

# Geopolitics of the Amazon - Part IV

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See part I (ESSF, article 27323), [Geopolitics of the Amazon - Part I](#)

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## Colonialist fallacies

The *first fallacy* is the argument that with the highway the coca leaf producers will invade the TIPNIS. There is at this point no type of coercive measure that prevents them entering the Park using the roads that already exist within it; however, they are not doing so. Moreover, the unions of coca producers were the very ones that in 1990 defined with the government a “red line” within the TIPNIS that they voluntarily agreed not to cross. Since then, any *compañero* who crosses that line, instead of counting on the support of his union and federation, is liable to be removed from where he is living by the law enforcement agencies, as has happened in recent months. Compliance with this demarcation is now the responsibility of the coca leaf producers themselves, and not the result of any public force or law that prevents them from approaching.

The highway is not going to be the launching point for any supposed “cocalero invasion”; nor has any such “invasion” occurred even with the existing sections, because this is a Park and a territory of indigenous collective ownership, and it is the coca leaf producers themselves who as an organization have decided to respect this collective property. But in addition, the illegal production of coca leaf — regardless of the agreements of the producer federations with the Morales government — is not located along the edges of the highways, for then it would be eradicated immediately. The illegal cultivation occurs precisely beyond the reach of control by the state and the federations, in areas where there are no roads or pathways. It is precisely because of the illegal nature of this production (outside the areas defined by agreement between the peasant federations and the government) that it occurs where law enforcement — by the state or the unions — cannot go, that is, precisely where there are no roads, paths or public control. If there is anything that the presence of a highway in the Park will promote, it is the departure of the illegal crops, including the production of coca paste, the base for cocaine, which throughout these years has been detected in areas of the TIPNIS in which there are no roads or a state presence. [1] Furthermore, in his recent

message to the people of Bolivia on August 6, 2012, President Evo Morales announced the creation of a Regimiento Ecológico [Ecological Regiment (of the Armed Forces)], whose mission will be to protect the national parks and prevent any type of illegal occupation by peasants in the TIPNIS. [2]

The *second fallacy*, with even more reactionary implications than the first, is the one that seeks to artificially oppose “lowlands indigenous peoples” to “lowlands and highlands *campesinos*.” The first, remote from markets, are good people who contemplate nature, while the second are illegal predators, bad people, merchants and destroyers of nature. This cartoon dualism was for decades used by the Amazon and eastern hacendados to erect a barrier wall around their latifundios against the presence and migration of the indigenous peasants from the highlands. At its height, this anti-peasant xenophobia went so far as to consider instituting a passport requirement for Aymara and Quechua seeking to enter Santa Cruz. [3] This regionalist landlord ideology has been taken up again by the environmentalists in the debate over the TIPNIS, to create a hostile atmosphere toward the highlands indigenous-peasant movement and in particular in opposition to the coca leaf producers. This xenophobia goes to such limits that it unashamedly defends a type of ethnic inbreeding, considering it a “crime” if Yuracarés marry Quechuas or Aymaras. Basically, this is the colonial fallacy of the construction of “pure races,” now put in postmodern language.

But this *second colonial fallacy*, moreover, is woven around the separation of “good” indigenous living in a Tierra Comunitaria from “bad” peasants who hold individual family property. Let us look at this.

Colonial domination involved the looting of lands, control of labour itself, but above all control of the collective identities of the dominated society, which are the subjective forces that ultimately unite people around common objectives and shared forces of technical and associated production. To name is to unite and to separate; it is to define, map, territorialize and control. Naming from outside or self-naming are part of the basic scheme of the method of domination and emancipation in general. And when the naming territorializes the territorialized subject from outside, we are confronted with the most devastating method of domination, which is precisely colonial domination.

