge the country back into the chaos of 1964. "It is possible to defeat the dictatorship and the exploitation if we arm and organize ourselves," read the manifesto that Elbrick's kidnappers forced the government to publish as a condition for his release.

One of the masterminds of Brazil's urban terrorist movement was Carlos Marighela, whose National Liberation Alliance (ANL) combined within its ranks a number of smaller terrorist bands. Another revolutionary coalition, VAR-Palmares, with a following of university students and intellectuals, became a romantic leader of protest against the regime. Against this patchily united front, the government mobilized a highly efficient security system dominated by the SNI. Within a few years, the terrorists were eliminated—hunted down and arrested, exiled to Cuba, or, like Marighela, slain in shoot-outs.

### Settling Scores

The security apparatus itself proved harder to control. Even when terrorism subsided, the regime's witch hunt went on—against students, intellectuals, journalists, and anyone else considered possibly or potentially subversive. Some disappeared, some died during questioning. Not only federal and state security forces but paramilitary and "private" groups assumed responsibility for eliminating enemies of the state. Off-duty policemen, depraved drifters, and the thugs of São Paulo's infamous Death Squads often settled old political scores under the guise of working with the government. While never of the magnitude of the human-rights violations in Argentina or Chile, the repression clearly demonstrated the consequences in Brazil of the absence of political accountability.

The 1973–74 oil price increases decreed by OPEC mark the historical moment at which the Brazilian miracle ended, but the economy was not the only aspect of Brazilian life then in the throes of change. If the middle class had accepted or ignored the excesses of a dictatorial state during the prosperous late 1960s and early 1970s, it appeared less willing to do so by 1974.

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Opposition-party (MDB) votes in local and congressional elections increased dramatically in 1974 and again in 1976, and the MDB acquired a taste for saying "No," or at least trying to. The Catholic Church, journalists, lawyers, and other professionals—all openly questioned the right of those in power to rule without a minimal respect for human rights and civil liberties.

Against this ominous backdrop, the selection of General Ernesto Geisel as the fourth military President of Brazil was fortuitous. Geisel, an austere Lutheran, represented the "democratic" rather than the *linha dura* (hard line) faction of the Army. Though a strong adherent to the 1964 Revolution, he nevertheless conceived of military rule in Brazil as transitional. *Abertura*—his program of gradual restoration of civil rights and democratic rule—sprang as much from a personal commitment to liberalization as it did from growing public pressure.

### The Road Ahead

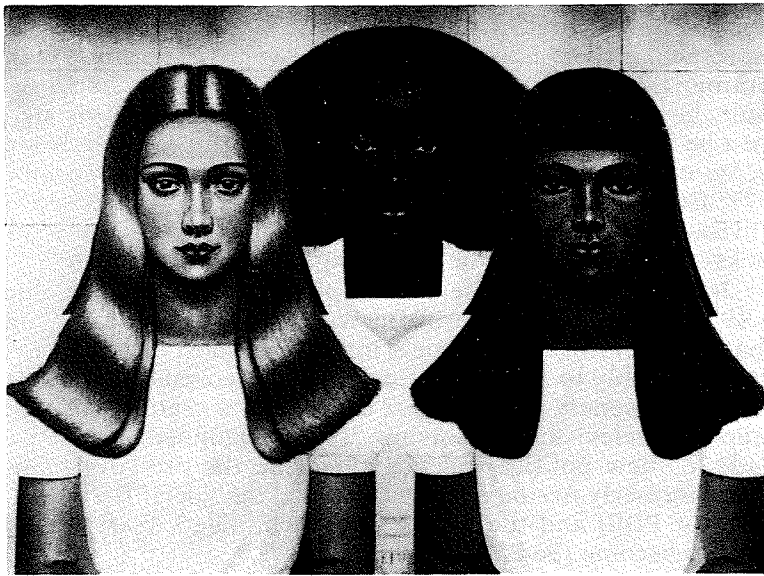
Though criticized by many in the armed forces, along with many conservative landowners, senior bureaucrats, and industrialists, the general and his chief political adviser, General Golbery do Couto e Silva, made it clear that they meant business. In a spectacular pair of decisions in 1977, Geisel first dismissed the commanding general of the Second Army, stationed in São Paulo, because of the death-under-torture of political prisoners. Then he fired the Minister of the Army, whom he correctly suspected of plotting against his policy of *abertura*. In December 1977, Geisel lifted some of the harsher sanctions imposed by previous governments—e.g., censorship of newspapers and books—and announced the beginnings of political reform.

João Figueiredo, Geisel's hand-picked successor, took office in 1979 and pledged to proceed with *abertura*. Though somewhat skeptical of the regime's intentions, most Brazilians reacted favorably to the restoration of habeas corpus, amnesty for political prisoners and political exiles, and a gradual easing of radio and television censorship. Torture stopped. Room was made for new political parties alongside the pro-government group (formerly Arena, now rechristened the Social Democratic Party, or PDS) and the old MDB (which added "Party" to its name to become the PMDB).

The government's behavior was not, it should be added, without blemish. Thus, the pre-1964 Labor Party, the PTB, reappeared, but without such former leaders as Leonel Brizola; hoping to limit Brizola's impact on the national elections, the government-controlled electoral court had awarded the PTB to

another politician. Brizola set up his own party, the Democratic Workers Party (PDT), and organized labor created the Workers Party (PT). Meanwhile, the government pushed through the legislature a series of self-serving *pacotes*, or "packages," of electoral reforms—including a "compulsory coattails" law (the *voto vinculado*, or linked vote) which, by prohibiting split-ticket balloting, gave the PDS a huge advantage wherever its local candidates were strong, especially in rural areas where the opposition was poorly organized.

