

# POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN AN AUTHORITARIAN STATE:

## A Case from Brazil\*

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The Brazilian government's plans to build the Transamazon Highway from the Atlantic coast to the Peruvian border and to settle thousands of landless peasants along it created intense debate before the project's precipitous beginning. Critics of the road "that went from nowhere to no place" denounced it as economic folly, while champions of "national integration" saw it as a crucial step toward the economic and geopolitical unification essential to Brazil's realization of its "great nation" potential and toward alleviating some of its land-tenure concentration (Tamer 1970, Pereira 1971).

Most discussion of the technical, organizational, economic, and political difficulties that hampered construction of the road and the completion of the agricultural colonization projects has been limited to the context of the highway itself. These issues, however, also have direct relevance for larger questions about the capacities of national states to implement development programs aimed at social welfare and distributive justice. Many studies of development in Latin America suggest that the state's efficacy in implementing development programs, especially those designed to favor politically unorganized and economically weak rural populations, may be impeded by various factors, including interference and subversion by powerful private interests, the complexity and rigidity of bureaucratic organization, the inadequate preparation and discipline of bureaucratic personnel, the diversity of regional, political, and economic systems within particular countries, or the "softness" of the state itself.<sup>1</sup> These themes contrast markedly with assumptions underlying recent theories of the corporatist or authoritarian state in

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Latin America, which ascribe considerable autonomy and administrative efficiency as well as an "overarching similarity in structure and organization" (Malloy 1977, p. 3) to regimes like those in Brazil, Chile, and Argentina.

Malloy (1977, p. 16) describes the authoritarian corporatist state as an unpleasant, but potentially viable, system capable of regulating the economic and social relations of entire nations. O'Donnell (1973, 1975, 1977, 1978), in his theory of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state (BA), maintains that the BA depends on a shifting three-way alliance with the national bourgeoisie and with international capital. He implies that, even though it depends on these allies, the BA dictates the terms of this alliance and that it limits private-sector access to its own administrative apparatus by maintaining bureaucratic control of higher government positions. He specifically argues that the national bourgeoisie is subordinate to the state (1977, p. 63), even though it is essential to the state's strategies for regulating international capital.

The assumption that authoritarian military regimes with highly centralized bureaucratic administrations have created new forms of government with great political autonomy and administrative capacity implies that such states could control or obviate the obstacles to effective development identified in various studies of development program failure. One way of testing assertions of the BA or corporatist state's developmental capacities, administrative efficiency, and relative autonomy is to analyze potentially limiting cases by examining, for example, development programs that largely exclude the national bourgeoisie or international firms from direct participation or indirect benefits. The state's ability to implement programs that do not benefit these classes and may even provoke their opposition or interference provides a means for assessing the limits of the state's autonomy from powerful private interests and its independent capacity to implement development programs.

The Brazilian government's programs for colonization and rural development along the Transamazon Highway provide a suitable case for such analysis. Unlike most development programs, these colonization programs brought no immediate benefits to any dominant group or class. Rather, they were aimed at relieving the poverty of landless peasants, one of the poorest and politically weakest segments of Brazilian society. These schemes, however, diverted funds from other development programs and thus generated opposition from powerful groups in the sectors affected (Cardoso and Müller 1977). They also created infrastructure and opened access to valuable natural resources, which various powerful groups then attempted to control. Finally, these colonization projects were established in marginal or frontier areas, where both distance and lack of prior infrastructure greatly complicated the task of organizing and administering these projects (Bunker 1980).

The coincidence of significant civil opposition with major administrative problems in a development program undertaken by the Brazilian regime, which O'Donnell has called "the purest example" of a bureaucratic-authoritarian state (1977, p. 53), provides a suitable case for testing the limits of one BA's autonomy and administrative capacity. Previous studies (O'Donnell 1978, Evans 1979) have shown that the regime that took power in 1964 has greatly strengthened its position relative to both domestic and international capitalist groups and that it has developed impressive administrative and entrepreneurial capacities. These studies, however, have focused on state initiatives in regions of the country or in sectors of the economy with "an extended but vertically unintegrated industrialization . . . and a highly modernized urban social structure" (O'Donnell 1978, p. 9) and on programs where interests of the state and at least some powerful private interests coincide. Even within these sectors, as Evans has shown, the relative influence and autonomy of the state varies with the production and marketing characteristics of different industries. The Transamazon Highway colonization and rural development schemes present an opportunity to examine the Brazilian BA's degree of autonomy and administrative capacity in development programs that do not enjoy either the support of some powerful private groups or the previous existence of modern organizational supports and infrastructure.

#### SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS AND GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS

The Brazilian state's strong support of economic development based on rapid industrial "deepening" through the concentration of income in the wealthiest classes (O'Donnell 1978) raises the issue of the government's intentions in creating social welfare programs for the poorest classes. Such programs are relevant to the question of the state's developmental capacity, administrative efficiency, and autonomy only if it can be shown that the state was, at some point, clearly committed to a particular program's success.

Arguments that the government used the colonization schemes to attract an adequate labor force for large-scale ranching, lumbering, and mining enterprises in order to develop the area (Cardoso and Müller 1977, Davis 1977) can be easily dismissed. Although some support for the road-building programs came from military and geopolitical preoccupation with the "demographic vacuum" in the Amazon and its subsequent susceptibility to "international covetousness" (Reis 1968, Pereira 1970), the long history of spontaneous colonization on Brazilian frontiers made accessible by road-building indicates that official encouragement to migrate would have been unnecessary (Velho 1972, 1976; Foweraker 1981; Martins 1975; Hébert and Acevedo 1979). Further, de-

spite the relatively rapid abandonment of the colonization idea itself, restrictions on land-holding size in most of the colonization areas remained relatively effective, so that migrants to official colonization areas did not become as accessible or significant a labor reserve for large-scale enterprise as did spontaneous migrants to areas that had not been reserved for colonization. Intense, continued criticisms of these projects from major business interests further suggest that the colonization projects were not designed as a disguised contribution to large-scale private enterprise in the area. Finally, in contrast to earlier colonization projects in the Amazon (Anderson 1976; Tavares, Considera, and Castro e Silva 1972) and in other parts of Latin America (Nelson 1973; Moran 1981, pp. 6–8), government plans for Transamazon colonization included extensive and costly investment in a comprehensive administrative and physical infrastructure. The enormous budgets allocated to the colonization projects and the massive publicity that sought to justify them (e.g., INCRA 1972) indicate, at least initially, major government commitment to these projects.