The first thing Spanish colonialism did was to re-signify and re-locate the world of people and things: territorially, “the West Indies,” cities; administratively, the vicerealties, governorships, etc.; economically, the distribution of powers, the *encomiendas*, the *mita*; in religion, the churches, the new faith, the new moral prohibitions, the new spiritual balms; in language, the dominant language and the new general language. And as a legitimation of this material reconfiguration of life, the soul and the *collective I*, was to appear Indianness: “the Indians” as a new colonizing identity intended to sweep away the *collective I* of the many original nations, their roots and their memory. To designate is to dominate, and colonialism de-nominated everything, dismantling stone by stone the ancient societal structure, and where it could not do so, it superimposed on it in order to subsume it, like the temples that were erected on top of the Waka’s [4] or the colonial institutions that were superimposed on the remaining local communal structures.

The colonial re-categorization of domination was not substantially affected by the passage from colony to republic. The *originarios*, *yanaconas*, *forasteros* and *mestizos* of colonial times [5] were now *indios*, *blancos* and *mestizos* of republican times. [6] These were tributary categories, imposing delegated identities on the social reality. In both cases, the intention was to classify the dominated, to identify them as such and thereby impose on them the image the dominator himself had of them; and thereby to reaffirm the domination. No objective or scientific classifications exist. Any identitarian classification is political, and the tributary, numerical, territorial justification is simply an artefact of legitimation of that political decision, whether of domination or of emancipation.

Revolutionary nationalism, in its renewed colonial obsession to homogenize the dominated, was not

to alter the expropriated nature of the identities inherited from the Colony: *indios* and *forasteros* became "*campesinos*," a subject of subjugation characterized by its labour activity, which sought to bury the vigorous culture, social roots and self-identification of the original peoples in a new profusion of categories.

The emancipating and self-identifying impulse of the peoples came years later, at the hands of the cultural productive forces, memory, language, history and skin. In the beginning the appeal was to an oppressor category, that of the Indian, as a means of self-identification. "They have dominated us with the name of Indian. With the name of Indian we will free ourselves," said the emerging intellectuality motivating indigenous national self-identification. This was not a retreat to the old names, but precisely a radicalization of them, to convert them into their opposite: from nomination of domination to denomination of emancipation. The point of rupture was the political will to self-identify, to superimpose on the *Collective I* constructed by others (by the dominant) the *Collective I* constructed by oneself (by the dominated); thereby dismantling at that very point the domination itself.

Indianness as identity was a cry of emancipation that revolutionized the Bolivian ideological-political panorama from the 1970s on. Indigenous identity was the discursive repertoire that reorganized the meaning of the Bolivian revolution, and came to refer to the political and cultural, that is historic, appeal by the immense majority of the people — not only of the farm workers but of the labourers, shopkeepers, *transportistas* [bus and truck operators], students and professionals, subalternized by their condition of work and their skin, by their name, language and place where they lived. In the emancipatory re-invention of the Katarista-*indianista* Indianness a long process was initiated of constructing an historic bloc and a discourse of social and general mobilization that would modify the content of the revolution in Bolivia as an anti-colonial, anti-neoliberal and democratic revolution with a socialist-communitarian horizon.

Years later, the *indianista* identity would mature, clarifying the territorial and historical composition of Indianness as identity of indigenous-First Nations with names and roots: the Aymara nation, Quechua nation, Guaraní nation, Chimán nation, Leco nation, Mosetén nation, Pacawara nation, Sirionó nation, etc. It moved from a generic identity of Indianness to an historic identity of indigenous nations that did not stop in the highlands and valleys but extended to the plains, the Amazon and the Chaco, creating in the last two decades a web of political forces mobilized around the indigenous national identities, the material foundation of the present Plurinational State.

The transition was not easy. From the emancipatory discursive construction of the Seventies, it moved to the indigenous self-organizing materialization of the originary indigenous campesino federations and confederations of the Eighties. And from there to the construction of the *political will to take power* by means of the transformation of the union-communal organic structure into an electoral political instrument in the Nineties, to advance to the taking of power by the social movements in 2006.