Such machinations, however, did little to dampen national enthusiasm for *abertura*. Even the recognition that voting is mandatory in Brazil could not mask the obvious delight with which the average Brazilian followed the campaign and cast his ballot last November. There was little violence, and even less evidence of electoral fraud. The regime came away with control of the electoral college (as planned) and the Senate, although the opposition parties won governorships that account for 80 percent of Brazil's wealth and a majority of its population. General



Three Girls from the Same Street, by Maria Margarida. Brazil's population is one-third "mixed," one-tenth black, and about one-half European. Brazil is also home to several million Arabs and to the largest (pop. 800,000) Japanese community outside Japan.

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Golbery do Couto e Silva summed up the implications for the military high command: "The time has ended in which half a dozen individuals painted monumental panels, like the Mexican muralists but without the help of ladders, of nothing."

No sooner was the counting over—it took two weeks, because ballots are cast by hand in Brazil, not registered on machines—than speculation began over whether the regime would have the courage to allow a direct vote for President in 1985. Much depends on popular pressure and the conduct of the parties during the next two years. Dominating local government in all of industrial Brazil, newly elected opposition officials such as Montoro and Brizola along with their allies are in a good position to bargain with the national government.

It is generally believed that the armed forces want to retain the Presidency—and hence ultimate authority—for at least one more six-year term. But the regime's own party, the PDS, was badly shaken internally by the election results. While President Figueiredo emerged as a popular campaigner, he can not succeed himself, and several of the PDS candidates with presidential ambitions went down to defeat in gubernatorial races last November.

All of which could portend an acceleration of *abertura*, as rival politicians get down to the business of cutting deals and building support. On the other hand, it could bring back the kind of political turmoil that makes Brazilian generals—and other Brazilians—uneasy. My own guess is that the regime will proceed with liberalization cautiously. President Figueiredo has already disciplined mutinous officers in Rio de Janeiro who sought to bar Leonel Brizola from taking office. And public opinion seems overwhelmingly in favor of "staying the course."

If and when full democracy returns to Brazil, its champions will face many of the same problems that contributed to its demise two decades ago: general economic disarray; the need for some sort of meaningful land reform; a continuing influx of the dispossessed from the countryside to the cities; the appalling poverty that afflicts at least one-third of the country's population. It is far easier to embrace democracy, after its absence, as an *ideology* of government, than it is to employ democracy as a satisfactory *system* of government. The challenge this time is to make the system work.

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## THE NEW FRONTIER

*by Brian J. Kelly and Mark London*

During the summer of 1980, gold fever infected Brazil. Word of a major find in the eastern Amazon spread throughout the country. There were rumors of men unearthing gold rocks as big as their fists, of men who could not read or write turning into millionaires overnight and signing their checks with a thumbprint.

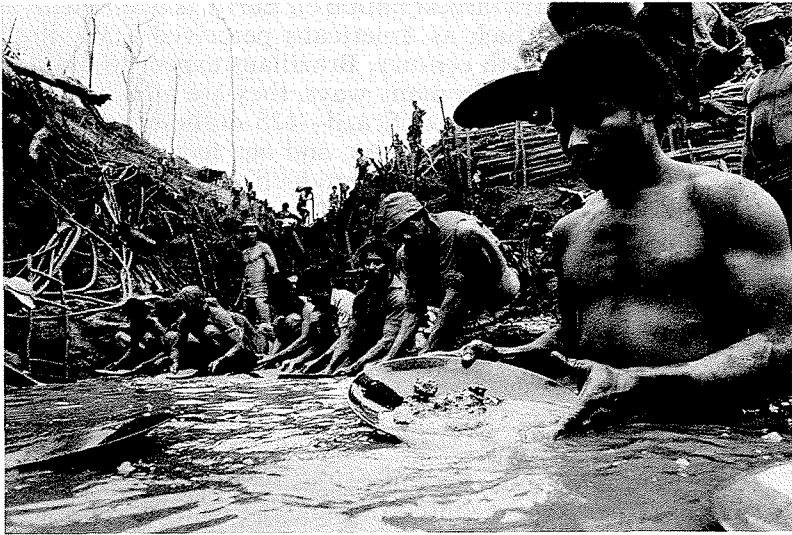
Soon the rumors were confirmed.

Three centuries after the gold strikes that had first lured thousands of men into the interior, Brazilians descended on Serra Pelada (Naked Mountain), the place where the discovery had been made, a small hill amid the dense rain forest that covers the northern half of Brazil. They came by the busload to Marabá, the closest town, and then plunged into the jungle for the 50-mile hike to the mine.

Doctors, lawyers, and businessmen in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo left their wives and children behind for a chance at El Dorado, traveling 1,000 miles north along the dirt roads that have been cut through the jungle by the government since the early 1960s in its drive to open the Amazon to exploration, exploitation, and settlement. From the rich croplands of the south came tenant farmers left jobless as the big farms switched from the labor-intensive cultivation of coffee to the mechanized cultivation of soybeans. And from the "horn" of Brazil—the drought-plagued, overpopulated Northeast jutting out into the Atlantic—came young men from city slums and subsistence farmers who could no longer subsist.

Excavated in places to a depth of 300 feet and divided into individual claims four meters square, laced together by makeshift ladders, the hilltop came to resemble a sugar bowl swarming with ants. Photographers for *Manchete*, a *Life*-like monthly, feasted on the sight of some 25,000 men sifting through less than one square mile of ground gouged out of the jungle. TV Globo, Brazil's largest network, brought the spectacle home to 80 million viewers.

The miners called the site Babylonia, after the Hanging Gardens. A handful struck it rich. One man (women were barred from the site) grossed \$6 million worth of gold in a single day.



