

have attended meetings of the World Social Forum, which was established as the most important meeting point for organizations critical of the neoliberal globalization model on an international scale. It has also participated in various activities that have taken place to coincide with the counter-summits during meetings of the WTO and the annual assemblies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In short, the movement against large dams has acted as a specific single-issue movement, but one which seeks to place its struggle in the context of criticism of the current neoliberal globalization development model and to create alliances with other social movements that are also opposed to it.

### Conclusion: An Uncertain Future for the Region

The Madeira River Complex is a transport infrastructure and energy project that is part of the neoliberal development and regional integration model embedded in the so-called "Washington Consensus." At the urging of Brazil, IIRSA, an initiative sanctioned by the governments of South America with support from various international funding, trade, and development agencies, seeks to commercially integrate Latin America into the international market. The Madeira River Complex, one of IIRSA's top priority projects, will provide energy to Brazilian urban areas and enable massive quantities of goods, particularly soy from the Brazilian, and to a lesser extent, Bolivian agribusiness sectors to be transported along the river.

The Madeira River Complex will have dire environmental, social, and economic consequences for the local population in the Amazon region in Bolivia and western Brazil. The massive, terrain-altering work required to build the large hydroelectric dams, widen and tame the river to make it navigable for large ships, and run the high-voltage electricity transmission lines will significantly alter local people's way of life: land will be flooded, fish stocks will decrease, and the ecological balance that currently sustains the culturally, environmentally, and economically important chestnut forests will be destroyed.

Faced with this situation, the affected populations on the Bolivian and Brazilian side have started to organize their opposition to the project. Far from being an isolated case, opposition to the Madeira River dams is part of a wider and growing social resistance to the construction of mega-infrastructures, particularly large dams. Increasing opposition internationally and on individual continents since the late 1970s and early 1980s has succeeded in significantly reducing both the number of new large dams planned since the early 1990s and the financing for them from international institutions. However, as the Madeira River Complex illustrates, the construction of large dams continues. It is still too soon to ascertain the outcome of the Madeira River issue, a result that will determine the fate and future of the Amazon region in Bolivia and western Brazil.

## The Eco-Class-Race Struggles in the Peruvian Amazon Basin: An Ecofeminist Perspective

Ana Isla

### Introduction

Since the 1992 Earth Summit, there has been a growing recognition of the global ecological crisis that threatens the future of life on the planet. In this debate *sufficiency* has become a defining concept in contemporary environmental and feminist thought. Ecofeminists maintain the view that there is a direct link between the exploitation of women (women's liberation) and the exploitation of nature (ecological justice). In fact, a cornerstone of ecofeminist thought holds that women's and nature's liberation are a joint project.<sup>1</sup> Ecofeminists advocate collective ownership and a restoration of the Commons. At the center of this ecofeminist analysis is the knowledge that capitalist patriarchy creates an intersecting domination against "all unwaged" in its exploitation of women, peasants, indigenous people, and nature. This exploitation takes place not so much through low wages but by their provision of services and material input to capital (land, forest, wood, water, fish, etc.) "free of charge." Ecofeminists maintain that nature is an exhaustible good that we must learn to conserve by living simply and recognizing "sufficiency" as a good life.<sup>2</sup> From this framework, subsistence needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, affection, love, respect, learning, creativity, adventure, company, friendship, enjoyment, pleasure, and work) are the same for people everywhere in the industrial and underdeveloped worlds. This form of subsistence

<sup>1</sup>Ynestra King, "Toward an Ecological Feminism and a Feminist Ecology," in J.S. Dryzek and D. Schlosberg (eds.), *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 399-407; Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor* (London: Zed Books, 1986); Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies, *The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalized Economy* (New York: Zed Books, 1999); Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1989); H. Pietila and J. Vickers, "The UN System in the Vanguard of Advancement of Women: Equality, Development, and Peace," in C.F. Alger (ed.), *The Future of the United Nations System: Potential for the Twenty-first Century* (New York: United Nations University Press, 1998), pp. 248-281; Ariel Salleh, "From Eco-Sufficiency to Global Justice," in Ariel Salleh (ed.), *Eco-Sufficiency and Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology* (London and New York: Pluto Press, 2009), pp. 297-312; Claudia von Werlhof, "The Globalization of Neoliberalism, its Consequences, and Some of its Basic Alternatives" *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, Vol. 19, No. 3, September 2008, pp. 94-117; and Terisa Turner and Leigh Brownhill, "We Want Our Land Back: Gendered Class Analysis, the Second Contradiction of Capital and Social Movement Theory," *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, Vol. 15, No. 4, December 2004, pp. 21-40.

<sup>2</sup>Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

embraces concepts like “moral economy”: a new way of life that advocates joy in life, happiness, and solidarity-bound societies.<sup>3</sup>

I call the ongoing struggle in Peru an eco-class-race<sup>4</sup> struggle because it involves the indigenous peoples’ ecological consciousness of nature’s destruction, labor exploitation, and institutional racism. The actors engaged in this struggle include indigenous people and *bosqueños* (this term includes *ribereños*, or those living on the river banks), international oil corporations (Occidental, Pluspetrol), the national oil corporation (Petro-Peru), forest corporations (Bozovich and Schipper), and government institutions. The geographical scope of this paper is the Peruvian Amazon basin, which covers 78,282,060 hectares, representing some 61 percent of the country.

Until 1973, *bosqueños* used this entire territory for their livelihood. This situation started to change gradually in the 1970s and much more rapidly in 1993 after Alberto Fujimori’s government changed the Constitution to expand oil and forestry “concessions,”<sup>5</sup> official government agreements that allow domestic and foreign firms to control indigenous territory and extract resources from within the Amazon. This process has been accelerating during Alan García’s second term as president (2006 to the present), in which 56,131,862 hectares—72 percent of the rainforest—have become hydrocarbon lots.

In 1993, indigenous people in the Amazon basin received a deed title covering 7,379,941.72 hectares and an additional 344,887 hectares reserved for the Nahua and Jugapakon groups, who live in voluntary isolation.<sup>6</sup> This forced indigenous people to live on just 10 percent of their original land. Furthermore, the land title on this dramatically shrunken territory only gave them the right to the soil, while

<sup>3</sup>Vandana Shiva, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup>The term “eco-class-race” is used here to indicate how, under the conditions of neoliberal capital’s growing penetration of Amazonia, an interrelated complex of domination must be taken into account. First, given the ever-growing pressure for resource extraction (including biofuels and other energy sources), ecosystem destabilization on an expanding scale becomes a dominant feature of the social and natural landscape. Second (and tied into this), numerous kinds of labor exploitation are drawn into the picture that then disrupt ancient and stable cultural and communitarian patterns. And third, vicious racist ideologies are imposed, generally speaking along the axes of “primitive ↔ civilized,” which in turn are related to the core ecofeminist analysis that reveals patriarchal capitalist concepts of “nature ↔ female/civilization ↔ male.” Clearly, these elements have been present since 1492; however, there comes a time when the sheer amount of ecological damage yields qualitative changes, mainly from advanced states of ecosystem decay that self-propagate and pose new threats to both cultural and physical survival. These in turn provide new phases of resistance. We are witnessing one such transformative moment in Peruvian Amazonia.

<sup>5</sup>Concessions are a favorite imperial card trick. Historically, European, and then North American imperial and colonial powers would often first occupy their colonies by using the system of concessions. Local rulers signed concessions or “treaties” giving complete control over small areas to private parties for their use, allowing colonizers to dispossess and disenfranchise thousands to millions of people.

<sup>6</sup>Several indigenous groups are living in voluntary isolation. They rejected “civilization,” which reduced them to slavery during the rubber exploitation times. See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/jul/04/peru-amazon-rainforest-conservation>, accessed on July 10, 2009.

control over the subsoil of these lands (minerals and hydrocarbon) was vested in the state and subject to privatization in the form of oil concessions. Areas not demarcated for oil concessions were given away in forest concessions. Currently, approximately 332,975 indigenous people live in the lower and upper rainforest of Peru—all of them in rebellion and actively struggling for their common territories.

Local struggles against concessions have a long history. The lower rainforest portion of Loreto, Peru’s northernmost and largest “department” (state), has had labor camps, roads, and pipelines to service oil concessions for more than 40 years. Pollution and noise produced by seismic explosions have modified the land, contaminated rivers, and destroyed ecosystems that indigenous communities depend on for a living.<sup>7</sup> In the southeastern department of Madre de Dios, forestry concessions have decimated wildlife, as forestry concessionaries relentlessly hunt key species such as *huanganas*, *sajinos*, *majás*, *añujes*, and *achuni*, varieties of turtles, iguanas, and other native fauna, in order to feed their workers.<sup>8</sup> They also use machinery for forest extraction which, along with trees for timber, brings down fruit trees, particularly palms that are a crucial part of the wildlife food chain.<sup>9</sup> Besides damaging the soil and watershed, these practices have displaced numerous wildlife species and led others to extinction.<sup>10</sup> As a result, approximately 60 percent of indigenous people residing in the Amazon rainforest have become impoverished and undernourished.<sup>11</sup>

As nature, indigenous people and *ribereños* are exploited under the patriarchal capitalist concession system, where, for example, women have been forced into sex work. During the first phase of oil concessions in the 1970s, hundreds of white women prostitutes arrived in Iquitos, Loreto’s capital and the largest city in the Peruvian Amazon basin, to “serve” men in oil labor camps. By 2000, young indigenous and *ribereña* women had been incorporated into the sex market. According to Rivadeneira,<sup>12</sup> Achuar and Jibara girls, aged ten to fourteen, from the Corrientes River are sold outright to oil workers. These young sex slaves serve the oil workers in the oil camps, and when these men leave, the girls are abandoned.

<sup>7</sup>Earth Rights International and Racimos de Ungurahui, published online at: [http://www.achuarperu.org/en/60petroleum\\_problems/block1ABand8-8x.htm?PHPSESSID=23a0efee55b87129b813438609126f](http://www.achuarperu.org/en/60petroleum_problems/block1ABand8-8x.htm?PHPSESSID=23a0efee55b87129b813438609126f).