This construction of this emancipatory identity with a will for power needed two decisive ethical-political moments. The first was the construction of the indigenous national identity as the national demographic majority with political visibility. In this the contribution of the Tupak-Katarismo of the Ayllus Rojos of the Nineties was decisive, because it began to appeal politically to the indigenous subject in an inter-class manner, that is, as a nation in whose interior cohabited various urban and rural social classes: *campesinos*, *transportistas*, intellectuals, professionals, owners, artisans, etc., but united and inter-acting on the cultural-historical basis of identity as Aymaras, Quechuas, Guaranis, etc. The numerical validation of this socially visible indigenous majority population came about through the huge urban and rural indigenous peoples mobilizations of 2000, 2001, 2003 and the results of the Population Census of 2001, which established that 62% of Bolivians are

indigenous.

The second decisive ethical-political moment for the taking of power by the indigenous-popular movement was the candidacy of Evo Morales at that precise historical moment with the ability to tap into the existing sentiment at the appropriate point, which allowed the socially visible demographic majority to become a political majority in the leadership of the state. The indigenous identity that had decolonized and raised to power the popular subject in Bolivia was now an urban-rural and transclass identity united around an indigenous nucleus as the expression of the material certainty of its majority and its hegemony. But this has produced an attempt by pseudo-environmentalism and a handful of abdicating ultraleftists to return to the method of identitarian colonization through the numerical inferiorization of the indigenous peoples. In a desperate and inelegant ideological somersault, they reduce “the indigenous peoples” to those who live in communitarian lands [*Tierras Comunitarias*], leaving the rest of the population as “non-indigenous.”

In a reactionary attempt to separate “good indigenous peoples” from “bad peasants,” they argue that only those who live in the communitarian lands are indigenous peoples, in as much as those who own family lands are now *campesinos* [7] — not to speak of those who live in the city. Thus, as if by some cheap magic, the indigenous majority conquering in the name of emancipation and a national-general revolutionary political project, dissolves into some tiny population centres dispersed in the lowlands that barely amount to 3.7% of the Bolivian population over the age of 15 (2001), and in the highlands, 4.5%.

Attempting to justify the unjustifiable, the pseudo-environmentalists regress 400 years in the political history of the indigenous nations, turning them into minority subjects susceptible to wardship and vassalage. There are two errors behind this gimmicky inferiorization of the indigenous nations. The first is the shyster blindness that reduces the identitarian force of the indigenous peoples to the legal classification of *Tierra Comunitaria de Origen* (TCO). The TCO is a legal category, not a social structure or an identity.

We all know that in the agrarian world (in both lowlands and highlands), even in areas of greater parcelization of land and individual titles, there are areas of collective use (pasture lands, community lands) and likewise common resources (watersheds, rivers, lakes, etc.) over which no type of private ownership is exercised. [8] Similarly, there is a system of legally protected communal authority over many aspects of life, individual property, and a labour system involving mutual assistance (roads, schools, *ayni*, *minka*, etc.). The agrarian unions in the Chapare are an example of this social system.

In like manner, although the land in the TCO is legally the common property of all those living in the community or communities, the labour system is similar to that in any community of individual property owners: production is based strictly on family and individual labour. Agriculture, hunting, fishing and gathering, which provide the day-to-day means of life, are carried on through the family and not the community. And in the lowlands, the systems of joint work for public necessities such as schools or roads, or for swapping labour, are not strongly established.

Generally speaking, in neither the *lands under family ownership* nor those *owned by the community* are there permanent communitarian production processes. The majority of the work activities required for the satisfaction of the basic needs of the community members are conducted on the basis of the individual family. As for the few activities of public utility that do employ collective labour systems, these are primarily in the highlands, the valleys and the Chapare, whether on TCOs or on lands that are individually owned.