*Garimpeiros panning for gold at Babylonia, the mine at Serra Pelada.*

Most found almost nothing and were reduced to hauling the luckier miners' dirt for a daily wage.\*

Government geologists eventually acknowledged Serra Pelada to be an exceptional find, one more manifestation of the mineral wealth waiting to be extracted in the eastern Amazon. They recommended that Serra Pelada be closed to individual prospectors and mined by machine, a process that would double Serra Pelada's average annual gold production of (currently) about nine metric tons.

But the normally unsentimental generals who have run Brazil since 1964 demurred. Even in a nation as financially embarrassed as Brazil—reeling from an inflation rate nearing triple digits and a foreign debt of some \$84 billion—a few hundred million dollars worth of unexpected income paled alongside the symbolic value of a mountain of gold, a mountain yielding not to the government's earth-moving equipment but to the picks and shovels of thousands of Brazilians with a common dream.

\*While the government, under Brazilian law, technically owns everything below the earth's surface, a Serra Pelada *garimpeiro* could place his nuggets of gold on the counter of the local bank—a shack with a counter—and receive in return three-quarters of its international price (adjusted daily). The government kept the rest to finance police protection, medical care, warehouses, and geologists who advised the prospectors on mining techniques.

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For Brazil, the fifth largest nation on Earth, is a land with a vision of greatness. Much as Americans perceived a Manifest Destiny in the early 19th century, Brazilians expect to build a great nation in the 20th. In many ways, they are already doing so. The Federative Republic of Brazil—125 million people in a union of 23 states, three territories, and one federal district—already ranks first worldwide in production of coffee, sugar, beans, and frozen concentrated orange juice (from which it reaped a \$170 million bonanza in 1982 after severe frosts blighted the Florida citrus crop); second in soybean exports; third in forest reserves; fourth in hydroelectric potential and beef production. It appears to be first in iron ore reserves and is a leader in alcohol-fuel technology.

### Growing Pains

Yet at the same time, the difficulties that afflict most of the rest of the Third World—inflation, unemployment, illiteracy, poor health care—exist also in Brazil, and on a typically Brazilian scale. One-half of Brazil's population consists of children under 16, whose ranks are swelling by about four million a year. The country's economic "miracle" of the late 1960s and early '70s failed to survive the oil price increases of 1973–74 and 1979. Disparities in income, outlook, and opportunity are extreme.

Brazil desperately needs the wealth the Amazon has thus far withheld, the capital it can create and attract, the safety valve it promises for a burgeoning population. Above all, Brazil needs the hope. The potential of the Amazon is what is new and promising about the country. Brazilians look to the Amazon with the "restless, inventive, self-confident, optimistic, enormously energetic" spirit that historian Frederick Jackson Turner saw in the American frontiersman.

"The Amazon is like your Alaska—far away, rich, empty, and mysterious," a Brazilian businessman explained over lunch not long ago. Sitting in the American Club, 30 stories above the heart of Rio de Janeiro's busy financial district, the business-

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man emphasized that the jungle is vastly more important to Brazil than America's 50th state is to the Lower Forty-Eight: "The future of your country," he said, "does not depend on Alaska."

Brazil is a big country, and the Amazon is as far away from the population centers as Alaska is from San Francisco. From Belém, a port city of one million just below the equator at the mouth of the Amazon River, it is four hours by jet to São Paulo, the industrial heartland of Brazil, and another hour and a half to Pôrto Alegre, in the southernmost part of the country. The more temperate south contains most of Brazil's wealth and more than three-fifths of its population. This is at once old Brazil and modern Brazil; it is the Brazil, one might say, that the Brazilians have begun to outgrow both physically and psychologically.

In the rich farm states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Paraná, the settlements on the rolling plains are European in character, reflecting the massive influx of German and Italian settlers during the early part of this century. In some towns, the parents of the blond-haired, blue-eyed children still speak German. Curitiba, the capital of Paraná, is run as efficiently as, say, Zurich, and its European flavor prompts the question, "Where is the Third World?"

### Dry Lives

Farther north, the state of São Paulo shows both how far Brazil has progressed and how far it still has to go. This state accounts for more than half of Brazil's total output—everything from oranges and coffee to autos, aircraft, computers and ships; it is the most industrialized region in the entire Southern Hemisphere. An hour's drive from the Atlantic coast, the sprawling metropolis of São Paulo is at once urbane and primitive, with clusters of 30-story skyscrapers linked at ground level by crowded highways and ringed by vast stretches of scrapwood-and-cardboard slums—the *favelas*.

There are 12.5 million people living in or around the city of São Paulo. Some 200 miles to the north, in Rio de Janeiro, there are nine million more, living in similarly varied circumstances. Rio is the tourist town of the travel posters, with its beachfront boulevards where talk in the outdoor cafés is of politics, sex, and football, to a samba beat. Starting at the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain, the glass-and-concrete hotels line the seashore. But tucked into the steep hillsides that account for so much of Rio's beauty are teeming *favelas* where one-quarter of the city's in-

## DEVELOPING THE AMAZON



habitants live, without electricity or running water or jobs (though it is technically illegal to be unemployed in Brazil).

The poor have flocked to Brazil's great cities—São Paulo is growing by 500,000 people a year—because opportunities to earn a living in the countryside are often nonexistent. If the nine rural Northeastern states seceded from the rest of Brazil, the 30 million *nordestinos* would be living in one of the world's poorest nations. Once this territory supported coastal rain forests, until they were cleared by coffee and sugar producers. Little grows there now, because the January-to-May rainy season has not come in four years. The chronic misery of the Northeast has been best portrayed by the novelist Graciliano Ramos, whose most famous work says much in its title: *Vidas Secas* (*Dry Lives*).