The apparent inconsistency between these social-welfare goals and the government's dedication to rapid industrialization and economic growth through the concentration of income is best explained as a government attempt to gain legitimacy and to offset criticism of its policies of excluding the rural poor economically and politically (Contini 1976, cited in Moran 1981). As O'Donnell has emphasized, "The state must present itself as the incarnation, as the political and ideological expression, of the general interests of the nation, to which the sectors excluded by the BA unquestionably belong" (1978, p. 20). Despite its great repressive powers and its political exclusion of the majority of the population, the authoritarian state cannot rely indefinitely on its alliance with domestic and international capital, but must somehow institutionalize and stabilize its control by legitimating itself to other sectors (Linz 1973, Schwartzman 1977, Portes 1979). If the colonization and rural development programs were successful in turning landless peasants into market-integrated small farmers, the government could claim that its imposed economic model was accessible to all classes and was therefore an apt vehicle for social as well as economic development. Successful rural development programs would be especially effective in the government's search for legitimacy because they could be used both as a response to national and international criticism of the socioeconomic condition of Brazil's rural poor and as an affirmation of the military regime's superiority over previous governments.

This interpretation does not imply that the government designed the Transamazon colonization schemes for the purpose of legitimating itself to a politically and economically excluded class of landless peasants. Even if the government had managed to settle as many peasants in

the Amazon as originally proposed, its programs would have affected only an insignificant part of this class. The use of the colonization schemes as a legitimating device appears rather to grow out of the BA's representation of itself as a national state, "working to everyone's long-term benefit . . . for the attainment of the true goal: the grandeur of a nation in which even those excluded and repressed are invited to participate vicariously" (O'Donnell 1978, p. 20). Roett (1978) described the initial effect of government publicity campaigns when he wrote that the "construction of the Transamazon Highway . . . quickly captured the imagination of the Brazilian people" (p. 152) and cited a *Jornal do Brasil* editorial on "the pride that Brazilians feel over the opening of the nation's new frontier, constituted by the gigantic work of conquering and colonizing the largest empty space on the globe" (p. 153). These publicity campaigns were directed at the entire national population rather than at a specific, politically and economically excluded segment of the population.

The colonization schemes also served to abate increasing pressure for significant land reform. Feder (1970) and Thiesenhusen (1971) have pointed out that colonization schemes have been used in other Latin American countries as substitutes for the deeper institutional changes that land reform would entail. Certainly the Brazilian military government had strong political reasons to try to alleviate political tensions caused by the increasingly unequal distribution of land and wealth in the northeastern and southern regions of the country (Cehelsky 1979). By curtailing the previous civilian regime's modest land reform and vetoing land-reform proposals made by its own Ministry of Agriculture in 1967, the government had strengthened the impression that its policies directly prejudiced the rural poor. These actions also created rifts within the military establishment itself (Cehelsky 1979; Foweraker 1981; Martins 1981, 1982). Some of these pressures could be partially reduced by the mere demonstration of intent implicit in the large colonization budgets and accompanying publicity of the early 1970s. Therefore, the argument can be made that the Brazilian military government acted in its own interest and independently of powerful private interests in establishing the colonization program. Its ability to carry out these programs thus provides a good test of the limits of the Brazilian BA's autonomy and administrative capacity.

#### CENTRAL GOVERNMENT POLICY AND PERIPHERAL LAND TENURE INSTITUTIONS

Another dimension of the BA's power, according to O'Donnell (1978, p. 15), is the ability to "deeply transform" society through control of economic, political, and social relations. Of the variety of new institutions

introduced, the most important to the transformation of *Amazônia* were the systems of modern land tenure, credit, and exchange that were established.

The colonization and rural-development programs along the Transamazon Highway constituted a major government attempt to establish a new set of institutions, exogenous to the region, despite major temporal and spatial obstacles. The existing systems of production and exchange in the Amazon differed radically from those the government attempted to establish. The established institutions derived largely from the Amazon's historically peripheral position in relation to the south-central region of Brazil. The 59 percent of national territory officially defined as *Amazônia* contained only about 8 percent of the national population and produced only about 4 percent of its income (INCRA 1972). Only within the previous decade had the Amazon been connected by roads to the rest of Brazil, and large areas remained accessible only by water or by air.

Commercial agriculture had never contributed significantly to the Amazon's market economy. First Portuguese and then Brazilian settlement of the Amazon depended far more on extraction than on farming. During the earlier periods of colonial rule, expeditionary exploitation of native spices and nuts provided the basis of trade with Europe, then the rubber boom of the late nineteenth century diverted labor away from the already weak agricultural sector (Melby 1942, Furtado 1963). After the collapse of the rubber boom in 1912, the rural monetary economy depended largely on itinerant merchants who received surplus production of manioc, rice, jute, or forest products like Brazil nuts in exchange for provisions. Wealth was accumulated and transferred from the rural to the urban areas almost exclusively through control over exchange. Land ownership had little juridical or economic importance (Santos 1979, Sawyer 1977).