<sup>8</sup>R.E. Bodmer, P.E. Puertas, C. Reyes, J.E. García, and D.R. Díaz. “Animales de caza y palmeras: integrando la socioeconomía de extracción de frutos de palmera y carne de monte con el uso sostenible,” in T.G. Fang, R.E. Bodmer, R. Aquino, and M.H. Valqui (eds.), *Manejo de Fauna Silvestre en la Amazonía* (UNAP, University of Florida, UNDP/GEF, e Instituto de Ecología, La Paz, 1997), pp. 75–86.

<sup>9</sup>R.E. Bodmer, “Strategies of Seed Dispersal and Seed Predation in Amazonian Ungulates,” *Biotropica*, Vol. 23, 1991, pp. 255–261.

<sup>10</sup>J. Thiollay, “Influence of Selective Logging on Bird Species Diversity in a Guianan Rainforest,” *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1992, pp. 47–63. See also: A. Quevedo, “Barreras o causas que obstaculizan la conservación y uso sostenible de la diversidad biológica en los bosques de Loreto. Informe para el Grupo Regional de Manejo de Bosques de Loreto,” 2003, pp. 1–49.

<sup>11</sup>José Álvarez, “Peru: Crisis forestal, ¿Alguien piensa—realmente—en las comunidades amazónicas?,” *La Razon*, February 6, 2009.

<sup>12</sup>Harvey Rivadeneira, “Prostitución en las empresas petroleras,” *Shamiro Decidores*, March 8, 2001.

In Madre de Dios, a huge ring of child prostitution involving more than 400 girls and boys operates around 100 bars.<sup>13</sup>

In 2008, the year Peru signed a free trade agreement with the United States and began negotiations for one with the European Union, Canada, and China, the government decided to change the concession system to expedite the privatization of the rainforest commons. In response, indigenous people organized to fight back.

This paper analyzes the recent intensification of these struggles as the concession system has been supplanted by global capitalist free trade agreements. This has provoked a powerful indigenous movement grounded in the defense of what I call here “the good life.” These struggles continue to rage right up to the composition of this article in mid-2009 and have gained international attention and sympathy.

### The Good Life in the Peruvian Amazon

Ecofeminists Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva<sup>14</sup> argue that “the good life” and freedom are possible when people and nature are not separated, since it is the inhabitants’ subsistence know-how that helps to conserve the *conditions* of life (nature) by valuing “sufficiency” and recognizing the need to live in harmony with the natural world. The indigenous people of the Peruvian Amazon have maintained their age-old connection to nature with their ability to steward an unbroken forest system. Endowed with one of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet, the Amazonians in Peru inhabit more than 71 distinct indigenous communities and mixed communities living on common land with a diversity of abundant wildlife. Amazonian peoples derive their livelihoods from the forest and its waters and are nourished by its clean and healthy air. This existence has nurtured complex socio-economic and cultural systems that have distinct ways of describing and interacting with the physical and natural world.

Jurg Gasché argues that in the modern capitalist market, these societies exist in a context of two sets of objective conditions: 1) *bosquecinos* have free access to natural resources, which are sustained with the knowledge and means of production to use and transform them; and 2) dependence on the availability of market goods.<sup>15</sup> The combination of the market and free access to natural resources allows forest dwellers to thrive and enjoy a “good life.” Anthropologists maintain that the concept of the

<sup>13</sup>Miguel Gutierrez, “El reino de los ‘prostitibares.’ Niñas y adolescentes son reclutadas a la fuerza,” *La Republica*, August 8, 2008, pp. 14–15.

<sup>14</sup>Mies Maria and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism* (Halifax: Fernwood Publications, and London: Zed Books, 1993).

<sup>15</sup>Jorge Gasché Suess, Napoleon Vela Mendoza, Julio Cesar Vela Mendoza, Erma Babilonia Cáceres, “Libertad, Dependencia y Constreñimiento en las Sociedades Bosquecinas Amazonicas. ¿Que significa para los Bosquesinos ‘autonomía,’ ‘ciudadanía’ y ‘democracia?’,” unpublished final report IAP – CONCYTEC, 2006.

good life is at the source of the different objective sociological arrangements we observe today.<sup>16</sup> According to Gasché et al., *bosquecinos* in the Amazon are sophisticated and rational human beings who satisfy their needs with a minimal impact on their environment. *Bosquecinos* organize their livelihood and their labor according to their needs; their “work” of living is practiced with pleasure. Gasché et al. point out that labor for *bosquecinos* (women and men) is a multitask activity that relies upon learning several techniques of fishing, hunting, gathering and transformation according to the seasonal rhythm of the climate (winter and summer), hydrology (e.g., widening waters in the rainy season and narrowing in the dry season), and biology (e.g., seasons of fruition, fattened animals, fish spawning, fish schools). This labor is based not on compulsion, but rather on enjoyment and community cooperation. It is an exercise of solidarity according to social rights and obligations. It is founded in reciprocity with family members, friends, and other members of the community as well as with nature spirits (mothers of the forest—*madre de monte* and *duenos de animales y plantas*). It is grounded in the appreciation of a respected community authority who is believed to be able to influence the forces of nature through “visions,” “conversations,” and “healing.”

Although the labor of women and men are equally important for their survival, there are differences in how the various Amazonian societies view gender roles. The Ashaninkas of the upper rainforest, for example, consider women’s labor complementary to men’s. However, their work is not perceived to be as valuable as men’s, and Ashaninka women are subordinate to men. In contrast, the Shipibos, who dwell in the lower rainforest, live in a matriarchal society where women are autonomous beings who are entrusted with control of the resources of the community. Shipibo women work alongside men in the commercialization of artisan work. Their communal and household participation are recognized and valued by both their partners and the larger Shipibo society.<sup>17</sup>

From the ecological point of view, *riberenos* do not separate themselves from nature. Rivers are at the center of all their activities. Men gather at the river’s edge before sunrise to fish and hunt, and women congregate there to wash the clothes, collect water for cooking, take baths, and bathe their young children. In each town, the river allows the women and men to grow and hunt food and raise cattle. Every household has a piece of land and is responsible for ploughing, planting, and harvesting its fruit. The slash-and-burn technique is used in agriculture, which is both

<sup>16</sup>See Joanna Overing and Alan Passes, *The Anthropology of Love and Anger: The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia* (London: Routledge, 2000); Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *A incostância da alma selvagem – e outros ensaios de antropologia* (São Paulo: Cosac & Naify, 2002); Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones (eds.), *About the House: Lévi-Strauss and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Peter Gow, *Of Mixed Blood: Kinship and History in Peruvian Amazonia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); and Claude Marcel Hladik (ed.), *Tropical Forest, People and Food: Biocultural Interactions and Application to Development* (New York: UNESCO and Parthenon Publishing Group, 1993).

<sup>17</sup>María Heise, Liliam Landeo, and Astrid Bant, *Relaciones de Genero en la Amazonia Peruana* (Peru: Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica, 1999).

an ideal practice for common land and a very sustainable system, because it allows the forest to regenerate. In the afternoon after school, girls and boys gather at the river to swim, bathe, catch shrimp and fish, collect drinking water, practice art with small stones, canoe, and participate in jumping competitions from trees. Medicinal plants that grow on the banks of the river are used in food and to cure illnesses. At night, the river provides the quiet needed for a good night's sleep. The river is always there. It produces food and drink, medicine and entertainment; it gives rainforest inhabitants life, livelihood, and freedom. The river and its products belong to everyone who lives there; and thanks to the river, people grow up physically and mentally healthy. This culture of abundance is subsistence, though the word has none of the negative connotations attached to it in the possessive society or by the Peruvian elites and industrial capitalism in general—everyone has what he or she needs.

The society of the Peruvian rainforest is the product of a particular ecological balance with a diversified, fragile, and acidic soil. According to Flores et al., the context of this ecosystem includes high temperatures (above 24 degrees Celsius), abundant yearly rainfall (between 3,000 and 4,000 mm), and relative humidity (between 82 and 86 percent), all of which speeds the process of decomposition of organic material, erosion, and soil deterioration.<sup>18</sup> In response to these challenges, *bosquecinos* have developed complex systems of forest management. In the lower lands of the Peruvian rainforest, most communities settled on the banks of the Amazon, Marañón, Nanay, Itaya, Tamishiyacu, Momón and Maniti rivers, which provide for their livelihoods as artisan fisherman. In the upper lands of the Peruvian Amazon, more than 100,000 residents derive their occupation and income from agriculture. Agriculture in this region is migratory due to the limited natural fertility of the soil. Like fishing, it is subsistence-oriented in its trade on the local market. In this fragile and acidic soil, the forest is the most stable vegetation, and it serves important functions in protecting the viability of flora, fauna, and the ecosystem as a whole. Photosynthesis occurs at the top of the forest, producing tall, closely packed, large-crowned, evergreen trees, which nurture countless vegetable and animal species.<sup>19</sup>

Forest-dwelling farmers and fishers have been coexisting for centuries following simple rules: fishers know which fish species develop under particular types of fruit and trees surrounding the river banks, while agriculturalists obey ancestral agricultural techniques, such as crop association and rotation. The slash-and-burn system of cultivation imitates the natural ecosystem in three different ways: first, through a high degree of food-plant diversification in which an extensive variety of plant and animal species grow. Second, continuous cycles of rain and sun produce a constant and rapid process of decomposition and regeneration of animal and vegetable material. Third, subsistence farming and tropical rainforest ecologies

<sup>18</sup>Salvador Flores, E. Gomez, and R. Kalliola, "Características Generales de la Zona de Iquitos," in R. Kalliola and S. Flores (eds.), *Geocología y Desarrollo Amazonico: Estudio Integrado en la Zona de Iquitos-Peru*, Series A II. (Turun, Finland: Annales Universitatis Turkuensis, 1998), pp. 17–32.

produce closed-cover protection of an already weakened soil against the direct impact of rain and sun.<sup>20</sup>

From the biological point of view, Antonio Brack (who is respected for his biological knowledge but discredited as the current Minister of Environment in Peru) estimated in 1997 that indigenous communities knew 890 medicinal plants, 556 wood species, 1,500 ornamental plants, 102 dyes, 44 types of oil, 96 agroforestry species, 29 perfumes, 99 dressings, 37 cosmetics, 28 abortive and aphrodisiac leaves, 115 toxic plants, 98 grains, and 261 fodders. In one indigenous community alone, according to Brack, inhabitants know 31 kinds of cassava.<sup>21</sup> José Álvarez, a biologist from the *Instituto Nacional de la Amazonia Peruana* (IIAP), stated that the impact of indigenous people on fauna was low due to their low-density population, cultural and social control on hunting, absence of external demand, limited hunting instruments, wide dispersion of wildlife, and diversified resources.<sup>22</sup>

This "good life" may seem to some to be a deplorable state of underdevelopment. Mainstream development experts see *bosquecinos* as irresponsible, ignorant, backward, poor and needy. Following this perception, developers have spread the ideological myth that Amazonian subsistence peoples are poor. But poverty is far more than a crudely materialist term. It is relative to the measure of human needs and in constant relation to nature. From this standpoint, *bosquecinos* have lessons to offer the continent and the world: the capitalist crises did not affect them because their habitat provides food, work, and entertainment. Indigenous people's struggle to retain their lands is also a struggle for recognition and respect.