The future of Brazil is partly a question of numbers. The numbers are the 40 million poor people, wherever they happen to live, and the annual birthrate exceeding three percent. Can the Amazon, with its inhospitable climate and its deadly diseases and its unforgiving terrain, really provide a new frontier? How many small farmers and slum dwellers will dare to pack up and move to a new land? How many of the sons and daughters of Rio's affluent professionals are willing to brave the hard-

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ships? What kinds of entrepreneurs will the Amazon attract, and how much money are they prepared to risk?

Such questions were raised in Brazil once before: during the long gestation of Brasília, the country's 23-year-old capital in the otherwise empty central plain. Brasília was 135 years in the planning, and during that century and a half, the *idea* of the city seemed to promise Brazil a brilliant future, a future that, it seemed, always lay just beyond reach.

### Staining the Sea

As early as 1822, when Dom Pedro I declared Brazil's independence from Portugal, Brazilians already envisioned a new capital in the interior, supplanting Rio de Janeiro on the coast. The name "Brasília" and a general location for the city were suggested in a postscript to the first Constitution (1824). On the centennial of Brazil's independence, a symbolic cornerstone was even laid. But it was not until 1957 that President Juscelino Kubitschek, making good on a campaign promise, announced that Brasília would finally arise from the red dirt and scrub brush of the Planalto Central. The architect he chose, Oscar Niemeyer, and the city planner, Lucio Costa, created what they hoped would be an egalitarian city whose design would foster a blending of all classes.

Brasília opened on schedule in 1960, but the ideal society never materialized. The city today is architecturally striking and in many ways innovative. (For example, a road system was devised that eliminated intersections.) It is also an austere monument to technocracy where only highly paid military officers, politicians, bureaucrats, and economists can afford to live. The cool, angled structures of steel and glass, set in vast, barren plazas, make a fitting home for a government that is at times remote from its people. Unintended ironies abound. The twin towers where Senators and Deputies maintain their offices were supposed to dominate the skyline as a statement that "the people" owned the city; as it happens, two new bank buildings now loom over them.

Critics of the government—notably Roman Catholic priests, who have provided the most vocal opposition to the regime during 19 years of military rule—consider Brasília a kind of Potemkin Village. "We have beautiful fountains here, but just outside of town they have no running water," the Rev. David Regan, a staff member of the National Conference of Bishops explained. The real Brazil has been banished to the capital's slum suburbs such as Taguatinga and Ceilandia, which do not even

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appear on most maps even though they are home to 500,000 of Brasília's 1.2 million people.

Beyond Brasília lies the Amazon River Basin. Everything to the north and west of the capital is part of it, comprising one-twentieth of the planet's land and the largest belt of rain forest in the world. Winding 3,900 miles across the South American continent, up to 40 miles wide, only 32 miles shorter than the Nile but with 17 times its volume, the Amazon River together with its tributaries holds one-fifth of the world's fresh water, pouring out a flood that stains the ocean brown 100 miles out in the Atlantic.

The Amazon is among the least populous places in the world—larger than India, but with fewer people than El Salvador. Within this realm lie not only gold but an estimated \$1 trillion worth of hardwood trees and 18 billion known tons of iron ore, along with sizable deposits of bauxite, manganese, nickel, copper, tin, kaolin, and diamonds. For centuries, the Amazon has been an unknown and forbidding place; most of it has never been accurately mapped. One reason Kubitschek built Brasília was to create a jumping-off point to reach the Amazon. And in this respect, at least, he succeeded.

### Straggling West

The government's first efforts to integrate the Amazon into the rest of Brazil went into the construction of highways, beginning with the two-lane Belém-Brasília Highway in 1960 and continuing in 1970 with the Trans-Amazon Highway, which now cuts 2,150 miles westward across the country, from the Atlantic at Recife almost to the border with Peru. These roads, which for long stretches are still unpaved, opened the jungle to settlement.

The various colonization efforts in the Amazon have had very different results. Movement from the south to the northwest—at first spontaneous, later orchestrated by the government through INCRA, the government colonization agency—has enjoyed far more success than movement westward from the northeast. The roads to the northwest, as it turns out, lead to better soils than do the roads into the interior from Brazil's horn, and the pioneers who travel them, unlike the desperate *nordestinos* straggling west, often bring confidence and expertise acquired on the prosperous commercial farms of the south.

One of these highways, which forms the spine of a new farming frontier in the southwestern Amazon, is known to the bureaucrats as BR-364, and to many who have used it as "the

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road to the promised land." The journey from end to end—São Paulo to Pôrto Velho—covers 2,300 miles. From Cuiabá to Pôrto Velho takes four days by jeep in the dry season, but up to 40 when the heaviest rains come in March and the solid surface virtually turns to mud. Sometimes people die on buses and trucks stuck for days at an impassable mud hole. Yet they have come by the thousands in the last few years to clear and farm what was once solid jungle in the region called Rondônia, the newest Brazilian state. Rondônia's population grew from about 100,000 in 1970 to 750,000 in 1982.

### **'I Am the Boss'**

Alfonso Andrade, one of the new residents, came to the town of Ouro Preto in 1976 after the price of cotton dropped by half and the bank foreclosed on his land in São Paulo. He now owns 500 acres, 360 head of cattle, and a well-stocked general store run by his wife. "I came without knowing what I was going to do," he explained. "I had a relative who told me the land was good. I brought four cows and my family." When he arrived, he found that the 250-acre plot he had purchased from the government was solid jungle. With his two sons, then 10 and 11, Andrade cleared the land and planted corn, beans, rice, and cacao. All the crops grew well, and he reported his success to friends and relatives, who packed up and followed him.

In his bare, concrete-floored living room, a picture of Christ the Redeemer pronouncing "God Bless This House" in Portuguese hangs opposite a calendar featuring a pin-up girl in black lace panties. Sitting under the calendar, Andrade ticked off his complaints: He comes down with malaria several times a year; when his children get sick, it is always a crisis; when the road is muddy, supplies are late; there is never a hot shower; he has no television. But he is happy, he said, because he has land.