Transfer of land rights through sale or inheritance, therefore, was seldom registered officially. The enormous distances to administrative centers, the lack of commercial value of the land itself, and the frequent absence of the appropriate authorities made the costs of land registration far greater than any benefits it might bring. Informal institutions of land tenure based on occupation, use, or sometimes superior force superceded the neglected juridical forms of possession.

Central government decisions to connect the Amazon to the rest of Brazil with highways, however, caused drastic changes in land use that the local legal institutions were not equipped to handle. The completion of the Belém-Brasília highway in 1959 provided access to unoccupied lands and guaranteed their communications with markets. This opportunity stimulated a massive migration to the newly opened areas, initially by dispossessed peasants from other regions, especially



the Northeast (Velho 1976, 1979). An influx of large ranching enterprises quickly followed. Using their greater political and economic power, as well as frequent force, the ranching enterprises took control of the land that the peasants had cleared and utilized the labor reserve created by the expelled peasants (Velho 1972, Ianni 1979, Hébette and Acevedo 1979, Schmink 1977, Martins 1980).<sup>2</sup>

The expansion of capitalist enterprise into these new areas disrupted the normal functioning of land-tenure institutions that were not prepared to treat land as a valuable negotiable good on the scale that the sudden influx of capital required (Mendonça 1977, Santos 1979). The state government sold vast tracts of land in a disorderly and frequently corrupt fashion.<sup>3</sup> The *cartórios* (licensed land-registry offices) were swamped by legitimate requests to transfer properties that were flawed by previous unregistered sales and inheritances, as well as by demands to register and sell fraudulent titles.

The authoritarian, centralist regime established in 1964 instituted a succession of programs for developing the Amazon region that caused further disruptions and changes in land-tenure institutions. In 1968 the central government, acting through the SUDAM (Superintendency for the Development of the Amazon), extended its program of fiscal incentives to large ranching enterprises in the Amazon. The SUDAM did not consider the validity of titles for the land on which its enormous subsidies were to be applied, thus seriously aggravating the already severe land-tenure crisis.

The subsequent Médici government moved to control the chaotic effects of rapid capitalist expansion in the Amazon. In 1970 this government planned a system of roads through the Amazon for two purposes: first, to secure the region by making possible occupation and rapid military and commercial movement through it; and second, to allow thousands of landless and unemployed families from the drought-scoured Northeast to settle there. This plan was followed in 1971 by the *decreto-lei 1.164*, by which the government imposed national control of all state lands along a one-hundred-kilometer belt on each side of any federal highway that was already constructed, under construction, or being planned throughout the Amazon region. These strips amounted to more than 60 percent of the total area of some states.

Decreto-lei 1.164 was largely a response to the land-tenure crisis that government road-building and fiscal-incentive policies had created. INCRA, the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform formed in 1970 by merging three lesser agencies, was given control over the newly acquired federal lands with the responsibility of classifying land tenure, surveying, selling or colonizing, and titling. INCRA's assignment was to impose order, minimize conflict between various segments of the rural population, and regularize the possession and use of

land in ways conducive to economic growth within capitalist institutions (Brasil 1971, 1974). Although INCRA was legally a self-governing agency (*autarquia*) within the Ministry of Agriculture, decreto-lei 1.164 subordinated INCRA directly to the National Security Council, which assumed power over policy on the administration and occupation of the federal lands in the Amazon.

The national government's expropriating immense portions of the states' public lands and establishing a bureaucratic apparatus to manage and dispose of them substantiate theoretical statements that point to the authoritarian state's attempts to regulate and arbitrate social and economic relations (Malloy 1977) and the predominance of military administrative control through bureaucratic organization (O'Donnell 1975). INCRA's administrative structure and its statutory mandates correspond closely to O'Donnell's and Malloy's characterizations of the BA as depoliticizing social and political problems by subordinating conflicting sectors to centralized bureaucratic control over their social and economic relations.

INCRA was divided into separate departments that reported directly to different sections of the agency's national headquarters. These departments were assigned seven basic tasks: first, to examine and validate claims to occupied or titled land; second, to survey and sell by public bid federal lands in lots of up to three thousand hectares; third, to maintain a cadastral survey and to collect the national rural land-tax; fourth, to supervise and regulate private colonization companies; fifth, to establish federal colonization projects; sixth, to achieve agrarian reform as defined by the *Estatuto da Terra*; and seventh, to promote and regulate all agricultural cooperatives.

These diverse mandates obliged INCRA to deal with directly opposed constituencies and to resolve their conflicting demands on its resources. Economic considerations, however, significantly distorted the execution of those mandates. Contrary to theoretical prediction, INCRA's centralist organization and broad mandates impeded, rather than promoted, government autonomy and administrative efficiency. As will be demonstrated below, INCRA's organizational structure facilitated private-sector penetration and interference in the colonization programs. Further, the colonization programs themselves were administered so inefficiently that the costs to the colonists of complying with bureaucratic procedures were greater than the benefits they derived from the development program.



## THE QUESTION OF AUTONOMY: DOMINANT-SECTOR DEMANDS ON INCRA AND THE REDUCTION OF THE COLONIZATION GOALS AND BUDGETS

Part of INCRA's revenues and much of its political influence derived from patrimonial control over public lands and taxes. This situation created direct pressure to allocate INCRA's financial and administrative resources to large-scale land sale and title validation rather than to the costly and politically sensitive issues of colonization and agrarian reform. This bias toward large-scale enterprise was exacerbated by direct competition between ranching and lumbering enterprises versus peasant or small-farm occupation of land. The history of the colonization program along the Transamazon Highway vividly demonstrates these contradictions.