The belief that the TCOs are the only spaces of communitarianism is a legalistic illusion typical of

those who confuse the reality of things with a literal reading of the words. Common legal ownership does not define what is peculiar to the community. Individual ownership of land co-exists with common possession of lands, and with communitarian systems of authority and communitarian labour techniques. That is what occurs, for example, in most of the highlands regions, the nucleus of the Aymara indigenous identity. Thus to classify a community as “indigenous” by virtue of common ownership of property, and as “campesino” because they do not have that, is merely intellectual scribbling with disastrous counterrevolutionary implications. To convert the indigenous peoples into a dispersed minority living in TCOs is to eliminate this country’s major political achievement of state-effected decolonization: the construction of the indigenous political force as a majority urban-rural force; but it is also to substitute the bare legal category for the productive and social reality, ignoring the real objectivity of the revolutionary communitarian-communist tendencies present in the distinct socio-productive organizations of the urban and rural labouring classes.

Lastly, to reduce the category of indigenous peoples to relevance to a TCO is to remain imprisoned in the illusion of a lawyer who dreams of substituting one’s linguistic devices for the reality of things; and in this case to make a legal category, the TCO, the nucleus of a social identity.

Social, and even more so national identities are political artefacts of mobilization with a state projection that can find support in specific social practices such as language, common history, memory, territory, economy, etc., but have the virtue of articulating a cross-class collective will around objectives of self-determination.

What can those pseudo-environmentalists tell the Aymara of Omasuyus or Villa Ingenio in El Alto — the backbone of the social mobilizations of October 2003 — who rose up, died and won waving whipalas and celebrating their indigenous identity? That they are not indigenous peoples because they do not have a TCO? That is ridiculous. But what is not ridiculous is the reactionary implication of this conservative metaphysics: the fragmentation of the indigenous movement, the minimization and isolation of the indigenous peoples, the ideological and political disarmament of the indigenous peoples, and the judicialization of the indigenous peoples. In short, this entire conservative narrative leads inexorably to the impotence and death of the indigenous political subject. That is the big dream of the hacendado right wing that is being implemented in words and action by the former leftists who have developed into organic intellectuals of the restoration of colonialism.

Finally, the *third fallacy*: environmentalism vs. capitalism.

As is well known, any human activity — from building a house to growing food, hunting and even walking and breathing — affects nature. No one lives solely in contemplation of nature, as naïve environmentalism argues, because those who did would not live long. Life is a process of metabolic transformation of nature that affects the environment, and in the process the living being transforms itself. In general, nature too is affected, which can result in catastrophes that in turn end in further change. Over time, human beings have formed societies that differ from each other according to how they produce and use the collective wealth resulting from their particular relationship with nature. To each material *mode of production* corresponds an *organic relationship with nature*. Some societies have created modes of life-sustaining relationships with their surrounding nature, such as the *communal forms* studied by Marx under the name of Rural Community and Agrarian Community. [9] In those cases, nature is presented as an organic extension of society itself, as a living being in the presence of which the exchange of advances in labour and reception of productive processes takes the form of dialogues and rituals of mutual re-production in time.

But within these distinct *communal forms* of society, civilization and production, there also exist variants that may produce a greater or lesser impact on the natural environment. Agrarian societies, a form of social community, have an economic system that in the framework of that mutually life-

sustaining relationship with nature produces a greater impact on the environment than the gatherer societies (another communal form of society).

To the degree that they introduce agriculture combined with domestic industry, agrarian societies — as in the case of the Aymara and Quechua communities — have to partially reduce the forests in order to obtain foodstuffs, while the gatherer societies, for example the Yuracarés or Chimanes of the lowlands, supply themselves with what the forest offers them, and while they sometimes resort to agriculture it is on a minor scale, and they maintain their nomadism. So the effects of deforestation they generate are also reduced. Clearly, at bottom both productive systems maintain a similar pattern of organic and life-sustaining exchange with nature, which prevents us from differentiating them between those who “pillage” and those who live in “harmony” with nature, as the pseudo-environmentalists do, echoing the *hacendados*’ anti-campesino ideology. The demographic expansion of both societies will also have a decisive influence on the pattern of relationships to the environment. The immense lakes constructed in their hundreds by the ancient Amazon nations of pre-colonial times, between Ascensión de Guarayos and Rio Madre de Dios in Pando — and which surely helped to feed and protect them from the continual flooding of the rivers on the Amazonian plain — are monumental human works whose presence and modification of the environment is still visible today.