In the new cattle country of the southeastern Amazon, dominated by corporate landholders clearing 100,000-acre tracts of jungle, Mario Thompson is a different kind of pioneer. He came to the Amazon in 1973 to help establish a 350,000-acre ranch owned by Volkswagen. (Mitsui, Swift Armour, Xerox, Liquigas, and King Ranch are among the other companies with large Amazon holdings.) Thompson slept in a hammock for months. He lived off the land or on supplies dropped by plane. When the land was cleared, he stayed on to supervise the construction of a nearby slaughterhouse.

On weekends, he drives a jeep down the narrow jungle track to 10,000 acres of his own, which he has been clearing for pas-



### BRAZIL'S CHANGING CATHOLIC CHURCH

During his 12-day pastoral visit to Brazil in 1980, Pope John Paul II made a point of meeting twice with the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, affirming its status as the corporate voice of the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil. The Pope also made a point of seconding the message the conference has been sounding in recent years.

"A society that is not socially just and does not intend to be puts its own future in danger," John Paul declared in the slums of Rio. He urged church leaders "to summon consciences, guard people and their liberty, and demand the necessary remedies."

Until 20 years ago, the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil was a pillar of the status quo—first of the colonial planters, then, beginning in the 19th century, of an expanding, city-centered middle class. During the turbulent 1960s, however, a "theology of liberation" began to attract adherents among Latin American bishops. The Brazilian Catholic Church—the largest in the world, with some 112 million baptized members—emerged as the chief opponent of Brazil's military regime.

The National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (founded by reform-minded prelates, many of them from the impoverished Northeast, in 1952) has disclaimed both the subversive intent and the Marxist coloration that some critics in the government and press have sought to bestow. But the bishops have vigorously protested the government's abuses of human rights and its seeming indifference to social inequities. Going beyond the bishops' calls for political and economic reform, priests in São Paulo have opened church doors to illegally striking union members. In the Northeast, clergymen have aligned themselves with tenant farmers in danger of losing their homesteads.

During the late 1960s and into the '70s, throughout Brazil, powerful landowners and the government's security police retaliated with invasions of churches and with beatings, kidnappings, and the torture and murder of religious activists, including priests and nuns. But the church, led by the bishops, stood its ground, and with the coming of *abertura* the situation began to improve.

The Brazilian church's stance is rooted in the so-called preferential option for the poor proclaimed by Latin American bishops meeting at Medellín, Colombia, in 1968. The "preferential option" statement endorsed local efforts at social reform by growing numbers of priests and bishops throughout the region. It also reflected an evolution in church teaching—for example, on salvation, which was

ture. He started in 1980 with 135 head of cattle, in the expectation of doubling his herd within a year (which he did). Thompson did not come to the Amazon because he was hungry. His father was a wealthy man, once the nation's Minister of Agriculture. But Thompson, now 39, is convinced of several things:

now conceived in social as well as personal terms.

In its new role as champion of the downtrodden, the Brazilian church, whose once-strong influence within the government and among the middle class began to erode during the 1950s, has recouped a measure of power, prestige, and national visibility. It has done so not only through the outspoken stands its ministers have taken from the pulpit but also, at a more basic level, via creation of small, local organizations known as *comunidades de base* (CEBs).

In private houses, barns, or village halls, the CEB participants (usually about 15 to 35 poor villagers or slum-dwellers) meet with a priest or a trained layman. They are generally so used to poverty and powerlessness that they have never seriously entertained the possibility of bettering their lot. The CEBs try to get such people, as one group leader in Pernambuco explained it, to "see with their own eyes, think with their own heads, speak with their own mouths, and walk with their own feet." While Brazil's 80,000 CEBs are primarily religious in orientation (centered on scripture study), communal attempts to relate the Gospel to daily life have led to active protest by CEB members against unemployment, declining real wages, slum conditions, and other social and economic ills. Here and there, clinics and housing projects have been established. Lawyers have been hired to fight evictions. Electricity has been brought to some urban shantytowns.



The church's effort to turn its energies to the "struggle against everything that degrades and oppresses man" has been substantial but not uniform. At the top, among the leadership of the bishops' conference, a new cohesion is evident. Yet not all the leaders of Brazil's 200 ecclesiastical jurisdictions share the same zeal.

While São Paulo's Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns has become a national figure—denouncing economic "growthsmanship," providing sanctuary to active critics of the regime, and encouraging development of the CEBs—his counterparts in some of the other prosperous dioceses of the south pursue more traditional ministries. Thousands of the needy, all over the country, continue to convert to Protestant Pentecostal sects; as many as 20 to 30 million more have some sort of contact with Afro-Brazilian spiritist cults such as Umbanda.

that "sometimes you must abdicate the comforts of civilization to achieve something worthy"; that eventually he will make money from his ranch; that the Amazon is the future. He cannot understand why every young person in Brazil is not there, too.

With the small farmers who slog along BR-364 and the en-

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trepreneurs like Thompson and the big ranchers who fly in and out by private jet, there come young professionals with a middle-class, technocratic vision of the Amazon.

At the huge government projects—the Tucuruí hydroelectric dam, the Carajás mineral complex, the Trombetas bauxite mine—there are platoons of young engineers who endure all-male, no-alcohol, bunkhouse living for a chance at responsibility. “I am doing things here that would take me 15 more years to achieve in the south,” said a 29-year-old engineer, Helio Siqueira, as he stood on the pilot ore-crusher he had helped build at Carajás. “I am not an apprentice. I am the boss.”