In coordination with a major national publicity campaign and the central government's political commitment to the Program for National Integration (INCRA 1972), the bulk of INCRA's activities and budget from 1970 to 1974 was dedicated to the ambitious *Projetos Integrados de Colonização* (PIC) along the Transamazon Highway. Publicized as a program to give "lands without men to men without lands,"<sup>4</sup> the declared purpose of these projects was to solve the problems of overpopulation in the Northeast and of *minifundização* in the South by settling up to one hundred thousand landless peasant families in the Amazon. Government directives charging INCRA with supervision of all aspects of these projects provoked opposition from private groups who benefited from INCRA's other functions and from other public agencies who perceived this expansion of INCRA's budget and jurisdiction as an encroachment on their territory.

Contrary to theoretical prediction about the corporatist or BA state, the Brazilian authoritarian regime was not able to limit private access to its own bureaucracy. Nor was it able to prevent the public airing of conflicts between its own administrative units. Cardoso (1975), Martins (1977), and Pereira (1977) have all described a major transition in the relations among the "state bourgeoisie," the national "capitalist bourgeoisie," and international capital. The higher levels of the state bureaucracy had grown rapidly in size and autonomy during the years following the 1964 revolution. In the early 1970s, however, national and international capitalist groups significantly increased their participation in determining development policy, both by exerting direct pressure on government and by penetrating key positions within the state bureaucracy.<sup>5</sup>

The colonization schemes and the policies restricting the size of landholdings in the Amazon were immediate and easy targets. As a result of pressure from private interests, from the SUDAM, and from the Ministry of Planning, INCRA policy and personnel were fundamen-

tally reoriented. INCRA announced in 1972 that it would sell public lands in the Amazon to private enterprise. Minister of Agriculture Cirne Lima resigned, protesting interference and restrictions on the colonization projects. The president of INCRA, Moura Cavalcanti, took over as Minister of Agriculture. As president of INCRA, he had repeatedly expressed opposition to Minister of Planning Reis Velloso and other government officials who were urging that the Amazon be opened to large-scale private enterprise. In 1973, however, Cavalcanti changed his position to one more compatible with Velloso's and announced that Amazon development policy had to be modified to encourage "more dynamic" private initiative. In the context of the debate over who was to control land in the Amazon, "more dynamic" enterprise was clearly meant to imply large enterprise and signalled Cavalcanti's intention to oppose the legal restrictions on the amount of land that INCRA could sell to any one bidder (Cardoso and Müller 1977, pp. 157–58).

Interagency conflict at the regional level also created obstacles to the government's expressed goal of settling the Amazon with small farmers. The umbrella program for the colonization projects, the Program for National Integration (PIN), was to receive 30 percent of the income-tax revenues for fiscal incentives that had previously gone to the SUDAM. This change threatened the SUDAM's predominant position in Amazon development programs. The resulting competition between INCRA and the SUDAM created impasses between these two agencies and among the other agencies that received rural development funds from each of them. Because this program also threatened business groups that had benefited from the SUDAM's fiscal incentives for industry, large-scale ranching and agriculture, and mineral extraction, SUDAM found natural allies among the entrepreneurs' associations that were demanding access to Amazonian resources and federal subsidies. The superintendent of the SUDAM throughout this time was advocating that economic integration of the Amazon could best be achieved by large ranching projects (Cardoso and Müller 1977, pp. 157–58).

Finally, in 1974, INCRA's President Lourenço Tavares da Silva formally acknowledged the major policy changes that had already occurred. INCRA, he said, was opposed to *latifúndios*, but not to large enterprise in itself; consequently, the colonization projects would be oriented toward a "joint composition" with large and medium enterprises (Cardoso and Müller 1977, p. 181). By this time, colonization budgets had already been cut and the estimated number of colonists to be settled had been reduced to one-fifth of the originally projected one hundred thousand families.

In 1975 INCRA was instructed by the government's personnel department to reduce drastically the number of its functionaries in the colonization programs. INCRA increasingly left assistance programs to

other less powerful agencies and restricted its activities in the colonization areas to surveying lots and attempting to expedite titles (Bunker 1979). Many of the original colonists never received titles and therefore could not obtain investment credit from banks. Increasing numbers left the area, selling rights in their lots to other colonists or to ranchers who were buying land behind the colonization areas.

With the publication of the second Plan for the Development of the Amazon (PDA II) in 1975, the government explicitly abandoned the idea proclaimed in PDA I in 1972 of developing the Amazon through the settlement of small farmers and emphasized instead the establishment of large, highly capitalized ranching and mining enterprises that supposedly would be more effective in generating foreign revenues. By 1976 two presidential directives, *exposição de motivos 005* and *006*, authorized INCRA to regularize titles of up to sixty thousand hectares and three thousand hectares respectively for large and medium enterprises whose "paralyzation might hinder the economic development of the region" (Santos 1979, pp. 130–31). The sequence of events that preceded these policy changes indicates that the state was not able or willing to resist private sector demands, even where its own credibility and claims to legitimacy were at stake.

To explain the reduction of its commitment to the colonization projects, the government invoked the difficulties of the colonization process and the balance-of-payments crisis caused by Brazil's model of rapid economic growth and aggravated by increased petroleum costs. These difficulties were certainly contributing factors, but they cannot have been determinant because numerous other costly development programs for the Amazon were initiated or continued during the same period (Mahar 1979). In fact, INCRA's *Projetos Fundiários* increased their activities in large-scale land-tenure classification as colonization budgets declined (see table 1). The SUDAM's fiscal incentives disbursements in 1975 and 1976 climbed to levels even higher than their previous peak in 1970, despite mounting evidence that many of these subsidies were being diverted to other uses (often outside the Amazon) and that the established pastures had an extremely short economic life (Hecht 1979; see also table 1). The official justifications for favoring large-scale agricultural enterprise at the cost of the colonization projects is especially implausible in light of consistent evidence that small producers in Brazil consistently market more produce and support more workers than larger enterprises (da Silva 1978).