But there also are societies in which nature is presented as a mere reservoir of things to be exploited as usufruct by human beings, that is, as an inert object that can be transformed by labour but in relation to which one has no ethical or material responsibility of continuity. And if we add to this that the guiding purpose of the productive processes is not the satisfaction of material needs but the unlimited accumulation of monetary profit (valorization), we are confronted with the capitalist *mode of production*. In that case, nature is presented only as inert raw material for the purpose of profit; which means that if the destruction of nature or of life itself (in wars, for example) generates monetary benefits, then it is useful for capitalism.

However, it is not by definition that capitalism destroys nature — as right-wing environmentalism holds. What capitalism does by definition is to generate profits in a few private hands: “valorizing value,” as Marx put it. [10] And if in order to fulfil this objective it is necessary to kill living beings, crush societies, annihilate and destroy the nature that lies in its path, capitalism will no doubt do this. And if, to generate capital (profit) in a few hands, it is necessary to preserve nature or protect the life of the workers, capitalism will also do this for the purpose of continuing to accumulate *surplus value*. It is very important to specify *the founding logic of this system*: profit (value which self-valorizes incessantly), because if indeed whenever its productive forces are becoming forces of destruction of life and the planet, the irresistible drive for profit can lead it to “preserve” nature, if that is what guarantees the necessary rate of profit. Only in this way is it possible to understand that while in some parts of the world there arise technical forces destructive of nature (hence the greenhouse effect), in others it can encourage a hypocritical “defence” of the environment through its market policies: “carbon credits,” “green economy,” exchanging debt for protection of forests, etc., which basically are nothing more than various methods of commoditization and capitalist subsumption of the temporary conservation of forests in the countries of the South, in order to produce profits for the big transnational corporations of the North through the purchase of certificates of carbon emissions reduction in order to obtain tax reductions, credit approvals and increased rates of profit.

These pseudo-environmentalist policies are not contradictory to capitalism; on the contrary, they are inherent to it, and *this environmentalism for the poor* is profitable for it and therefore useful to promote. If destroying the environment in the North and protecting some forest in the South — but accepting this as clean, as part of its corporate activities — generates profits, this pseudo-environmentalism forms part of the capitalist machinery. The tragic thing in all this is that this



planetary farce of a capitalism that is strategically destructive of nature, but tactically a preserver of environmental niches, has as its executors in its scheme of capitalist profit an army of well-intentioned environmentalists — their salaries paid by multinational corporations — who “preserve” the forests in the poor countries and at the end of the day deliver *extraterritorial environmental surplus value to the mega-business* that will raise the price of its shares even higher on the stock market. Thus, while the major share of the tax exemptions of the big company in the North raise its rate of profit, a tiny portion goes to the environmentalists who go out of their way to ensure that the inhabitants of the forest in some country of the South, like the TIPNIS, continue to live in absolute marginality, avoiding the state so it won’t disturb their “harmonious” poverty, finishing off a sinister planetary mechanism of “environmental” capitalist accumulation.

## **Who has the power in the Amazon?**

Throughout this brief analysis we have seen the convergence of the four distinct forces that have interacted in connection with the domination of the Amazon. Let us list them, not in order of historical presence, as we did in the text, but in order of predominance and geopolitical power in the region.

1. *Foreign corporations*, which have created a novel category of surplus value: *environmental surplus value*, in connection with the extraterritorial appropriation of the Amazon’s biodiversity, which allows them to raise their rates of profit in their countries of origin without having to modify the destructive technical-productive pattern of the biodiversity, which would require spending millions and millions of dollars on a new world-wide technical basis. These firms continue to maintain in place the same destructive technical forces and they get substantial tax reductions and elimination of penalties whenever they hold “carbon credits” in their name. Thus, by “protecting” this or that area of the Amazon jungle, they reduce their corporate production costs, raise the rate of profit for the shareholders, and escape the need for a radical switch in the contemporary technical and productive base, characterized by the destructiveness of the natural basis of social production.