An intuitively ecofeminist perspective emerges from Peruvian literature in the 1990s as both fiction and nonfiction writers on the rainforest confronted the brutality of the concession system with their stories. Marcella Barcellos reminds us that among natives, life is negotiated with nature according to certain rules that recognize the "owners of things," or "mothers": "Everything, from trees to humans, has a mother. Mothers are stronger than men and have special powers," she says.<sup>23</sup> Barcellos argues that women in the rainforest provide use values and regenerate the conditions of production and reproduction; as such, they are highly respected and live in freedom. In reflecting on the tragedy of the concessions, Teddy Bendayan sees the Amazon Mother as the only hope for life. He writes that "women are the only

<sup>20</sup>Clifford Geertz, "Two Types of Ecosystems," in Andrew Vayda (ed.), *Environment and Cultural Behavior: Ecological Studies in Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 3–28.

<sup>21</sup>Antonio Brack, "Conocimientos tradicionales," in GEF/PNUD/UNOPS *Amazonia Peruana, comunidades indígenas, conocimientos y tierras tituladas* (Lima, Peru: Atlas y Base de Datos. Proyectos RLA/92/G31,32,33, 1997).

<sup>22</sup>José Álvarez, "Gestión comunal y territorio: Lecciones aprendidas de la cuenca del Nanay (Amazonia NorPeruana) para el manejo de la fauna silvestre amazónica," *Manejo de Fauna silvestre en Latinoamérica*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2006, pp. 1–15.

<sup>23</sup>Cecilia Barcellos, *Munainini and Manguare. Relatos de la Amazonia* (Lima: Entorno a la Selva Editorial, 2007).

ones who can save the rainforest by teaching their children, from the time they are in the womb, to shout for freedom.”<sup>24</sup> Roger Rumrill proposes to “remind women’s children that nature is alive, that nature has ears, eyes, heart, sentiments, that if a mountain falls, a tree is cut, a bird dies, a weapon is shot, everything is registered in the jungle’s heart.”<sup>25</sup>

But by the end of the 1990s, oil concessions in Loreto had significantly reduced the abundance of wildlife. Subsistence living collapsed in the 35 communities<sup>26</sup> living next to Occidental and Petro-Peru (now Pluspetrol) installations along the Corrientes, Tigre, Pastaza, and Macusary rivers, and by streams, lakes, wetlands, and in the flooded forests. Occidental and Petro-Peru pumped oil into those rivers and degraded their pristine land, turning it into an oilfield with more than 150 wells, over 1,000 kilometers of road, and a pipeline through these communities.

This situation sparked several rebellions.<sup>27</sup> The Achuar community formed three local organizations<sup>28</sup> and two international organizations<sup>29</sup> with about 12,500 people. In the Corrientes River area, Pluspetrol Norte S.A. counterattacked. The company founded an organization called FEPIBAC, which divided the rebelling community by providing money to mitigate some of the problems the company had created. It funded micro-enterprises to clean up the pollution and sell locally produced food. It also paid for small infrastructure projects such as a public tap to collect water, which became necessary after Pluspetrol contaminated local water supplies. FEPIBAC works in alliance with the Confederation of Amazon Nations (CONAP),<sup>30</sup> an indigenous association organized by the government. These company-friendly organizations work to get the indigenous groups to accept development projects but sit down and negotiate with the corporations and the government over some of the details.

### Dispossession by Oil and Forestry Concessions and Privatization Decrees

The descendants of the colonizers and *mestizos* (mixed descent, or so-called white),<sup>31</sup> who have taken power since independence (1821–24), have long-held racist and exclusionary attitudes towards Peru’s indigenous people from both the Amazon

<sup>24</sup>Teddy Bendayan, *Germen the Luz (Cuentos y Poemas)* (Iquitos, Peru: Bufeo Colorado Editorial, 1996), p. 68.

<sup>25</sup>Roger Rumrill, *La Anaconda del Samiria* (Lima: Bruno Editorial, 1997), p. 29.

<sup>26</sup>Among those communities are Itayacu (Achual), Nuevo Porvenir (Quichua), Nuevo Andoas (Quichua), Alianza Capalmari (Quichua), Andoas Viejo (Quichua), and Panayacu (Quichua).

<sup>27</sup>See <http://www.contaminacionpetrolera.com/>, accessed July 12, 2008.

<sup>28</sup>Achuarí Inunramu (ATI), La Federación de Comunidades Nativas del Río Corrientes (FECONACO), and Organización Achuar Chayat (ORACH).

<sup>29</sup>Federación de la Nacionalidad Achuar del Perú (FENAP) and Coordinadora Binacional de Nacionalidad Achuar del Ecuador y Perú (COBNAEP).

<sup>30</sup>See: <http://www.servindi.org/actualidad/4731>.

<sup>31</sup>David Nugent, *Modernity at the Edge of Empire: State, Individual, and Nation in the Northern Peruvian Andes*,



and Andes. As such, they ignored the indigenous peoples’ struggles until they finally rose up in arms. Peru’s current and two-time president, Alan Garcia, unabashedly summed up the sentiment when he recently said indigenous people are “not first-class citizens.”<sup>32</sup> Like many leaders in colonized countries, Garcia’s allegiance is to Peru’s elite classes in perpetuation of the capitalist system from which they derive enormous benefit.

But capitalism’s underlying philosophy of scarcity—i.e., that there is not enough, so those able to do so better grab what they can while they can—puts it in direct conflict with cultures of subsistence, which are based on the idea that the Earth does provide enough for everyone. Capitalism causes poverty by destroying the culture of subsistence.

<sup>32</sup>Peruvian President Alan Garcia, speaking in a clip on “As Tensions Flare in Peruvian Amazon, Award-Winning ...” *Democracy Now!* June 10, 2009.

The first long wave of dispossession in Peru started with the Spanish invasion in 1593. Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the peoples and ecosystems of the Inca Empire (now Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia, and parts of Chile and Brazil) fed the growth and evolution of the colonial center, beginning with Spain and Portugal. The industrial revolution also used Peru's Andean gold, silver and potato production<sup>33</sup> as well as the rainforest's mahogany, rubber, and barbasco (*Lonchocarpus urucu*, a plant that is used as a pesticide and insecticide). Yet instead of appreciating these valuable contributions by Peruvian Andean and rainforest subsistence cultures, they have been dismissed and stigmatized as pre-scientific, traditional, primitive, or backward, and their members have been assassinated, raped, kidnapped, poisoned, and massacred.<sup>34</sup>

A second wave of dispossession began in 1950 as Peru was incorporated into the imperium of the United States. Legal provisions were introduced to weaken indigenous people's control over their lands.<sup>35</sup> In 1970, during the military regime of Velasco Alvarado, petroleum exploration and production began in indigenous lands, in Blocks 1A-B with Occidental (Oxy) and Petro-Peru in Blocks 8-8X, both in Loreto. In 1974, despite these agreements with capitalist outsiders, the military government of Velasco Alvarado recognized the native community as a legal person with collective property rights to their land. It declared that the indigenous peoples' land rights were inalienable and permanent, and that their land could not be used as collateral by the government. This meant that Amazon indigenous people were then considered subjects with rights.<sup>36</sup> But the declaration of rights for indigenous people turned out to be hollow, since Velasco's government also introduced the legal system of concessions that has been used ever since to take indigenous lands. Indigenous people, with Velasco's support, began formally organizing for territorial recognition and after several decades formed AIDASEP, the *Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana* [The Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest].<sup>37</sup> In 1979 during the regime of General Morales Bermudez, who ousted Velasco in a military coup, Amazon forestry land was

<sup>33</sup>Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1988).

<sup>34</sup>Fernando Santos Granero and Federico Barclay, *Tamed Frontiers: Economy, Society and Civil Rights in Upper Amazonian* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000).

<sup>35</sup>In 1957, supreme decree No. 003 set aside 98,128 hectares of land for "tribus selvícolas," an average of 1,533 hectares per community. In 1964, the Agrarian Reform (Law No. 15037) promoted colonization of the rainforest, outside of the indigenous land. At the time, the reform generated the largest and most aggressive process of colonization and occupation of indigenous people's land.

<sup>36</sup>Stefano Varese, *Salt of the Mountain: Campa Ashaninka History and Resistance in the Peruvian Jungle* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002).

<sup>37</sup>AIDASEP is a network of indigenous people whose work is to preserve and teach indigenous language. It includes several organizations such as *Asociación Regional de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Selva Central* (ARPI S.C.), *Coordinadora Regional de Pueblos Indígenas Región San Lorenzo* (CORPI San Lorenzo), *Federación Nativa de Madre de Dios y Afluentes* (FENAMAD), *Organización Regional de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente* (ORPIO), *Organización Regional AIDASEP Ucayali* (ORAU), *Organización Regional de Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonia Norte del Perú* (ORPIAN P) and *Consejo Mchiguenga del Río Urubamba*. See also: Alberto Chirif and Pedro García, "Amazonia peruana: Organizaciones indígenas: logros y desafíos," forthcoming in *Asuntos Indígenas*, Grupo Internacional de Trabajo sobre Asuntos Indígenas (IWGIA).

designated as state property that was "handed over for use" by the indigenous communities. Only land used in agriculture by communities was recognized as communal property. A change to decisions regarding the sale of land was also introduced at that time, framing them as "based on the community decision" and "solicited by two-thirds of the community members." This provision opened the way for massive manipulation and fraudulent "community decisions."