Numerous factors contributed to the curtailment of the colonization programs. The sharp rise in oil prices, cost overruns resulting from inadequate topographic information about the land the highway would traverse, and delays in construction that increased costs directly and indirectly through inflation all made the project cost the state more than

TABLE 1 Indicators of Government Activities in Colonization Compared by Year with Indicators of Activities Related to Large-Scale Enterprise

Colonization—PIC Altamira and Itaituba		Large Enterprise	
INCRA Budgets (Cr\$) <sup>1</sup>	INCRA Personnel	INCRA Land Tenure Classification—PF Altamira (Ha) <sup>2</sup>	Fiscal Incentives SUDAM Disbursements (Cr\$) <sup>1</sup>
1970			632,758,447
1971			561,533,792
1972	128,265,518	1,228	424,298,206
1973	159,330,205	1,651	477,618,018
1974	119,719,014	833	487,391,435
1975	112,065,111	700	923,671,516
1976	95,190,642	517	652,922,274
1977	39,700,639	248	504,926,063

Sources: INCRA CR-01, FF/FFP; SUDAM, DAI/DPOI.

<sup>1</sup>Values corrected to 1977 equivalents following *Conjuntura Econômica*, 324 (April) 1978: Index 2, Column 2.

<sup>2</sup>Two Projetos Fundiários—PF Santarém and PF Cachimbo—were established within the original jurisdiction of PF Altamira in 1975 and 1977, respectively. Figures here include all three PFs.

had been anticipated. These nondeterminant factors, however, do not explain away the effects of competing private-sector demands on INCRA's resources, criticism and political pressure from powerful business groups, and publicly expressed opposition from various parts of the national bureaucratic apparatus. All these factors indicate that, in this program at least, the state was considerably less autonomous than Malloy or O'Donnell suggests. These factors further suggest that the Brazilian state's considerable autonomy in its alliance with domestic and international capitalist groups (Evans 1979, O'Donnell 1978, Cardoso 1975) may be limited to projects and programs in which the interests of the state and of at least some powerful private groups substantially overlap. This interpretation is congruent with Evans's demonstration that the relative power of each member of the "triple alliance"—the state, domestic capital, and international capital—varies with the differential bargaining power and shifting points of common interest among the three "members" in different sectors of the national economy.

The effects of private-sector pressures on the colonization projects were compounded by a number of highly visible mistakes and failures in planning and administering the colonization schemes. Contrary to theoretical expectations of the BA's administrative efficiency and capacity to transform society deeply, the organization of the colonization

projects was marked by inefficiency, faulty planning, bureaucratic indiscipline, and lack of interagency coordination. These administrative problems in turn reduced the chances of program success and further undermined state autonomy.

THE QUESTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY: INSTITUTIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE AND THE COSTS OF DEVELOPMENT TO THE FARMER

INCRA was charged with selecting the colonists who were to receive one-hundred-hectare lots and surveying and documenting these lots. It was also supposed to provide access roads from the newly opened highway, as well as housing, access to credit, transportation, warehouses, health services, education, and technical assistance. All of these goals were to be accomplished both directly and in coordination with other federal agencies.

INCRA had enormous difficulties in coordinating all the various facets of these projects. Selection and transportation of colonists were distorted by political corruption and logistic snarls. Access roads were not built on time, and credit facilities were bogged down in bureaucratic procedures that rendered them uneconomical for most of the colonists. The geometric patterns in which the 100-hectare lots had been laid out, along with the various administrative and residential centers that had been built, had ignored completely problems of soil fertility, land relief, drainage, and availability of water. Seeds distributed to the colonists for their first rice crops had not been tested in the colonization areas and proved totally inadequate, resulting in almost total crop failure. Transport failures due to the delays in building access roads impeded the commercialization of the crops that were produced. Because of the failure of the rice crop and the losses occasioned by lack of access roads, many colonists were unable to pay back their loans and thus were prevented from using bank credit in subsequent years (see Moran 1979, 1981 and Smith 1976 for details of initial settlement).

Ecological constraints created a major series of unanticipated obstacles. Most soils in the colonization areas were not suitable for the sustained tillage necessary for the annual crops of rice, beans, and corn that INCRA and other agencies promoted. The perennial tree crops, such as cocoa, which produce high value-to-volume returns and protect the fragile tropical soils from leaching and erosion, require several years' investment and care before yielding. Neither the government nor the colonists were prepared initially for such an extensive capital outlay. Weather and soils also combined to make the road dangerous and frequently impassable, despite vast sums spent on its maintenance. This situation increased costs and difficulties for colonists and government agents alike.

In the colonization areas and in those with more traditional settlement, the rural development programs maintained by INCRA and other federal and state agencies aimed to integrate the colonists and other small farmers into a market economy as "rational" producers capable of accumulating sufficient capital to improve their own technology and increase their own productivity. The agencies, and the structures through which they were to coordinate their efforts, however, were organized in ways that impeded effective implementation of the colonization program. While INCRA was restructured under the BA regime, the multiple agencies assigned to collaborate with INCRA had been established and given specific functions under various earlier regimes. Although many of them were subordinated to the Ministry of Agriculture, they operated under a series of distinct statutory and budgetary arrangements, and in several cases, controlled their own patrimony and collected their own fees for services (Bunker 1979, 1982). The autonomy and functional specificity of each agency had been compatible with programs aimed at enhancing market integration of an already established commercial agriculture in the industrial central and southern regions of Brazil, but the centralist logic that structured the relations between these agencies in the Amazon was incompatible with their autarchic statutory bases. Furthermore, the operating procedures of the agencies themselves presupposed a set of interdependent institutions for the titling and registry of land, its use as a real guarantee of bank credit, the documentation of social identity, and competitive market systems, none of which yet existed along the Transamazon Highway.