Similarly, many foreign corporations that control “their forests” extraterritorially get the advantage of having a gigantic laboratory free of charge for obtaining genetic material for the biotechnology industry, without having to pay any taxes, patent fees or royalties whatsoever or to make any prior investment. The “protection of forests” under the aegis of foreign corporate conglomerates has become an “*environmental*” *mode of capitalist accumulation*.

**2. Governments of the more developed capitalist countries**, who through this corporate environmentalism are managing to establish cordons of control over numerous areas of enormous wealth in existing natural, biological, mineral and hydrocarbon resources precisely in these areas of high biodiversity. The presence of foreign military bases near these regions forms a part of the extraterritorial rings of protection that the U.S. government in particular is deploying in Latin America. [11]

In the case of the Bolivian Amazon, we have not only the largest reserves of fresh water in the entire country, but also the largest concentration of biological diversity, petroleum reserves and a large part of the so-called Precambrian shield [12] with extensive deposits of gold, nickel, iron, uranium, etc.

**3. The *hacendado*-business bloc that is processing Amazon raw materials.** This is a business elite simultaneously linked to landed property, the old political parties of the hereditary right wing, the purchase and processing of cattle and the processing of Amazon raw materials such as wood, chestnuts, rubber, alligator skins, etc. It is a regional bourgeoisie that over the years has created a

kind of *captive regional market* for its raw materials supply business. The Beni cattle industry is monopolized by the processing and price-fixing of the slaughterhouses in Santa Cruz. Likewise, in the harvesting of other Amazon products such as wood or chestnuts, this bourgeoisie operates as a monopoly purchaser which, at the time when the TCOs were being revived as spaces for negotiated provision of raw materials by the indigenous leaders, was able to monopolize — through this brokerage function — the ground rent resulting from the extraction activity; and in some cases, through the extra-economic coercion exercised over the indigenous inhabitants, to obtain as well a further surplus value because the payment for the work of the indigenous labourer was below his subsistence level, his living conditions generally being the responsibility of the work of his family as a whole. So we have a combination of mechanisms of appropriation of land rents, surplus value generated by the worker and a share of the wage of this indigenous labourer, which produces an extraordinary profit in the hands of this corporate-landowner group.

That is why defence of this captive Amazon regional market, preservation of extra-economic bargaining mechanisms for raw materials supplies, and the reproduction of the despotic-landowner relations, are the geopolitical priorities in those matters that involve its class interests.

**4. The Amazonian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** as a group, some of which have created over the last two decades a clientelistic network of indigenous leaders through which they express the corporate environmentalist discourse in the various communities. Possessing fine humanitarian intentions — and good salaries for such missions — they form a small army that is ideologically the disseminator of the right-wing environmentalist discourse, and economically the material expression of an environmental capitalist accumulation.

Educated in opposition to any type of state presence in the Amazon forests and plains, and adversaries of any autonomy of the indigenous movement that would erode the networks of cooptation of the leaders, some NGOs have launched a kind of local environmentalist crusade the actual effect of which worldwide is the consolidation of the lucrative business of reducing taxes on the transnational corporations in exchange for protection of forests.

The combination of these four forces makes up what we can call the *arch of Amazon power and domination*.



In resistance and opposition to these forces of domination, the sectors that have taken distinct initiatives in struggle form part of the bloc of the indigenous-campesino and popular movement:

The indigenous peoples, fundamentally through the great mutual efforts toward unification of their regional struggles and demands, which help to overcome their territorial dispersion and low demographic density;

The campesino movement, through the struggle for democratization of access to the land and political autonomy from the bosses, this in turn generating an immediate response by the landowner power in the massacre of campesino leaders in El Porvenir in September 2008; notwithstanding that, the movement has persevered in its self-organization;



And finally, the popular movement, through the free-flowing micro-business, cooperative and transport activity, which complicates the regional scenario of class struggles, cracking the old traditional order of things.