In 1993, Fujimori's dictatorship (1990–2001) made further changes to the Constitution that permitted communal land to be seized by the state if it was judged to be abandoned. This decision was very problematic for the indigenous population, since slash-and-burn cultivation is sequential; some years lands are in use, while other years the land rests. Ignoring this fact, in 1995 the regime expanded oil concessions and signed a contract with Atlantic Richfield Peru, Inc. (ARCO) for production in Block 64, located in Achuar territory along the Morona River and the Huituyacu and Huasaga rivers, two tributaries of the Pastaza River, near the northern border of Peru. In 2000, the Achuar people forced ARCO to pull out of the block, and Occidental took over production there. Between 1996 and 2000, Pluspetrol Norte S.A. operated in Block 8-8X and Block 1A-B respectively. In February 2001, Fujimori—before resigning from the presidency of Peru via fax—granted 23 new oil concessions to Occidental, Repsol, and Burlington Resources. In 2003, the Achuar people's resistance also forced Burlington Resources to withdraw from Block 64. The dictator also granted forestry concessions of up to 10,000 hectares for 60-year contracts to those with deep pockets.

Traditionally, *bosquecinos* would cut a few trees during the rainy season to sell in the city in exchange for basics such as sugar, salt, paraffin, matches, clothing, school materials, medicine, and Christmas gifts. In this way, they extracted resources only to meet their minimal, immediate needs. But as the system of concessions has expanded, the laws have changed. Since 2000, *bosquecinos*' logging activities have essentially been made illegal by requiring them to buy a permit, which they cannot afford. "Illegal" trees cut without a license fetch lower prices, so they must extract a higher volume of trees than they would otherwise need. Thus, *bosquecinos* who do not have access to forest concessions or live far away from them have become criminalized.<sup>38</sup>

Permanent forest production has been superimposed on communal spaces, which has created numerous conflicts, as companies with forest concessions quickly began clear-cutting. Although Article 66 of the Peruvian Constitution grants forest concessions only to individuals, in Madre de Dios and Loreto, mafias of foreign and national traffickers (*habilitadores*)<sup>39</sup> with powerful connections in government moved in to take advantage of the business opportunity.<sup>40</sup> Aside from being given to groups

<sup>38</sup>José Álvarez, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup>*Habilitadores* operate a financial or food credit system that delivers wood to the financier.

<sup>40</sup>José Álvarez, "Peru: Crisis forestal, ¿Alguien piensa—realmente—en las comunidades amazónicas?," *La Razon*, February 6, 2000.

who are not legally entitled to them, the government is not able to monitor or supervise these areas to make sure that concession holders respect the few restrictions that exist. For example, with just one concession of, say, 5,000 hectares, an individual can gain access to hundreds of square kilometers, which happened with the Schipper family, a major player in the timber sector. In 1992 the family obtained the first forest concession of 5,000 hectares in Iberia, the so-called "Madera Iberia or Chullachaquis Investment." In 1993, by investing in *habilitation* schemes, the family secured another four concessions, which gave it control over 207,000 hectares out of 682,000 hectares authorized in Madre de Dios.<sup>41</sup> The Schipper family also administers three timber companies, Empresa Forestal Rio Piedras, Empresa Forestal Monago, and Forestal Otorongo A and B, which export high-quality wood to the U.S. According to Miluska Soko, Alan Schipper is the "man on the ground"—or in this case, the "man in the forest"—for Drago Bozovich, the timber magnate who heads Peru's largest wood products exporter, Grupo Bozovich. The company exports cedar (*cedrela odorata*), mahogany (*swietenia macrophylla*), and other woods to an expanding international market, with export offices in the U.S. (Bozovich Timber Products, Inc., [BTP]), Mexico (Bozovich S. de R.L. de C.V. [Bozomex]), and a joint-venture in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. The company is also eagerly eyeing China and Europe for future expansion, and it sells to the domestic Peruvian market.<sup>42</sup>

In March 2004, the administration of Alejandro Toledo, who succeeded Fujimori, approved the concession of Block 101 to Occidental Oil's Peruvian subsidiary. Block 101 is adjacent to Block 64; together they total 1,698,230 hectares (16,982.3 square kilometers, an area slightly less than half the size of Switzerland). By 2006, the government had committed approximately 43 percent of Peru's tropical rainforest to oil concessions—some 27 million hectares in a five-year period. This included contracts with Repsol (Spain) and Conoco Phillips (Canada/U.S.) to explore new concessions in Loreto, Madre de Dios, and Ucayali, which borders Loreto to the north and Madre de Dios to the south.<sup>43</sup> In 2005, Toledo's administration granted 196 forest concessions in Loreto.

To make matters worse, the state is incapable of monitoring logging in the Peruvian Amazon. One worker with the government agency that grants forestry concessions, INRENA (*Instituto Nacional de Recursos Naturales* [the National Institute of Natural Resources]), who asked not to be identified, described the situation this way:

<sup>41</sup>Miguel Gutierrez, "El Rey de la Madera," *La Republica*, July 22, 2008, pp. 16–17.

<sup>42</sup>See: <http://www.peruexporta.com.pe/articulo.php?ia=300>, translated into English at: <http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=es&u=http://www.peruexporta.com.pe/articulo.php?ia=300&ei=AuVtSrrMKJCJtge4sMy-AQ&sa=X&oi=translate&resnum=7&ct=result&prev=/search?q=Drago+Bozovich&hl=en&rls=GGGL,GGGL:2006>, accessed July 27, 2009; and Soko R. Miluska, "Peru. Los Barones del Cedro y la Caoba: La Familia Bozovich y la Industria Maderera," online at: [http://www.peru-amazonico.de/pam\\_esp/amazgo\\_es.htm](http://www.peru-amazonico.de/pam_esp/amazgo_es.htm), accessed February 19, 2009.

<sup>43</sup>Dan Collyns, "Indigenous Groups Force Oil Company to Cut Pollution," *Guardian Weekly*, December 8

There is no budget for conducting field evaluations, even though this is mandatory by law. For instance, to check Islandia's concessions, the personnel need to walk eight days to go and eight days to come back, because there is no money for gas."<sup>44</sup>

As a result, concessions are granted with no knowledge of the area. José Álvarez, an IAP (*Instituto de Investigaciones de la Amazonia Peruana* [Peruvian Amazon Research Institute]) biologist, proposes that organized indigenous and *campesina* communities under their highest authority, the Communal Assembly, take over the monitoring and enforcement of laws and regulations regarding logging in their areas. He points out that indigenous communities are perfectly suited to this task, because they are autonomous, sustainable, have a direct interest in the biological diversity, and have the capability to monitor activities and the legal authority to direct internal affairs and punish offenders.<sup>45</sup> But they need to be empowered by the government.

### Globalization Pressures on Dispossession

A third wave in the attack on Peruvian Amazon subsistence societies started with the implementation of free trade agreements to expand commodification. Since 2006, during Alan García's second administration, privatization of the Amazon rainforest became the main negotiation within the push for free trade agreements with the United States, the European Union, Canada, and China, as the Amazon rainforest became one of the last profitable frontiers for economic development.

A trade agreement negotiated with the U.S., the Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA)<sup>46</sup> frames its goals in terms of "sustainable development," a humane and ecologically responsible sounding code word that allows virtually unchecked capitalist exploitation of the Global South. In keeping with the free trade agenda, the government organized the Environment Ministry with two vice-ministries: Natural Resources Development Strategy, and Environmental Management (EM), which are financed by the International Bank of Development, the regional arm of the World Bank. The EM is in charge of promoting biotechnology/biopiracy, and ethanol, it encourages the use of agro-chemicals in

<sup>44</sup>Author interview, July 2008.

<sup>45</sup>José Álvarez, "Gestión Comunal y Territorio: Lecciones aprendidas de la Cuenca del Nanay (Amazonia Norperuana) para el manejo de la Fauna Silvestre Amazónica," *Revista Electronica Manejo de Fauna Silvestre en Latinoamérica*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2006, pp. 1–15.

<sup>46</sup>The PTPA was signed on April 12, 2006, though it didn't come into force until February, 1, 2009. According to the U.S. Trade Representative, the PTPA will result in "significant liberalization of trade in goods and services between the United States and Peru. Under the PTPA, Peru immediately eliminated most of its tariffs on U.S. exports, with all remaining tariffs phased out over defined time periods. The PTPA also includes important disciplines relating to: customs administration and trade facilitation, technical barriers to trade, government procurement, services, investment, telecommunications, electronic commerce, intellectual property rights, and labor and environmental protection." See <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/>

farming, and guarantees private property in agrarian and forestry land. In addition to promoting policies that dispossess the indigenous people of their lands, the creation of these new organizations ignores the competence of regional governments and indigenous and peasant federations. Instead it authorizes the Central Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG) and the Supervision Office of Wood Forest Concessions, or OSINFOR, an agency within INRENA, to privatize land. OSINFOR was set up to supervise the implementation of forestry concessions and protected areas, while MINAG authorizes changes in land use.

In an attempt to justify his racist policies of dispossession, in October 2007, President Garcia wrote an article titled "*El Perro del Hortelano*" [The Syndrome of the Orchard Dog] in which he likened *bosquecinos* to mad dogs who have resources they neither exploit nor allow anyone else to exploit: "There are millions of hectares that the communities have not cultivated as well as hundreds of mineral deposits that cannot be worked . . . the rivers that run down both sides of the mountain range pour into the ocean without producing electric energy,"<sup>47</sup> he wrote. Garcia then equated modernity and progress with investment and transnational corporations.