In principle, each agency fulfilled complementary functions necessary to sustain the various interdependent institutions on which the government's model of rural development was based. The interdependence of the presupposed institutions created an interdependence between the various agencies that the government reinforced by delegating powers and assigning programs. The absence or insufficient development of the presupposed capitalist institutions, however, reduced each agency's capacity to carry out its assigned functions and the resulting inefficiency of each agency further impeded the operation of all the others. The interdependence imposed on the agencies progressively increased the internal contradictions among agency procedures and lessened their applicability to the external situation.

The fragmentation of rural development programs between multiple, functionally specific agencies further complicated the problems already created by the absence of their presupposed institutional bases.<sup>6</sup> Coordination of the complementary programs was complex, difficult, and often hindered by extraneous political considerations because the various agencies were responsible to different levels of government and dependent on diverse arrangements for funding (Bunker 1979).



The costs of fulfilling the procedural requirements of this model in the absence of the necessary institutions weighed directly on the small farmer. An examination of the financing-cultivation-harvesting-remuneration cycle will illustrate how institutional interdependence created agency interdependence and how the cost of agency procedures and of the breakdown in their coordination were passed on to the small farmer. The accumulation of these costs led to a net loss for most farmers and prohibited the agencies from carrying out their programs effectively.

Official plans for rural development in the colonization area were largely based on providing agricultural loans. EMATER (Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Enterprise) was assigned to prepare agricultural credit proposals for the colonists and to supervise their application.<sup>7</sup> EMATER was greatly hampered, however, by the absence of regularized land titles.

The Banco do Brasil, from which EMATER received its lines of credit, demanded real guarantees for its agricultural loans and defined these guarantees as titled land or fixed capital on titled land. An exception for short-term loans only was made for a special INCRA document called a *licença de ocupação* that was given to the colonists while their title processes were pending. In most cases, short-term credit was limited to the annual crops of rice, beans, and corn, whose cultivation on a small scale was neither profitable nor ecologically viable (Bunker 1980, Fearnside). Effective market integration of small farmers in the colonization areas depended instead on the more valuable and ecologically sound perennial crops such as pepper and cocoa. Establishment of these crops required long-term credit, which was only available for land that had a title acceptable to the bank. Neither EMATER nor the Banco do Brasil could perform the rural development tasks effectively until INCRA provided such titles.

Pending INCRA's classification of the land's occupation, use, and titling, and its subsequent surveying and regularization, the national government's expropriation of the 200-kilometer-wide highway belt effectively suspended the validity of whatever pre-INCRA documentation or de facto occupation might have existed there. INCRA's capacity to classify, survey, and register the numerous small tracts of land within its jurisdiction was compromised by its involvement with land sales to large enterprises and with its other activities. Even in the official colonization areas where surveying of the colonists' lots had priority, many colonists still lacked definitive titles in 1977 (see table 2). Moreover, in many of the traditional small-holding areas, INCRA had not even begun the demarcation of the land within its jurisdiction by that date, much less the actual classification and surveying of occupied lands.

The title situation in the colonization areas was complicated further by INCRA's special regulations. In order to "fix" the colonists on

TABLE 2 INCRA—Expedition of Land Titles in the Colonization Projects (PIC) Altamira and Itaituba, 1972–1977

	Definitive Titles (TD)						Colonists	
	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	Total*	1977
PIC Altamira	803	76	555	1,071	254	70	2,829	4,479
PIC Itaituba	—	—	—	144	356	955	1,455	2,034

Source: INCRA CR - 01/TF.

\*Includes cancelled titles.

their lots, INCRA would not allow them to sell the land itself. Instead, the colonist who wanted to leave could apply to INCRA to evaluate the improvements made on the lot so that he could sell these to another applicant selected by INCRA.

In practice, this system proved enormously cumbersome. Delays of up to four years in the official transfer process were common. Nevertheless, many colonists wanted to sell because the basic infrastructure and the assistance programs did not provide them with the necessary facilities to make their lots profitable. Because of access problems and difficulties in getting credit and, in many cases because previous losses of financed crops left them unable to borrow more money, the colonists found that the value of their production did not keep pace with the increased value of their lots. Once the most difficult period of opening and clearing had passed, the colonization areas attracted settlers with more capital than the original colonists.

In these circumstances, INCRA's administrative barriers did not prevent land sales. Rather, a series of informal transfer mechanisms emerged to replace the official ones. In some cases, the original colonist simply left the lot in return for a sum of money. In others, he signed a formal statement of abandonment or transfer and left it with the new owner, or signed a power of attorney for the buyer and left the title in his own name. The only real effect of INCRA's measures to prevent sales was to complicate and delay the second owner's ability to title his land and thus get access to credit, especially investment or long-term credit. Many of these second owners could not get credit to follow up their initial investment before their resources were exhausted.

By 1977 the number of transfer and abandonments officially registered by INCRA represented over a third of the lots in the colonization areas.<sup>8</sup> The actual total far exceeded the official figures because informal transfers were not recorded by INCRA, indicating that a large proportion of the colonists were excluded from credit programs either directly because of INCRA's delays in titling land or indirectly because of its measures against transfers. Even for those who managed to get the

necessary land documents and keep their credit records clear, the relations between EMATER, the Banco do Brasil, and various other agencies were so complex as to make credit unprofitable or too late to be applied in the proper season, thereby impairing the colonist's credit record and subsequent access to credit (Bunker 1980).