The *Programa Grande Carajás*, centered on vast iron ore deposits, is doubtless the most ambitious development project in the world, with a projected cost of \$60 billion by the year 2000. Plans call not only for extensive mining (a 550-mile railroad is under construction to transport minerals from the interior to the Atlantic port city of São Luís) but also for the building of seven major industrial centers for producing steel, aluminum, and copper; the construction of a series of hydroelectric dams along the Tocantins River system; and the clearing of millions of acres for farming and ranching. Altogether, an area the size of California is involved. The government itself is building the iron ore complex and the Tucuruí Dam, but the rest of the effort is in the hands of private corporations and entrepreneurs, with Brasília’s technocrats providing general guidelines and tax incentives.

### Bounty Hunters

There is one key aspect of the Amazon’s development that would surely have troubled Frederick Jackson Turner. Much of his thinking about the impact of the American frontier revolved around the fact that the new land was free. The Homestead Act of 1862 guaranteed that any American who wanted land could have it—160 acres—so long as he worked it. Brazil never passed a Homestead Act; much of the land in the Amazon has a price tag. Titles are often murky and frequently are based on land grants made several centuries ago by the Portuguese crown. A common way of acquiring ownership is by recourse to *grileiros*, specialists in fabricated deeds and forged signatures.

Squatters, by law, own *terra devoluta*, or public land, after occupying it for a year and a day. They can also claim land that is already owned if the titleholder does not tend it for 10 years. But their claims are vulnerable to official corruption and contradictory regulations. In addition to scores of thousands of In-

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dians whose tribal lands lay in the path of development, hundreds of squatters—perhaps more—have paid for their land with their lives, victims of bounty hunters employed by the wealthier ranchers and farmers on whose land they have settled.

One surviving squatter is Hamilton Perreira, a 20-year-old working a small farm in the eastern Amazon with his four older brothers. He knows that his chances of turning 21 are anything but certain. "There's a \$500 bounty on my head," he explained, "and someone is going to come for it." The rugged, blond-haired man held his 18-year-old wife, Rosa, in one arm, leaning with the other on the muzzle of an old .22-caliber rifle. The late-afternoon sun radiated in shafts through the palm fronds roofing his damp, high-ceilinged shack 30 miles outside the town of Xinguara.

The Perreira clan, never part of any government settlement plan, had ventured from the dry Northeast to look for a new life. Instead, they found themselves battling a cattle rancher who claimed he owned the land they were trying to cultivate. He announced his intention to kill them if they didn't leave, and hired gunmen to do the deed. The Perreira brothers, along with some other squatters, killed four of the *pistoleiros* in an ambush. The Perreiras ask the question that Serra Pelada gold only begins to answer: Does the little man really have a chance in the Amazon, and what will happen to Brazil if he doesn't?

### Squandering the Forest

Haste in developing the Amazon has led to waste on a grand scale. The Trans-Amazon Highway, for example, one of the great engineering projects of modern times, was conceived and planned in 10 days, after President Emílio Garrastazú Médici toured the Northeast during a particularly harsh drought in 1970. He was appalled by the squalor and famine. "Men with no land to land with no men," he announced in a ringing speech calling for a highway to help populate the jungle with pioneering *nordestinos*.

The east-west highway was built, but it failed dismally to meet the aims of its builders. One hundred thousand families were to have moved along it within five years, but only 8,000 actually did so. Secondary roads, especially access roads leading to the new *agrovilas*, were badly maintained. Technical advisers, ignorant or disdainful of the relatively efficient patchwork farming methods of local peasants (*caboclos*) and Indians, promoted inappropriate management techniques and inappropriate crops. Indeed, the government's policy was to get the



*Panorama of Rio de Janeiro, by Lia Mitterakis. Three out of five Brazilians today live in cities (versus one out of four in 1920). Many of today's urban-dwellers were driven from the countryside by increased mechanization of agriculture and a sometimes feudal system of land ownership.*

Indians out of the way, not to learn from them. Many of these people had their first contact with the 20th century when the Trans-Amazon Highway passed through their lands. Some 45 percent of the Parakânan Indian tribe were dead of disease within months of the highway's intrusion, threatening to join the other 80 Brazilian tribes known to have become extinct during this century. Surviving Indians are now thought to number no more than 200,000, compared with as many as three million at the turn of the century.

Lack of proper research—the Brazilian government had stated plainly in 1972 that “development should not be negatively affected by sometimes exaggerated concern for the preservation of the environment”—took a heavy toll. Despite the lush impression of fertility that a rain forest presents, jungle soils in fact are extremely thin, complex, and delicate, and they vary in composition from one acre to the next. Up to 90 percent of the

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nutrients in a tropical forest may be concentrated in the trees themselves, while in temperate climates, up to 90 percent will be concentrated in the soil. Thus, the ashes from slash-and-burn clearing may enrich the earth, but only temporarily. Not knowing how to identify arable soils—and there are many of them in the Amazon Basin, amounting to perhaps 20 percent of its area—small farmers along the highway found their fields quickly exhausted, and moved on from one plot to the next.

The government abandoned the new settlers along the Trans-Amazon Highway when they failed to produce or maintain satisfactory harvests. The push was declared a failure, and thousands of families were left along the roadside to watch the jungle creep back over their neatly planned villages. There is a monument in the Trans-Amazon Highway town of Presidente Médici (est. 1974) where a plaque on a stone plinth proclaims that the Brazilian people have responded to “the challenge of history, occupying the heart of Amazonia.” Today, the town is nearly deserted, and the flagpoles encircling the plaque, one for each of the states of Brazil, are perpetually bare.