Secrecy has surrounded the negotiation of the trade agreements. To avoid public scrutiny, Garcia sought special authority from the Congress to legislate in favor of the PTPA. He then issued 92 decrees, which established the basis for the next indigenous struggle; the decrees violate Covenant 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), which the Peruvian government ratified in 1993.<sup>48</sup> They also conflict with the Peruvian Constitution and communities' legislation<sup>49</sup> that protect native and campesina communities' rights to agrarian development. Furthermore, the decrees are widely condemned throughout indigenous society, including by the Amazonia Parliamentary Representative. The decrees also contain contradictory judgments produced by two government ministries.<sup>50</sup>

Despite all of these problems and conflicts, Garcia has been negotiating more concessions. Oil concessions under negotiation include Block 109 to the Spanish oil

<sup>47</sup>Javier Diez Canseco, "Colmillos del perro del hortelano," *La Republica*, June 7, 2007.

<sup>48</sup>With Legislative Resolution No. 2653, Peru agreed formally to recognize the property rights and the concept of territory for indigenous land, meaning a place where indigenous communities exercise patrimonial control and socio-cultural ascendancy.

<sup>49</sup>Law No. 22175 (Community Natives and Agrarian Development of the Upper and Lower Rainforest), and Law No. 24657 (Boundaries and Title Deeds of Campesina Communities).

<sup>50</sup>The Agrarian Commission in April 2007 approved a selling regime to enable privatization in order to assure investment and employment. In October 2007, the Economy Commission expressed disapproval of the selling regime, instead favoring the continuation of the concession system. The Loreto Regional Government prefers the concession system, because it maintains that transferring property rights introduces incentives that could promote deforestation and put the natural rainforest at risk. The International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO) also favors concessions over privatization, because it believes the resulting deforestation and replacement of the native Amazon forest with exotic species of homogenous plantations would negatively

giant, Repsol; Block 67 to the private French/Anglo oil and gas company, Perenco; Block 64 to the independent Canadian oil and gas concern, Talisman; and Block 1 to Texas-based backer of George W. Bush, Hunt Oil. Garcia is also negotiating more areas for ethanol production, gold mining concessions with Dorato Resources, Inc., and areas for hydroelectric plants with the Brazilian oil and gas giant, Petrobras. Three hydroelectric plants under discussion are at Nambari (2,000 MW), Sumabeni (1,000 MW), Paquizapango (2,000 MW), Urubamba (940 MW), Vizcatan (750 MW) and Chuquipampa (800 MW).

Following is a chronology of the extended rebellion that has erupted in increasingly serious confrontations in the past decades.

### Recent Eco-class-race Struggles to Defend the Commons

The struggle in the Peruvian Amazon basin is the first organized Peruvian indigenous peoples' rebellion since the 1780 Tupac Amaru II rebellion against Spanish colonizers. This quintessentially 21<sup>st</sup> century rebellion has grown over the course of many years in response to the attack on indigenous people's life by multinational oil, mining, and forest corporations in alliance with the Peruvian government.

Since the first rebellion, indigenous men, women, and children have had a common agenda: the liberation of their territories. In 2003, the first eco-class-race uprising took place after heavy metals such as lead and cadmium were found in Achuar drinking water, rivers, ecosystems, and in the blood of people. One anonymous indigenous informant with whom I spoke in 2008 had this to say about the situation:

Down well water pours directly into the rivers Pastaza, Macusary, Corrientes and Tigre. The contamination is expanded toward the Marañon and Amazon rivers because these four rivers are their tributaries. Pollution produced by oil spills sticks to the trees and bushes. Medicinal plants and "*pan llevar*" are weakened and their fruit instead of ripening becomes rotten. Drinking water is contaminated resulting in people and animal poisonings. The contamination of ecosystems has put our communities close to extinction.<sup>51</sup>

In 2006, the second eco-class struggle began as an international revolt when Achuars from Ecuador and Peru, ignoring national borders, arrived by boat and formed a peaceful blockade in Pluspetrol-operated Lot 1A-B and Lot 1C to prevent road traffic to the site. For two weeks, they stopped oil production of 40,000 barrels of oil per day. The Peruvian government and Pluspetrol were pressured





agree to the Dorissa Agreement, which contained promises to assess the situation and stop the contamination of their communities from the oil production.<sup>52</sup> Among other provisions, the agreement gave the company twelve months to clean the areas polluted by Occidental's abandoned oil wells; initiate a process of reforestation; and begin re-injecting into the subsoil the contaminated "down well water"<sup>53</sup> that is poisoning the waterways. Every day the oil companies dump about a million barrels of down well water into rivers and streams. To help them cope with the illnesses resulting from exposure to these toxins, local people demanded a hospital be built within two years and that the government conduct an epidemiological study to assess the impacts on indigenous workers.

Despite the Dorissa Agreement, by 2009 nothing changed, and the contamination continues. Pluspetrol has re-injected only small amounts of the contaminated waste water. Further, several oil spills have made life unbearable in affected communities. On July 8, 2007, one spill contaminated 16 kilometers of the Macusari River, and on July 25, 2007 another despoiled 5 kilometers of the stream in Antoquia village. According to Harvey Rivadencira, a local chemist:

Toxic substances modified the pH of the surrounding watersheds, devastating the hydrobiology of rivers surrounding oil exploitation. Oil covering the river water made mirrors [that reflected the sunlight], making impossible its oxygenation and condemning to death its plankton, animals and its native people.<sup>54</sup>

In March 2008, as conditions continued to deteriorate, the struggle escalated. With the destruction of their means of livelihood by lack of access to their areas of hunting, gathering, and fishing, indigenous people are forced to become wage-laborers at the oil companies, since oil corporations are the only income providers in the area. Thus an exploitative relationship forms through a process of structural devaluation of indigenous people's work.

Mies observes that in the Third World, the fate of the subsistence producer is "housewifization"—that is, treatment as feminine or feminized workers who are either unpaid or poorly paid. Victims of racist discrimination, indigenous wage-laborers receive the lowest salary compared with other oil production workers. They are only given one-month contracts and then must wait a year until all members of the 35 communities in the area have earned a month's salary before they are re-hired.

<sup>52</sup>See letter from César García Sandy, on behalf of the Native Communities of the Corrientes River Federation (FECONACO), the Racimos de Ungurahui Working Group (Racimos), and the Forest Peoples Programme to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), February 3, 2009, online at: [http://www.forestpeoples.org/.../peru\\_cerd\\_update\\_achuar\\_feb09\\_eng.pdf](http://www.forestpeoples.org/.../peru_cerd_update_achuar_feb09_eng.pdf).

<sup>53</sup>Down well water, also referred to as production water, is the water in an oil well that is separated and left over from oil extraction. It is heavily contaminated with hydrocarbons and heavy metals.

Following the Dorissa Act, Pluspetrol contracted the service of the Peruvian corporation, Graña y Montero, which is involved in energy, mining, and oil production, to remediate the destruction Pluspetrol caused in the forest. Graña y Montero employs between four and five individuals per community. The corporation knows that these workers are capable of remediating the soil contamination because of their experiential knowledge of the soil taxonomy identified in the Amazon.<sup>55</sup> However, because of the classism and racism against indigenous people, they are not respected as thinking or problem-solving human beings, and their knowledge is dismissed.

Tired of the poor conditions, in late March 2008 workers complained of their situation to the 24 *Apus*, community leaders, who according to indigenous tradition, are consulted before any activity is carried out in the community's territory. After listening to the workers, the *Apus* decided to call a meeting with Graña y Montero. The first meeting was set in Titayacu, but the Graña y Montero negotiators did not show up. Instead they sent police who militarized the area. At the second meeting, this time in Nueva Jerusalen, three negotiators did attend. The *Apus* proposed an equal payment of 2,500 *nuevo soles* (US\$800) to indigenous laborers who are given only 28 days of paid employment a year, but the proposal was rejected. At the third meeting, no negotiators arrived.

In support of their members/workers, on March 20, 2008, the *Apus* and their communities initiated a strike for better pay. Workers, community members, and *Apus* congregated at an abandoned airport hoping to discuss their issues with any institutions—the enterprise, the government, and the ombudsperson<sup>56</sup>—interested in helping to resolve the problem. None bothered to come. Instead, armed police arrived and attacked. In this encounter, three indigenous people were injured, one was killed, and three "disappeared." During the police rampage, one police officer was also killed. The police used a Pluspetrol installation as a detention center. Fifty-three men, including an eleven-year-old boy and a priest, were held in a container and beaten for three days. Afterwards, the "prisoners" were taken to jail in Iquitos where local people and the church intervened to gain their freedom. Of those 53, four indigenous men were accused of police assassination and terrorism and kept in jail.

In August 2008, in Guayabamba jail in Iquitos, I interviewed these four men. They identified themselves as belonging to the Quichua and Achuar communities located on the El Marañón River. They disputed the accusations against them, and three of the four said they had not even participated in the airport demonstration, since the police had taken them from their houses the day before the march. After five months in prison, it was revealed that the officer had not died in the airport as the

<sup>55</sup>Gobert Paredes, Sjeff Kauffman and Risto Kalliola, "Suelos Aluviales Recientes de la Zona Iquitos-Nauta," in R. Kalliola and S. Flores (eds.), *Geoecología y Desarrollo Amazonico: Estudio Integrado en la Zona de Iquitos-Peru*, Series A II. (Turun, Finland: Annales Universitatis Turkuensis, 1998), pp. 231–251.

<sup>56</sup>The ombudsperson is a government watchdog over the people's and community's constitutional rights.

police had originally claimed, but in the backyard of a 60-year-old woman during a police attack on the small farms and households adjacent to the airport. In an interview with a national media outlet, the woman said she was so afraid of the violence of the police raids that she hid to keep safe and did not see what happened in her backyard. Despite this new information, which should have cleared the four suspects, as I write this essay, two of the four indigenous men are still being held in jail without charge. A month after the revolt, Carlos Curitiva Chuge, a cousin of one of the detainees, was killed by a police bayonet as he was fishing in a communal pond.<sup>57</sup>

Between 2006 and 2008, several other local eco-class-race struggles took place against oil concessions, but the government chose to ignore them. During this same period, the negotiations over the Peru Trade Promotion Agreement with the U.S. increased pressure to take indigenous land. Separate free trade agreements with the European Union, Canada, and China are still under negotiation. Under the PTPA, land privatization was proposed to replace the Concession System.