Both land documents and credit applications required numerous documents, including certification of birth and military service, voting records, and a certificate of good conduct from the police. In order to acquire a land title within the colonization area, the colonist needed a bank statement showing no bad debts and also had to present a title search guaranteeing that he owned no other land at each step in the process. If the lot's situation was complicated by transfer, the colonist might have to present all of these documents four or five times. Similar procedures governed all credit applications. The time and money a colonist had to spend traveling to different administrative centers were often increased because the proper forms or the proper functionary was not available, or because the necessary personal records were never kept. Administrative centers of the *municípios* were established along the main transportation routes, the rivers, so any document that required a *cartório* could involve a long road trip around to the river and then a boat trip to the município seat. Even on the highway itself, INCRA, EMATER, and Banco do Brasil offices were frequently located in widely separated administrative centers.

The small farmer who managed to obtain credit on these terms therefore had already spent a large part of it before receiving it. In the case of short-term loans, this proportion might be as high as 50 percent. Receipt of the credit, however, still depended on the bank, which released portions of the loan only on the presentation of a certificate from EMATER stating that the previous phase was satisfactorily completed. The EMATER agent's authorization of payment was itself dependent, in some cases, on the verification by another agency of the Ministry of Agriculture of absence of plant disease. Moreover, EMATER was seriously understaffed and hampered by long delays in receiving funds for gasoline and vehicle maintenance from the other agencies with which it had *convênios*. Therefore, the farmer frequently had to go to the EMATER office to persuade the agent to sign the authorization without visiting his lot; or he had to wait until the agent finally arrived, thus losing days of work and risking crop loss through late planting or harvesting. Even after obtaining the necessary authorization, the colonist might still be delayed at the bank, which occasionally closed its credit section for several days while resolving its own administrative problems and at least once closed for several weeks while investigating a case of embezzlement. Such trips and delays raised the cost of credit even more (see also Moran 1981).

The final sale of his crop, on which the farmer depended to repay his bank loan, demanded his being able to get his crop to market and to sell it at a compensatory price. This phase required roads, which were INCRA's responsibility in the colonization areas, and the opportunity to sell crops to CIBRAZEM, the government warehouse company, the only place the farmer could receive guaranteed minimum prices. Because CIBRAZEM was self-sustaining, it was reluctant to invest in areas where its storage charges would not recompense its costs. Even though CIBRAZEM generally was required to act as a business, it was subject to the controls of expenditure required of all government bureaucracies, including the requirement that all purchases be submitted first for approval and then for bidding. These combined restrictions kept CIBRAZEM's capacity well below that necessary for the volume of crops produced in the colonization areas and impeded or delayed installation of equipment that would have speeded rotation and handling of the stored product.

The cost of CIBRAZEM's inefficiency was passed on to the farmer. At the height of the rice harvest, one might have to spend as many as eight days waiting in line to unload while paying for the truck's idle time and for food and lodging. The combined cost of transport, a six-to-eight-day wait, food and lodging, and the various CIBRAZEM handling charges exceeded half the value of a normal 200-sack truckload of rice during the 1977 harvest, even without counting the value of the farmer's lost work time. The additional costs of titling, credit, travel, and lost work-time meant that the probability of making a profit on rice was only one in eight for all farmers (Bunker 1980). Fewer than twenty percent of farmers had received credit for perennial crops by 1977, so most still depended on rice.

Both the Banco do Brasil and EMATER had counted on minimum prices when calculating the farmers' debt capacity each year. In fact, the delays at the CIBRAZEM warehouses either cost the farmer so much or forced him to sell to private buyers at prices so much lower that the delays and costs became a major factor in many farmers' inability to repay loans.

The inefficiencies resulting from the delays and omissions of all these interdependent agencies were compounded by their inability to control their employees' activities. The Banco do Brasil suffered from embezzlement and kickbacks. Some INCRA personnel demanded bribes for access to good lots or expedition of the titling process. Many functionaries of the various agencies purchased lots in the colonization areas, either through power of attorney or in the name of relatives or spouses. They thus contributed to the inflation of land prices that encouraged many colonists to sell their use rights. Employees took advantage of favored positions to get bank loans, to avoid the long lines at the

CIBRAZEM warehouses, to receive special technological orientation, and to benefit from other government assistance programs through the informal exchange networks that emerged among the lot owners in the various agencies. These networks became dense enough to discourage the agencies from pressuring other agencies whose inefficient performance created difficulties for all. Because the private prosperity of so many agents depended on interagency good will, considerable reluctance existed to criticize publicly or complain to administrative headquarters.

Some government agents also bought crops directly from the farmers. Usually working through employees or partners, who in some cases were their relatives, agents could take advantage of their special relations with CIBRAZEM personnel to avoid the long waits in line. They could also circumvent the CFP's regulation restricting minimum-price payments to the producers or to buyers who could prove that they had paid the minimum price. Agents could thus achieve a high rate of return and a rapid turnover on their investment. With some crops such as pepper and cocoa, market prices were so much higher in Belém than on the highway that the agents made returns of up to 50 percent, even after paying for shipping. CIBRAZEM employees also colluded with the regular private-sector intermediaries to accept the rice they bought at low prices from the farmers. In addition to distorting official policy, these corrupt practices aggravated the delays that motivated farmers to sell to private buyers.

Moreover, government employees occupied an excellent position to buy good land, develop it, and buy crops from other farmers because they knew how to work the agency system and because they possessed secure, relatively large incomes to invest, including free housing and use of official transport. Access to credit as lot owners and rapid return as crop buyers magnified the power and the effects of the employees' basic capital. As a result, government agents collectively played an important role in the distortion of official policy for the colonization projects and the eventual failure to achieve the stated goals.

## CONCLUSION

The Brazilian government's colonization program was subject from its conception to attack from powerful civil groups and from that part of its own bureaucracy allied to them. Concessions to these sectors and the reduction of colonization budgets in favor of other government programs added to the growing problems of the colonization process itself. The organizational deficiencies of the rural development programs designed to promote the colonization process both encouraged and were aggravated by the private sectors' interference in the official programs.