Accompanying this social upheaval in the Amazon the revolutionary state, which from day one has sought to further strengthen these social struggles, not only has dismantled the hereditary state (having separated possession of land from the administration of the state), but with the new Constitution has proceeded to expropriate latifundios [13] and redistribute lands. Today, for the first time, we have national and departmental assemblies in Beni, Pando and Santa Cruz, with representatives of campesinos, indigenous peoples, merchants, transportistas, and of the people in general. Political representation has ceased to be an attribute of big property or business activity. [14] And parallel to this, the state presence has been extended, in the sense of laws and the monopoly of coercion. Social programs have been created, like the Bono Juancito Pinto, the Renta Dignidad and the Bono Juana Azurduy, and there are now hospital boats on the Amazon rivers. Thousands of people who since birth lacked the necessary documentation now have it, free of charge. Indigenous-peasant communities have received direct transfers and free dental care for children in places devoid in the past of state authority or law. But in addition, one of the most important processes of relocation of regiments and troops in the country's military history has been carried out. Military units have been created in the Amazon. In Pando, in the last four years, the military presence along the border has been tripled; the Bruno Racua Regiment and Conjunto Amazónico Command have been created; and the personnel of the Company in San Joaquín, the naval base in Magdalena, and the naval headquarters in Ramón Darío have been increased significantly, in addition to the formation of the engineers' battalion in Roboré. Likewise, the military posts have been reinforced in Cocos Lanza, San Fermín and General Camacho in northern La Paz, and a military garrison has been built in Ixiamas. And a unit of governmental management has been formed: ADEMAF, which has united military and civilian efforts and been deployed throughout the Amazon, consolidating the application of laws and sanctions in places where hitherto the only law was the personal fiat of some landowners.

The Rurrenabaque-Riberalta highway, now in adjudication, and the Villa Tunari-San Ignacio de Moxos highway, are objective expressions of this territorial enlargement of the state presence. They fall within the framework of a set of broader state policies for recovery of state sovereignty, understood as the full exercise of state laws and benefits in places where until recently forest companies, *hacendados* or narcotraffickers were the major authority in a kind of micro-republics of illegality.

The highway stitches together a national geography split between two major geographical blocs, the Altiplano and the Amazon. It will allow the face to face encounter of two regions of the country that up to now have been living back to back. The highway will nationalize a fundamental territorial space in Bolivia, in which foreign governments and companies, foreign citizens and landlords, have held more authority, knowledge and power than the Bolivian state itself. With the highway, the *real geography and the ideal geography of the state* (present in maps and agreements) will tend to coincide.

When we talk about *real geography of the state* we are referring to verification that its authority is one of public order with effective compliance and social legitimation. The highway then presents itself as a material force of territorial sovereignty of the state and, with that, as a technical mediation of the enlargement and defence of the laws of the population of the Amazon in general and the TIPNIS in particular.

To some extent, of course, the Villa Tunari-San Ignacio de Moxos highway creates a new geopolitical state axis running from north to south, conjoining the extensive geography and Amazon society. The

capitalist adversary of this nationalization of the Amazon is huge and brings to bear its enormous private material interests. Accordingly, at stake for the revolutionary state is its territorially verifiable sovereignty, and for the opposing powers their money, their personal revenues, their businesses and their domination. Hence the obvious virulence of the attack by the conservative internal and external forces against that nationalized state presence in the Amazon territory. It will be a long struggle with numerous battles along the way.

**Álvaro García Linera**

[To be continued in Part V, the final section]

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\* <http://lifeonleft.blogspot.ca/2012/12/geopolitics-of-amazon-part-iv.html>

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## **Footnotes**

[1] See the newspaper El Día, “Coca y cocaína en el Tipnis,” 13 January 2012.

[2] See the newspaper Los Tiempos, “Gobierno anuncia creación de regimiento ecológico de las FFAA,” 7 August 2012.