In 2008, indigenous people became aware of the new scheme to privatize their lands. Before taking action against the new decrees, indigenous people through AIDSESEP called for dialogue, which again the government ignored. The continued government stonewalling inflamed the struggle against the privatization of the rainforest, turning a local eco-class revolt into a regional battle as knowledge about the privatization of the commons spread and expanded into a larger eco-class consciousness among *bosqueños*.

On July 6, 2008, indigenous people in the upper rainforest area of Madre de Dios initiated a three-day strike against the Garcia government's decrees,<sup>58</sup> by demanding the abolition of all new legislation promoting the privatization of the rainforest. This strike coincided with a national strike organized by the largest union in the country, *Central General de Trabajadores del Peru* (CGTP). On July 8, 2008, the day of the national strike, the regional government headquarters in Puerto Maldonado, the capital city of Madre de Dios, was burned to the ground. Twenty-three indigenous people were detained and accused of starting the fire.<sup>59</sup> During the national strike, Peruvian journalists revealed that the dispute over the privatization of the rainforest was a central issue for the strikers.<sup>60</sup> The press coverage put indigenous people's land claims in a new light, as their pictures were shown on the front page of newspapers all over the country.

On August 9, 2008, International Indigenous Peoples Day, AIDSESEP, representing 57 indigenous communities, announced that after several months of

<sup>57</sup>Informe especial, "Qué pasa realmente en Andoas?" *La Primera*, July 7, 2008, pp. 12–13.

<sup>58</sup>Legislative decrees: 1011, 1013, 1020, 1039, 1048, 1064, 1079, 1081, 1089, 1090, and several others.

<sup>59</sup>"Paro en Madre de Dios fue violento, Campesinos incendian sede del gobierno regional. Hieren policías a flechazos," *Ojo*, July 10, 2008, p. 1; also see: "Multitudes piden cambio de rumbo. Informe especial," *La Primera*, July 10, 2008, p. 1.

calling for dialogue and negotiation, indigenous people were taking to the streets. The uprising began without incident as indigenous people exercised their constitutional right to engage in civil disobedience against the privatization laws and say "No!" to the free trade agreement. They barricaded the road to Camisea<sup>61</sup> and took control of several areas, including the pipeline in the lower rainforest, the hydroelectric installation near Bagua, and the gasoline in Urubamba.<sup>62</sup>

In an attempt to find a way forward in this expanding crisis, a roundtable was organized in the town of Datem del Marañón in Loreto state. Participants in the dialogue were, on the one side, the President of the Loreto Region, the Minister of Environment, and two members of the Council of Ministries. On the other side were leaders of seven native confederations represented by AIDSESEP, the president of INDEPA (*Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo de Pueblos Andinos, Amazonicos y Afroperuano* [the Institute for Andean, Amazonian and Afro-Peruvian Peoples]), an indigenous organization affiliated with the Peruvian government,<sup>63</sup> and leaders of the *Frente Patriótico de Loreto* (FPL [the Patriotic Front of Loreto]), a civil society organization that includes unions, teachers, university professors, and business people. After eleven days of strike action in which indigenous people paralyzed 60 percent of the country amidst on-and-off negotiations, the Peruvian Parliament in charge of Indigenous Issues voted to eliminate two legislative decrees: 1015 and 1073.<sup>64</sup> By law, President Garcia had 40 days to reply to this parliamentary action.

The struggle was highly politicized. In October 2008 a plot organized by the Garcia government and functionaries from the Energy and Mining Ministry and Petro-Peru was uncovered.<sup>65</sup> They secretly negotiated to provide concessions in Reserva Kugapakori, Nahua, and Nantis, located in Cuzco and Ucayali, to Discover Petroleum, a Dutch oil corporation. These reserves were created by the Ministry of Agriculture supposedly to protect voluntarily isolated indigenous people. However in 2009, President Garcia conceded 49 million hectares for oil production, citing "national interest."<sup>66</sup> Revelations of these underhanded deals fueled support for indigenous peoples' claims.

<sup>61</sup>Peru's Camisea Gas Project is one of the most damaging projects in the Amazon Basin. Located in the remote Lower Urubamba Basin in the southeastern Peruvian Amazon, the \$1.6 billion project includes two pipelines to the Peruvian coast, cutting through an Amazon biodiversity hotspot. This is another Pluspetrol project.

<sup>62</sup>Petro-Peru, station 5 facility in el Pongo de Manseriche (Loreto); hydro-electric Amarango in Amarango, Mayo Zone (Amazonas); nine Pluspetrol oil ferries in Echarate/Bajo Urubamba (Madre de Dios and Cuzco).

<sup>63</sup>*Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Amazónicos y Afroperuano* (INDEPA), online at: <http://www.indepa.gob.pe/index.php?id=66,0,0,1,0,0>, accessed on April 20, 2009.

<sup>64</sup>These decrees related to the percentage required for their lands to be concessioned off and the requirements for the sale of indigenous land.

<sup>65</sup>"La Mención al Presidente, (Todos los Audios de la Corrupción)," *La Republica*, October, 12, 2008, online at: <http://www.larepublica.pe/node/167161>.

<sup>66</sup>"Según Investigación de Científicos de Organizaciones Estadounidenses y Universidad de Duke. El 72 percent de la Amazonia Peruana está cubierta de concesiones de petróleo y gas," *La Republica*, July 16, 2008.

The indigenous struggle got another boost in February 2009 when the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations asked the Peruvian government to comply with Covenant 169. The ILO requested that the government:

- guarantee the participation and consultation of the indigenous people in a coordinated and systematic manner;
- identify urgent situations related to natural resource exploitation that put people, institutions, goods, work, cultures, and environments at risk; and
- adopt special measures in order to protect them.

Despite the indigenous uprising, Parliament's action to rescind two of the legislative decrees, and the ILO resolution, the government ignored the constitutional mandate to reply within 40 days and instead continued selling-out indigenous land to corporations.

On March 12, 2009, IADESEP wrote to the Congress and the President of the Council of the Ministries again requesting a dialogue, which both institutions ignored. On April 9, 2009, with their demands still unmet, the indigenous people declared a permanent uprising in defense and protection of their territories and rose up in arms again. In this most recent uprising, new demands were incorporated, which included:

- to reform the constitution to reinstate the principles of indigenous peoples' inalienable, permanent rights to their territories;
- to prohibit the government from using their land as collateral;
- to recognize collective property among indigenous people;
- to accept and include in the Constitution the UN declaration on Indigenous Peoples' Rights, and ILO edict 169;
- to incorporate into the Constitution the right to previous consultation in every procedure that affects indigenous people;
- to rescind the government resolution that criminalizes protest;
- to eliminate resolutions that privatize water and divert the rivers toward agribusiness projects; and,
- to establish a national dialogue roundtable to implement the indigenous people's demands to rescind the decrees.<sup>67</sup>

The uprising had a significant impact in that it was able to incorporate all *bosquecinos*, including Regional Patriotic Fronts that include unions, municipalities, army reservists, and cities from every corner of the rainforest. These new forces converged to expose the oppression of the Garcia government. Two main cities, Yurimaguas (in Loreto) and Pucallpa (in Ucayalli), staged general strikes, while Iquitos, the capital city of the Peruvian Amazon rainforest, organized a march. According to FORMABIAP (*Formación de Maestros Bilingües de la Amazonía Peruana* [the Amazon Bilingual Teacher's Association]), river boats carrying oil on the rivers surrounding the Amazon basin—the Amazonas, Napo, Marañón, and Ucayali—were blockaded.<sup>68</sup> In Loreto, these actions forced Petro-Peru S.A. to shut down the North-eastern pipeline, which cut off the shipment of crude oil for export. It also forced Pluspetrol to shut operations in Block 1A-B and Block 8.<sup>69</sup> In Bagua 300 indigenous people took control of Petro-Peru installations, and thousands blocked highways at the Devil's Curve to stop delivery of supplies to Lima, the Peruvian capital.

In response to this widespread rebellion, the government declared a 60-day state-of-siege on May 9, 2009 in four departments: Loreto, Amazonas, Cuzco, and Ucayali. This declaration suspended the constitutional rights of rainforest citizens living close to oil and gas pipelines. The government violently attacked the Ashaninkas with tear gas grenades, and marine gunboats on the Napo River destroyed the wooden canoes of the Quichuas and Arabelas peoples.

The *bosquecinos* saw the government actions as a declaration of war. The conflict escalated to the national level and brought Andean indigenous people into the struggle, since they are also affected by several of the legislative decrees. The repression continued. On May 12, 2009, while meeting in preparation for the IV Continental Summit of People and Indigenous Nationalities from Abya Yala (CSPN) scheduled at the end of the month, Amazon and indigenous groups united and announced their planned response. On May 13, 2009 for the first time, AIDASEP, the indigenous peoples' network from the Amazon basin, marched on the streets of Lima accompanied by the most important indigenous Andean associations, such as the peasant federation, CCP (*Confederación Campesina del Perú*), CON-ACAMI (*Confederación Nacional de Comunidades en Contra de la Minería* [The National Confederation of Communities Affected by Mining in Peru]), MCP (*Movimiento Cumbre de los Pueblos* [the Peoples Summit Movements]), and ANAMEBI-Peru (*Asociación Nacional de Maestros en Educación Bilingüe* [the National Association of Bilingual Teachers]). Support has also come from the highest levels of the Catholic Church in the Amazon basin, which condemned the land takeovers and declared support for the right of the indigenous people to defend themselves against this injustice. Other political organizations have expressed

<sup>68</sup>FORMABIAP, April 24, 2009, personal communication.