### Buying a Dream

Along with the big failures, the Amazon has its own sense of parody. The pioneers in dusty towns such as Rio Maria and Rendeacao have seen the cowboy movies (“bangy-bangys,” they are called) and know how to act. The military police assigned to duty in the “Far Oeste” wear their pistol holsters slung low, like John Wayne in *Red River*. The supervisor of a slaughterhouse in Campo Alegre, looking over a roomful of his workers, solemnly told some American visitors, “These are the same people who conquered your Wild West”—and then put a videotape of a Randolph Scott movie in the Betamax and belied up to the bar for another martini.

Yet, if they are fooling themselves, the Brazilians in the Amazon may never know it. They share a combination of hope and nationalism that stems more from pride than from arrogance; a willingness to make their *own* mistakes. This attitude was something that the shipping magnate Daniel K. Ludwig, perhaps America’s richest man, discovered the hard way.

Beginning in 1967, the reclusive Ludwig, now 86, invested \$1 billion in a Connecticut-sized Amazon plantation. Ludwig wanted to show the world how to use the tropics. Foreseeing an international pulp shortage, he replaced mixed stands of native trees with a fast-maturing Asian import, the gmelina tree, in a headstrong and risky attempt at timber monoculture. He also

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towed a 17-story floating pulp mill across the Pacific from Japan and then up the Amazon to the Jarí River. With 6,600 workers, Ludwig's Jarí Project was the largest private employer in the Amazon.

But as Brazil's military regime, led by General Ernesto Geisel, began to loosen curbs on political activity and free speech during the late 1970s, one of the first things Brazilians chose to protest was the presence of the rich American on four million acres of their jungle. There were rumors (unfounded) of slavery. Critics denounced his efforts as an "American invasion of Brazil." Brazil could tame the Amazon by itself, they said. In 1982, the Jarí Project, still operating at a loss, was sold for \$280 million to a consortium of 22 Brazilian companies. The transaction was orchestrated by the Brazilian government.

Yet the evidence suggests that Brazil cannot afford to lose the Ludwigs. Brazilians have much of the technology but not enough of the money it will take to develop the Amazon. The government has already obtained German, Japanese, and World Bank financing to develop the iron ore complex at Carajás, and more will be needed. The Brazilian people have demonstrated their determination to conquer the Amazon. They have created a new agricultural frontier—though who, ultimately, will own the land remains in question—and begun to exploit the region's mineral wealth. Railroads and highways and airfields are in place. From what has already been achieved there will be no retreat. But if development is to go forward, Brazil must convince the world to buy the Amazon dream. Perhaps it can.

During the height of the rainy season in 1981, the gold mine at Serra Pelada collapsed. The walls gave way and slipped into the pit, leaving a wide, shallow mudhole. All the miners departed. It seemed a bad end to such a hopeful symbol.

But in March of last year, Serra Pelada was reopened. Rumors of the discovery of a 16.5-pound nugget of gold, worth \$100,000, became world news this time. It was the biggest sign yet, for a nation that believes in signs, of the treasure that is still there for the taking.



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## BACKGROUND BOOKS

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### BRAZIL

In 1494, Pope Alexander VI was asked by the kings of Spain and Portugal, the world's greatest seafaring powers, to establish a basis for future territorial claims in the Atlantic.

The pope drew an imaginary line running from pole to pole, 270 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, and gave Portugal all lands discovered east of that line (including, unbeknownst to anyone at the time, 1,200 miles of South American coastline). Spain got the rest.

Not until 1500, when Admiral Pedro Álvares Cabral chanced upon it on his way to India, did the Portuguese learn that the land now called Brazil actually existed. Another three decades elapsed before they began to exploit the colony systematically. In 1532, the first town was established at São Vicente. Cattle and sugar cane were introduced, and a sugar mill was built.

By the 1570s, when Pero de Magalhães de Gandavo toured Brazil's sugar-producing provinces, he counted some 60 mills and estimated the colony's sugar exports at one million pounds a year. His detailed chronicle is translated as **The Histories of Brazil** (1922; Longwood, 1978). By 1627, exports of sugar exceeded 32 million pounds, the colony's first bonanza.

Sugar was not the only product of Brazilian farms. Tobacco from Salvador, laced with molasses, was a prized commodity, and from the cattle-ranching interior came hides for export and salted beef for local consumption.

The burgeoning trade between Brazil and the mother country was paralleled by an influx of slaves to work the plantations. Between 1575

and 1650, Portuguese slavers shipped more than 300,000 Africans from Angola to Brazil. Herbert Klein relates the story of the slave trade in **The Middle Passage** (Princeton, 1978, cloth & paper) while Celso Furtado's **The Economic Growth of Brazil** (Univ. of Calif., 1963) surveys the colony's agricultural and commercial expansion.

By the 1680s, competition from Spain's Caribbean possessions had ended Brazil's long reign as the hemisphere's sugar king. But discovery of gold in the province of Minas Gerais rescued Brazil's sagging economy. Gold shipments to Portugal rose from 514 kilos in 1699 to 14,500 kilos in 1712.

Charles Boxer's **The Golden Age of Brazil** (Univ. of Calif., 1962, cloth & paper) is a spirited account of the period from a historian who knows how to spin a good tale.

Gold lured thousands of Brazilians into the continent's interior. The selections edited by Richard Morse in **The Bandeirantes: The Historical Role of the Brazilian Pathfinders** (Knopf, 1965) capture the trailblazing spirit. From São Paulo, the daring *bandeirantes* in their fragile canoes followed the Paraná River deep into the backlands (the *sertão*). From Belém, adventurers traced the Amazon and its tributaries all the way to Mato Grosso. In essence, Brazil reached its present boundaries by 1750.

The *sertão* has always held a fascination for Brazilians—much as the Old West has for Americans. It is depicted by novelist João Guimarães Rosa in **The Devil to Pay in the Backlands** (Knopf, 1963) as a mag-



ical land of renewal and discovery.