[3] See the newspaper El Diario, “Senadores cruceños plantean uso de pasaportes para ingresar a SantaCruz,” 16 March 2006.

[4] Apparently a reference to the ancient Maya center, known from Mayan inscriptions as Waka’, and known today as El Perú, which was once an important economic and political center of the Mayan world and formed one corner of a triangle of major sites that also included Calakmul (Mexico) to the north, and Tikal to the west. – Tr.

[5] Eraclio Bonilla Editor, La Cuestión Colonial, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, 2011. See also “Consolidación del Orden Colonial,” in Historia general de América Latina, III, 2, Unesco/Editorial TROTTA, España, 2001 and M. Carmagnani; A.Hernandez; R. Romano (Coordinadores), Para una Historia de América I: Las Estructuras, Colegio de México/FCE, Mexico City, 1999.

[6] Rossana Barragán, Espacio Urbano y Dinámica Étnica. La Paz en el siglo XIX, Hisbol, La Paz, 1990.

[7] As is seen, for example, in this quotation from Raúl Prada (in the article “En torno al TIPNIS”):

“The TIPNIS conflict has illustrated the new political, social, economic and cultural fronts that have emerged in the critical context of the process: on the one hand, defending the rights of Mother Earth, are the originary indigenous nations and peoples, especially the movements and organizations of the indigenous peoples as such, with their own forms of organizations, forms of representation, rotating leaderships, their own norms and procedures, ancestral institutions and native cosmovisions, supported by new adolescent and urban movements and by historic

movements such as the regantes, the water and gas warriors; on the other hand, supporting the section of the highway through the TIPNIS, are the campesino organizations, those organized in unions (CSUTCB, CNMCI OB “BS”, CSCIB); the entire campesino conglomerate, led to some extent by the cocalero federations. This entire ensemble, more or less unified, but differentiated and plural, motley as it is, which was part of the so-called “popular bloc,” and that now finds itself rising in the runaway ascent of a new emerging bourgeoisie, nouveaux riches and new intermediaries in the circuits of capital, the merchants, genetic modifiers, smugglers, traffickers, including those involved in narcotrafficking, in constant displacements toward unexpected alliances with the agro-industrial interests of Santa Cruz, the intermediary bourgeoisie, the banks, the transnational enterprises in hydrocarbon and mining, the Brazilian construction firms and the Brazilian government....”

[8] Hans van den Berg, *La tierra no da así nomas*. Hisbol, La Paz, 1993.

[9] Karl Marx, *El Porvenir de la Comuna Rural Rusa*, Pasado y Presente, México 1980; Karl Marx, *Cuaderno Kovalevsky* (newly published in Spanish), Ediciones Ofensiva Roja, La Paz, 1989; *Los Apuntes Etnológicos de Karl Marx*, Siglo XXI/ Editorial Pablo Iglesias; Spain, 1988. [In English, see Teodor Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and ‘The Peripheries of Capitalism’*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1983, and Lawrence Krader (ed.), *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, Assen, The Netherlands, Van Gorcum & Comp. B.V., 1974. – Tr.

[10] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Book I: *The Process of Production of Capital*, Vintage, New York 1977.

[11] Ana Esther Ceceña, *Hegemonía, Emancipaciones y Políticas de Seguridad en América*, Programa Democracia y Transformación Global, Lima, 2008.

[12] See Salomón Rivas Valenzuela, “Las maravillas del precámbrico,” publisher unknown, Santa Cruz, 2007. And check out Jevan Berrangé, “The eastern Bolivian mineral exploration project. Proyecto Precámbrico,” in *Episodes*, Vol. 1982, N°4.

[13] Through the reversion and expropriation of lands, the state has recovered around 2 million hectares. And through the restructuring of lands, about 10 million hectares in the lowlands have been recovered for the indigenous peoples and peasant communities.

[14] In those three departments, 45% of the representatives in the Plurinational Legislative Assembly come from social movements. Similarly, in the departments 21.4% of the departmental assembly members are from social movements.