<sup>69</sup>FORMABIAP, May 12, 2009, personal communication.

solidarity with this uprising and are calling for the creation of a National Political Front.<sup>70</sup>

On May 28, at the IV Indigenous Peoples Abya Yala Summit in Puno, 7,000 indigenous people from Canada, Europe, and Africa arrived and pledged their support to the struggle. At this Summit, the Amazon indigenous women in association with 2,000 international women presented a document in which they stated:

We, indigenous women gathered in the sacred lands of Lake Titicaca, after two days of discussions and deliberation raise our voices in these times when *Abya Yala*'s<sup>71</sup> womb is once more with childbirth pains, to give birth to the new *Pachakutik*'<sup>72</sup> for a better life on our planet. We, indigenous women, have had a direct input into the historical process of transformation of our peoples through our proposals and actions in the various struggles taking place and engendered from the indigenous movements.

We are the carriers, conduits of our cultural and genetic make-up; we gestate and brood life; together with men, we are the axis of the family unit and society. We join our wombs to our mother earth's womb to give birth to new times in this Latin American continent where in many countries millions of people, impoverished by the neoliberal system, raise their voices to say ENOUGH! to oppression, exploitation and the looting of our wealth. We therefore join in the liberation struggles taking place throughout our continent.

We gather here at this summit, with our hearts, minds, hands and wombs, for the purpose of seeking alternatives to eliminate injustice, discrimination, machismo and violence against women, and to return to our ways of mutual respect and a life of harmony with the planet. Whereas women are part of nature and the macrocosm, we are called to defend and take care of our mother earth, because from her comes our ancient history and culture, that make us what we are: indigenous peoples under the protection and spiritual guidance of our parents and grandparents who gave life to all the human beings that now inhabit this wonderful planet, even though a few oligarchs and imperialists seek to plague it with death in their quest for their god called greed. Therefore, before the memory of our martyrs, heroes, leaders, we present to our extended families (*Ayllu*'<sup>73</sup>), communities, peoples and nations of the world the conclusions of our rebellious hearts.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup>FORMABIAP, May 16, 2009, personal communication.

<sup>71</sup>"*Abya Yala*" means "Continent of Life" in the language of the Kuna peoples of Panama and Colombia. See: <http://abyayala.nativeweb.org>.

<sup>72</sup>*Pachakutik* is a Quechua word that signifies change, rebirth, transformation, and the coming of a new era.

<sup>73</sup>*Ayllu* is a word in both the Quechua and Aymara languages referring to a network of families in a given area.

<sup>74</sup>See: <http://www.servindi.org/actualidad/12228>.

Indigenous women and men called for a National Uprising to be initiated on July 7, 2009 until victory is reached—i.e., until the decrees are revoked and/or President Garcia resigns. Indigenous people maintain that Garcia is unfit to lead the country, since he has demonstrated an inability to resolve the conflicts between the corporate world of free traders and the commoners and subsistence producers of Peru.

The Garcia government responded to this challenge with violence. On June 4, 2009 the Congress postponed the urgent debate of Decree No. 1090<sup>75</sup>—one of the most objectionable decrees, because it allows the vague and overly broad rationale of "national interest" to open land to oil extraction, mining, biofuel production, and other exploitative projects. At 4:30 a.m. on June 5, 600 police attacked 3,000 Awajun and Wampi indigenous people with tear gas and machine guns from helicopters and on land with artillery while they were occupying part of the highway, the Devil's Curve, in Bagua, killing an unknown number when they ran for cover. The police then forcibly took an unknown number of wounded and dead to the military barracks of El Milagro.

The attack on Awajun and Wampis, appears to be a direct response to a peaceful but effective protest initiated in December 2008 against the Canadian mining company, Dorato Resources, Inc. Marco Huaco,<sup>76</sup> the legal counsel to the Awajun and Wampis, argues that this attack had been directed against these particular ethnic groups because they proved that the government and Dorato Resources, Inc., have been violating ILO Covenant 169.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup>Decree No. 1090, *Ley Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre*, Article 6 reads "there would not be change in land use of any category in the forestry inheritance, unless projects are declared of national interest, in that case the Environment Ministry in coordination with the correspondent Public Entity Sector will proceed to the change in land use."

<sup>76</sup>A. Marco and P. Huaco, "Testimonio: Pueblos guerreros provocados hasta el genocidio," online at: <http://www.servindi.org/actualidad/12902-more-12902>>le, ≠ do.

<sup>77</sup>According to Huaco, in December 2008, thirteen indigenous community patrols that included hundreds of people walked seven days to examine the environmental damage in an area Dorato was mining. They discovered 4 hectares of deforested area and two underground mines inside two military camps, Tambo and Ciro Alegria. They also encountered narrow paths that crossed the military bases as well as their communal-titled land located in Cerro Sagrado Kumpanan (1,250 meters above sea level) and Cordillera del Condor. Horteiz Baitue, an ex-soldier, alleges that lieutenant Marco Antonio Bravo had been receiving \$250 a week plus food and prostitutes, courtesy of the corporation. See: "Peru: Mineras se asientan en Cordillera del Condor," online at: <http://www.servindi.org/actualidad/14171-more-14171>>le, ≠ do. On December 14, 2008, Awajun indigenous people wrote a letter to Dorato Resources, Inc. giving it 48 hours to abandon their ancestral territories. Since the corporation ignored the demand, on January 12, 2009, ODECOFROC, a local indigenous organization, requested a meeting with the Prime Minister's Office and other ministries to discuss revoking the mining contract, but they, too, were ignored. On January 21, 2009, the Prime Minister's Office indicated the government might be willing to talk, but no meeting was scheduled. Tired of waiting, that month 300 indigenous people in Huampami, Cenepa district siezed and held an executive of Dorato Resources Inc. and five security agents for seven days.

According to FORMABIAP,<sup>78</sup> during the regional uprising on April 23, 2009, 300 Awajun and Wampis marched to Petro-Peru installations in Imasita near Bagua and requested that the company stop oil pumping until their demands were met. Petro-Peru's management and the indigenous people reached an agreement in which oil pumping stopped while the protesters peacefully protested outside the installations. On the same day, 38 policemen were sent by the government to protect the installations. For 42 days until the attack on June 5th, policemen and indigenous people peacefully sat outside the installations. When indigenous people posted in Imasita learned about the massacre taking place a few kilometers from where they were located, they took eleven of the 38 policemen and assassinated them. Another group of indigenous people opposed to the vengeance decided to liberate the remaining police hostages.<sup>79</sup>

Belgian volunteers working in Bagua circulated photos of dead civilians that contradicted the government's initial claims that only the police suffered casualties.<sup>80</sup> An eye-witness account provides a startling estimate of the casualties. At an AIDSESEP press conference that was televised on *Canal N* on June 7, 2009, Nelida Calvo, an indigenous leader whose brother and uncle were killed in the massacre, described the scene:

Although we indigenous people only had spears, we were attacked by the police, and hundreds of my brothers were killed . . . The government says that only 25 were killed, but local witnesses saw hundreds of dead bodies spread on the road. In addition, hundreds more have disappeared . . . I will continue struggling to retrieve their bodies and to stop the execution of the hundred who have been captured by the police . . . We are still counting our family members in order to clarify how many of our people are dead, disappeared, or in jail.<sup>81</sup>

The human rights association APRODEH (*Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos*) has so far confirmed 61 missing, 133 detained, and 189 injured, but the numbers continue to rise.<sup>82</sup> On TV screens everywhere, we witnessed the suffering following the massacre in Bagua. A tormented mother, whose son was killed, speaking loudly in her dialect, impeached Garcia with these words:

Please, listen Mr. Alan Garcia: You are guilty of this extermination! You are killing us! You are selling us! You are a terrorist! We defend our territories without

<sup>78</sup>FORMABIAP, April 9, 2009, personal communication.

<sup>79</sup>Fernando Rospigliosi, "Negligencia Criminal," *La Republica*, June 13, 2009, online at: <http://www.larepublica.pe/controversias/14/06/2009/negligencia-criminal>.

<sup>80</sup>See: <http://catapa.be/en/north-peru-killings>.

<sup>81</sup>Nelida Calvo, Press Conference at AIDSESEP, *Canal N*, June 7, 2009, online at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWCDwH\\_yTMA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWCDwH_yTMA).

<sup>82</sup>See: <http://www.aprodeh.org.pe/>.

arms, our only defenses are spears and sticks, and they are not made to kill as you have done to us. You have exterminated us with arms, bullets, helicopters, and you have killed our brothers, sisters, students, teachers, sons! Alan, we ask you to come to our territories to pay your debts to us! Alan, you are selling our territories, indigenous people's resources: gold, oil, water, and air. You pollute our environment and in this way you make us poor as you now see us. We, the Awajun-Wampis, did not elect you to exterminate us, but to help, to educate our children who now have been killed. We have not taken your private property, nor have we killed your children, your family. Why are you annihilating us? You have extinguished life from us, we have nothing!<sup>83</sup>

This cowardly and bloody attack is a familiar hallmark of Garcia's presidency. In June 1986, during his first term (1985–1990), a massacre of 300 prison inmates took place in Lima. In 1988, Andean farmers were executed by the army.<sup>84</sup>

President Garcia's racist, sexist, and classist governmental style has its roots in the Spanish Inquisition. In the current struggle, the prime minister and other government ministers initially supported their president's offense against humanity by repeating false versions of the facts that were then countered by eye-witness accounts of dead bodies being dumped in rivers. Orders for the arrest of the leaders of AIDSESEP, including its president, Alberto Pizango, who was charged with sedition and terrorism, were issued on Friday, June 6, 2009. Pizango sought and was granted asylum at Nicaragua's embassy.

The call for a regional uprising beginning on July 7 was moved up to start earlier in response to the massacre in Bagua. AIDSESEP and Amazon Regional Organizations called for a regional general strike starting June 11th. AIDSESEP vice-president, Daysi Zapata, a Yine woman, took over the leadership of the regional uprising. In the Amazon basin, thousands of indigenous people began leaving their traditional lands to gather in the four rainforest cities of Iquitos, Pucallpa, Yurimaguas, and Bagua in preparation. Indigenous people reorganized their forces; new oil compounds were occupied, and more highways were closed in preparation for the regional uprising.<sup>85</sup> In Iquitos, an Army General attempted to intimidate the people with this message: "Stay in your houses, we do not want to kill you, but we have orders from our superiors to kill you if you continue with your rebellion."<sup>86</sup> This message was broadcast by *RPP*, *Radio Programas del Perú*, a national private news station.