Overall, standard explanations of program failures under various types of Latin American government better account for the fate of the Transamazon colonization projects than predictions derived from theories of the BA or corporatist state. Rather than demonstrating effective government control of social, economic, and political relations, the history of these projects reflects private-sector penetration of the state apparatus and competition for its resources, bureaucratic inefficiency associated with excessive complexity, lack of effective governmental control and coordination, the accumulated encumbrances of past political and administrative arrangements, and discontinuities of government commitment caused by shifts in the relative power among different segments of the government. The failure of the Transamazon colonization programs to achieve their goals indicates that the Brazilian regime suffered many of the same restraints on its executive capacities that have crippled social welfare, land reform, and other rural development programs under different kinds of regimes.

The environmental and logistical obstacles to the establishment of "modern" institutions (such as registered land title, formal bank credit, and controlled markets) and to the coordination and control of the bureaucratic agencies assigned to establish and regulate these institutions posed a formidable administrative challenge. Instead of being able to respond to this challenge with the administrative capacity required to "deeply transform society," the government was forced to operate through agencies inherited from what Roett (1978) has described as a patrimonial state—a governmental apparatus in which various agencies control certain economic and political sectors and derive part of their own political and economic base from that control. The BA was able to mount ambitious new programs aimed at transforming the Amazon, but it had to operate through an administrative structure established by earlier regimes and geared to the socioeconomic organization of other areas (Pereira 1978).

The government's inability to establish the institutions on which its administrative structure and procedures were based, its lack of control over its own bureaucracy, and its vulnerability to interference from various private groups and interests demonstrate significant limits on its autonomy and administrative efficacy in a program initiated outside the organizational and institutional supports of the nation's industrial center and lacking support from powerful private interests.

O'Donnell's model of the BA predicated its emergence at points of crisis in nations that have attained extended, but vertically unintegrated, industrialization. Extreme regional disparities within Brazil are not adequately accounted for in this model, however (Foweraker 1981). The south-central regions of Brazil are extensively industrialized, but the BA affects and is affected by vast areas within its national boundaries where



the economic and organizational systems on which O'Donnell's model is predicated are only tenuously established (Velho 1976, 1979). The present study has shown that the BA's autonomy and administrative capacity were less than predicted in a particular program in the Amazon. It also suggests that a comprehensive model of the Brazilian state must take into account the political and administrative effects of unequal regional development within a single nation.

## NOTES

1. General explanations of these failures, however, are extremely diverse. Different studies cite a wide range of causative factors including: the great disparities of wealth and privilege in most Latin American countries, interregional differences in production levels, vested dominant class interests in archaic production systems, isolation and subordination of indigenous communities, lack of sufficient personnel with entrepreneurial and organizational skills, distrust among various sectors of the population, duplicity of international financial institutions, and intervention by multinational corporations (Veliz 1965, 1967; Anderson 1966; Furtado 1965; Herrera 1965; Lambert 1969; Feder 1976; Petras and LaPorte 1971; McEwen 1975).

Explanations of the more specific problems of rural-development-program failure are equally diverse. They include elite or systemic obstruction or distortion of program goals, intensified exploitation and social dislocation of small-holding farmers (Stavenhagen 1964; Fals Borda 1970, 1971); manipulation of rural development programs by government to maintain political control (Cotler 1972, Feder 1973); active government opposition to peasant organization (Landsberger and Hewitt 1968); rural-community fears based on a long history of dominant-class and government discrimination and exploitation (Huizer 1969); excessively complex or cumbersome legal mechanisms and bureaucratic procedures (Nisbet 1967, Findley 1973); inadequacies of "modern urban" credit institutions in rural settings (Gillette and Uphoff 1973; Adams, Davis, and Bettis 1972); unrealistic or inflexible program goals (Tendler 1973); limited scope and impact of projects (Thiesenhusen 1971, Findley 1973, Bunker 1979); and the insecurity of peasant land tenure (Thome 1979).

2. The term *labor reserve* is relative here. In some areas, especially where ranching projects clear vast tracts of land, the expelled farmers may join the ranks of imported laborers. The clearing phase always absorbs much more manpower than the later phases, however, and many of the local and imported laborers are forced to move on once it has ended.
3. Of the 6,987,567 hectares of land sold to private buyers by the State of Pará between 1924 and 1976, 6,481,042.8 hectares, or 92.7 percent, were sold in the five-year period between the opening of the highway in 1959 and the revolution in 1964 (based on data from Santos 1979). The revolution greatly reduced the massive state-land sales, although the states have contested these restrictions and have continued to sell land.
4. This phrase was used in various discourses by President Médici and by the president of INCRA at that time, Moura Cavalcanti (INCRA 1972).
5. The extent and implications of this penetration in the case of INCRA can be shown by the following example: one of INCRA's chief lawyers also worked for a large private business. One of its owners publicly stated that the company intended to take over a sugar mill in the PIC Altamira, despite the mill's being owned by a cooperative and managed entirely by INCRA (personal communication from various INCRA officials).
6. Barraclough (1970) attributes the proliferation of agricultural development agencies, which he calls typical of many Latin American countries, to the fact that dominant-class interests are so strongly entrenched in the Ministry of Agriculture that the government is obliged to create special agencies to carry out rural development programs that do not directly serve these interests. These agencies are subordinate to the Minis-

- try of Agriculture, however, and are thus subject to limitations on their power, resources, and policy formulation.
7. Each EMATER is chartered at the individual state level as a "public company in private law" and is affiliated to and partially financed by the national-level EMBRATER (Brazilian EMATER).
  8. Author's estimate based on various INCRA documents.

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