But it was also a region where laws did not rule, where outlaws sometimes became folk heroes. Billy Chandler brings to life the notorious Lampião in **The Bandit King** (Texas A&M, 1978). Lampião's story is still told on Brazilian television—in soap opera form.

Race relations in colonial Brazil diverged sharply from the pattern in the American South. During the turbulent gold rush era, Brazilians of diverse races and social backgrounds mixed indiscriminately, and slaves purchased their freedom with surprising frequency. As mechanics, artisans, shopkeepers, and small farmers, they were indispensable to the colony's economy.

Tolerance did not make slavery less harsh, but it did create more flexible racial attitudes, and Brazilians today perceive race in very different terms than do Americans. As Gilberto Freyre wrote in his classic **The Masters and the Slaves** (1933; Knopf, 1964), "Every Brazilian carries in his soul the birthmark of the African."

Other worthwhile works on race in Brazil include **Neither Slave Nor Free** (Johns Hopkins, 1972, paper only), a collection of essays on the colonial period edited by David Cohen and Jack Greene; Roger Bastide's **The African Religions of Brazil** (Johns Hopkins, 1978, cloth & paper); and Jorge Amado's novel **Tent of Miracles** (Knopf, 1971, cloth; Avon, 1978, paper), set in the city of Salvador, where Afro-Brazilian culture displays a special vitality in its artistry and dance, its *carnaval* and *candomblé* (folk religion).

By 1800, Brazil's "golden age" was over—the mines, it was thought, had been exhausted. Yet Brazil was actually more prosperous than ever, ex-

porting great quantities of sugar, tobacco, rice, indigo, and cotton. As Kenneth Maxwell points out in **Conflicts and Conspiracies: Brazil and Portugal, 1750–1808** (Cambridge, 1973), the Portuguese were well aware that "Portugal was neither the best nor the most essential part of the empire. . . . Brazil was the kernel, Portugal the shell."

When Napoleon invaded Portugal in 1807, the Portuguese court took refuge in Rio de Janeiro. The empire was ruled from Rio until 1821. Then, brought back to Lisbon, the monarchy was unable to reassert control over Brazilian affairs. Backed by the planter elite, Prince Dom Pedro in 1822 declared Brazil's independence from Portugal and proclaimed it an empire.

Brazil's path to independence is traced in **From Colony to Nation** (Johns Hopkins, 1975), edited by A. J. R. Russell-Wood. A good supplement is **Every Inch a King** (New York: Macmillan, 1950; Hale, 1972), a biography of Dom Pedro I by Sérgio Corrêa da Costa.

"A tropical Don Juan," writes Corrêa da Costa of Dom Pedro, "something of a throwback to his lusty grandfather, John V, he would lunge into the night, muffled like a conspirator, in search of gallant adventures. Riding on horseback, he would sometimes go so far as to draw back the curtains of passing litters or coaches, in search of beautiful ladies."

Economically, imperial Brazil was much like colonial Brazil, except that cultivation of coffee gradually came to replace that of sugar. Exports of coffee rose from a million sacks annually during the 1830s to more than five million sacks a year during the 1880s—accounting for 60 percent of Brazil's total exports.

The government in Rio drew much of its support from sugar planters in the northeast. But coffee production was based in the southern province of São Paulo. As that commodity's importance grew, the regional balance of power was upset. Self-made men, the coffee planters disliked the empire's aristocratic veneer and the obstacles the monarchy posed to their own ambitions. After slavery was abolished in 1888, disgruntled coffee planters joined with the military to overthrow the monarchy.

The result was creation of a republic, the so-called Old Republic (1889–1930), whose life coincided with four decades of dynamic economic growth. In the province of São Paulo, for example, planters did much more than simply cultivate coffee. They controlled most of the railroad system, and moved into banking, manufacturing, insurance, and commerce.

"Coffee was the basis of domestic industrial growth . . . and nearly all Brazilian entrepreneurs came from the planter elite," writes Warren Dean in *The Industrialization of São Paulo, 1880–1945* (Univ. of Tex., 1969).

The opportunities available in what was becoming Brazil's richest province attracted an unprecedented number of immigrants; between 1890 and 1910, some 1.8 million people, mostly Italians, Germans, Spaniards, and Portuguese, left Europe for Brazil. São Paulo mushroomed from a small town of 65,000 in 1890 to a densely populated state capital

of almost 600,000 in 1920. The impact of immigration is described by Rollie Poppino in *Brazil: The Land and the People* (Oxford, 1973, cloth & paper), a good general introduction to Brazilian society.

Brazil's economic modernization made obsolete a basically agrarian political system held together by shaky alliances and shady deals. In 1930, backed by the military, the populist governor of Rio Grande do Sul, Getúlio Vargas, turned out the old guard, established the "new state," and unequivocally pointed Brazil toward industrialization.

Yet if the Old Republic was unable to reconcile the competing claims of economic development and political democracy, neither was the Vargas regime. Nor have subsequent governments proved any more adept. This is the enduring dilemma of Brazilian history, and the focus of two excellent surveys—Peter Flynn's *Brazil: A Political Analysis* (Westview, 1978, cloth; 1979, paper) and E. Bradford Burns's *A History of Brazil* (Columbia, 1980, cloth & paper). Both books end with the first stirrings of *abertura*.

Whatever their nation's woes, Burns notes, Brazilians have always shown an irrepressible, perhaps naive, faith in the future. "In spite of you," wrote the popular composer Chico Buarque de Holanda, addressing the military regime during the early 1970s, "tomorrow will be another day." The lyrics were censored. The sentiment endures.

—James Lang

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Professor Lang, a former Wilson Center Fellow, teaches in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Vanderbilt University. He is currently a Kellogg Fellow. For additional titles, readers should consult WQ's Background Books essay on Brazil appearing in the Autumn 1976 issue.