<sup>83</sup>See: [http://www.betoortiz.com/index.php?option=com\\_seyret&Itemid=80&task=videodirectlink&id=366](http://www.betoortiz.com/index.php?option=com_seyret&Itemid=80&task=videodirectlink&id=366). Also see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiLsx9fSn8&NR=1>.

<sup>84</sup>See: <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/ifinal/index.php>.

<sup>85</sup>Genaro Alvarado, "Nativos toman lotes petroleros y un aeropuerto de Pluspetrol," *La Republica*, June 8, 2009, online at: <http://www.larepublica.pe/bagua-masacre/08/06/2009/nativos-toman-lotes-petroleros-y-un-aeropuerto-de-pluspetrol>.

<sup>86</sup>Radio Programas del Perú, afternoon coverage on "Preparaciones para el levantamiento en Loreto," June 9, 2009.

Following the massacre, a Communitarian Front in Defense of Life and Sovereignty was organized. Members called for Garcia and his ministers to resign, the adoption of a new Constitution that includes indigenous people's territorial rights, and trials for guilty parties. Garcia's government responded with televised propaganda in which indigenous people and *bosqueños* were accused of being "violent," "savages," "terrorists against the democratic system," and "manipulated by international interests." The government provocation prompted the resignation of Carmen Vildoso, Minister of Women and Human Development, which created a ministerial crisis. At the same time, another crisis developed in Parliament with the members affiliated with the *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* (PNP),<sup>87</sup> a socialist-oriented nationalist party that opposes the country's ruling elite and the neoliberal project. Most of its members are indigenous and mix-raced children of the Amazon as well as the Andes. In response to the wishes of their constituents, they insisted that the decrees be rescinded. The government then temporarily suspended two decrees, 1064 and 1090, for 90 days. Eighteen members of the PNP then challenged the government by carrying banners inside the Parliament to protest the government decision. On June 11, seven members of the PNP were suspended without pay for 120 days, and eleven were warned that they would be next.<sup>88</sup>

The *bosqueños* began the uprising on June 11, 2009 with 24 hours of solidarity actions across the country. Thousands of people—old and young, women and men, political organizations and independent individuals, students and community organizations—united on the streets and plazas to reject the decrees and in every language express their indignation against the president.<sup>89</sup> They chanted "We do not have a president. We do have a race murderer." Meanwhile, international marches in solidarity with the Amazon struggle took place in Uruguay, Italy, Spain, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. Common demands were: "Stop abuse and government indifference!" "Stop humiliations and dispossession!" "Stop blood and death!" Eight members of the European Parliament weighed in by presenting a motion to postpone the next round of free trade negotiations. They sent the following communiqué to the Peruvian government:

We condemn these grave acts of violence that are totally contradictory to the maintenance of a stable democracy and the rule of law, as well as the racist overtones made by President Alan Garcia following the events.<sup>90</sup>

On June 16, 2009, desperate to end the conflict and clean up his image as a brutal, racist thug, Garcia forced his party to vote again, this time to get rid of the

<sup>87</sup>The PNP has 24 MPs in the Peruvian Parliament. See: <http://www.partidonacionalistaperuano.com/>.

<sup>88</sup>See: <http://www.larepublica.pe/bagua-masacre/12/06/2009/suspenden-7-congresistas-nacionalistas>.

<sup>89</sup>See: <http://www.larepublica.pe/bagua-masacre/12/06/2009/unidos-por-la-amazonia>.

<sup>90</sup>TLC: Europeos Piden Suspender Negociaciones," *La Republica*, June 12, 2009, available online at:

two laws. The Prime Minister, Yehude Simon, brought government-affiliated indigenous organizations to the negotiating table, but tried—unsuccessfully—to exclude AIDSESEP leaders. Days later, Garcia accused six other PNP Parliament members of engaging in a continental Cold War against his government as agent of Hugo Chavez and threatened them with impeachment. The PNP, along with other small opposition parties, formally called for the impeachment of Prime Minister Yehude Simon and Interior Minister Mercedes Cabanillas. They got 50 out of the 61 votes needed to remove Simon and Cabanillas, and would have had enough if not for the seven suspended PNP members. But then, Simon and his Cabinet were removed after more solidarity mass movement actions over 72 hours on July 7, 8, and 9, 2009, in which citizens throughout the entire country participated.

The persecution of indigenous people continues, and on July 12, 2009, four AIDSESEP leaders were charged with sedition and terrorism. As a result, brothers Saúl and Cervando Puertas Peña, requested asylum in the Nicaragua embassy, while two other members are still in hiding.

In contrast to the reaction to the Peruvian government's murderous attempt to lay claim to Amazonian indigenous lands, AIDSESEP has convoked unity among social movements and political parties—an unprecedented achievement in Peru. Its direct action campaign marked the emergence of Amazonian indigenous peoples as an influential and autonomous force in Peru's current political landscape. The mobilization also sparked a public realization that the defense of Amazonian resources is an issue of national and international importance, not only a regional or indigenous problem. The indigenous uprising has increased public awareness of the predatory nature of free trade, the need for the prioritization of the common over private interests, and the meaning and importance of the subsistence perspective.

## Conclusion

The neoliberal model—that everything is for sale—was confronted in the Peruvian Amazon basin. Indigenous people have risen in defense of their territories as common land and their society as sufficient. Their subsistence perspective has produced "the good life," which is based on simple and practical knowledge that for millennia conserved a healthy forest, wildlife, biodiversity, and society in general. This indigenous subsistence perspective holds the secret of abundant sufficiency, security, a good life, preservation of the economic and ecological base and cultural and biological diversity. Their ecosystem knowledge has for centuries allowed them to co-exist in and maintain the forests and the photosynthesis needed to produce tall, closed-packed, large-crowned, evergreen trees, preserving thousands of plant and animal species, which in turn provide a rich and abundant physical and spiritual life.

The recent capitalist global financial crisis, the escalating global ecological crisis, and neoliberal globalization—the pillar of free trade politics—are pushing the course of change in the Peruvian Amazon. Large national and international corporations overwhelmingly favor rapid privatization of the Amazon. Corporate projects of oil drilling, logging, mining, biofuel production, carbon credits, ecotourism, and biotechnology (biopiracy) are under negotiation. This model is not only destructive for *bosquecinos* but for the entire planet, since it involves the destruction of an ecosystem critical to the stability of the earth's climate.

What happens in the Amazon rainforest over the next decades will depend on the outcome of the struggles between the indigenous, national, continental, and international forces. Stopping the calamity in the rainforest requires a political will that simply does not exist in Garcia's government. Instead of allowing the government and its international associates to destroy the commons of the Amazon, local scientists and *bosquecinos* (women and men) are empowering themselves to use their ancestral knowledge (slash-and-burn technique) in combination with new ways to preserve their own means of subsistence and well-being—as well as humanity's future—which depends directly on the health of these forests. Internationally, indigenous people's struggles for their territorial rights can be seen as a critical element of the fight against global warming. Privatization of the rainforest transforms the Amazon forest which sustains an average of 1,000 metric tons of biomass per hectare, 150 to 200 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, and produces 30 percent of our fresh water. Thus, global solidarity with the Peruvian Amazon struggle strengthens the chances of succeeding in mitigating global warming. But international participation cannot include aid and nongovernmental organizations that push international market models. Nor can it include rainforest pirates<sup>91</sup> who promote the "buying of the forest to save the planet," all under the corporations' and corporate environmentalists' rhetoric of the "Global Commons."<sup>92</sup> Instead, this call is for people globally—including activists in the global justice movement—to build democracy by dismantling their national corporations and embracing "sufficiency" as a way to survive.

Ecofeminists have long argued for a new theory of society in which the unseen "feminine" or unwaged—indigenous people, peasants, and nature, along with women household workers—are recognized as necessary to the maintenance of natural and social systems that underpin human life on earth. This unseen and underdeveloped feminine is essential to the process of capital accumulation and therefore availed of tremendous power to interrupt the destructive path of industrialization and replace it with the "art of a good life."

<sup>91</sup>Rainforest pirates are expanding. Among them is "Cool Earth." See: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/article664544.ecc>, accessed on January 10, 2009.

<sup>92</sup>The Global Commons' rhetoric of universality of the industrial world makes the claim that private property is

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## MANIFESTO

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### ISTANBUL DECLARATION AGAINST THE 5TH WORLD WATER FORUM

We, the "No to the Commercialization of Water Platform," in opposition to the 5th World Water Forum and its collaborators in Turkey and throughout the world, have organized demonstrations, press releases, various workshops on the issue of water, and meetings of broad participation. We announce that:

From April 2008, during our "Counter Forum" activities that emphasize water as a social good, we have acted with the belief that defending water against commercialization—which poses a threat to all peoples and living creatures—is possible through an organized struggle.

Therefore, we acknowledge as our priority the necessity to incorporate the broadest segments of the world's people into this struggle.

This struggle goes well beyond the struggle against the 5th World Water Forum activities organized as part of the counter forum. We anticipate that our struggle will carry on until our forests, land, labor, and water have become free.

- ◆ Our opposition is not only directed towards the World Water Council and the World Water Forum. We declare to the whole world that we consider the United Nations as part of the problem, not as part of the solution, because it was the first international institution that defines water as a commercial commodity, and it has sponsored the World Water Council since its inception. Furthermore, we—trade unions and trade organizations, revolutionary configurations, labor parties, and environment and culture associations from Turkey—believe that it is not possible for the states that are identified as anti-democratic when considered individually to act "democratically" when clustered together under the umbrella of the UN.
- ◆ The reason that institutions of the capitalist system, such as the World Water Council, OECD, and World Bank, are now promoting "public-private

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\*This is an edited version of a translation of the Istanbul Declaration Against the World Water Forum. The "No to the Commercialization of Water Platform" was established in Istanbul, Turkey, on March 16-22, 2009 in Istanbul.