

and sometimes a cow or small dwelling, and told to make a new life for themselves. Many tried, but gave up after a few years, often leaving much damaged land behind. Hordes flooded into the Amazon from Brazil's poverty-stricken northeast; across the continent, thousands flowed down the Andes into the Amazon region of Ecuador. On the other side of the world, the poor were shipped from Java's slums to West Papua. Dozens of tribal peoples disappeared as a result of all this. Some tribes, now rendered landless, drifted to the towns to try and eke out a living as labourers, prostitutes or beggars. Losing connection with each other, and with no home to return to, they disappeared irretrievably as peoples. Others, such as the Guarani in Brazil, hung on desperately, living on shrinking scraps of land, sometimes just on roadside verges, but nevertheless clinging together and to a sense of their identity, and remembering what they had lost. Many are still there. Guarani children still routinely despair and commit suicide, usually by hanging themselves from trees. The youngest recorded so far was Luciane Ortiz, a little girl of nine.

## **Resource theft**

Over the last generation, resource exploration and extraction has become an even bigger threat than colonization. This usually comprises oil/petroleum, minerals, or timber, as well as damming rivers for hydropower. As the world's population consumes more goods and energy, driven by its growing population and huge corporations promoting an unceasing demand for new things, the price of such commodities has increased severalfold, making it more and more profitable to exploit remoter areas, exactly the places where tribal peoples have survived.

These developments vary from major international programmes to those promoted by local companies and individuals, who are often poor themselves. The most destructive schemes of recent decades, all funded by taxpayers from the industrialized world, include the Narmada dam in India, the Polonoroeste and Carajás projects in Brazil, the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline, and the Indonesian transmigration programme, which I have described. All destroyed tribal communities; most were environmental disasters. They largely benefitted the companies which built them, and the authorities with their hands in the cash register, siphoning off whatever they could. The total cost of these five megaprojects is unknown, but it certainly amounted to many billions of dollars. The real impacts of such catastrophes, rather than the fantasies disseminated in World Bank and government reports, were predicted years in advance and repeated, largely unsuccessful, efforts were made by human rights and environmental organizations, as well as by indigenous groups themselves, to stop them.

The largest copper and gold mine in the world is in West Papua, destroying a mountain sacred to the Amungme people. Dams in Ethiopia threaten the tribes downstream, such as the Mursi, who rely on seasonal flooding to enrich the riverbanks for crops and pasture. A diamond mine lay behind the eviction of Gana and Gwi Bushmen in Botswana. In Brazil, gold miners brought in an especially dangerous form of malaria which killed twenty percent of Yanomami in just a few years and remains a deadly threat. Gold and copper mining in the Philippines, uranium in Australia, coal and nickel in the United States and Canada, all have been acute problems for decades.

Almost everywhere now the race for underground riches has spread into areas once considered safe. Nowhere is this

more destructive than in Amazonian Ecuador and Peru, but as the destruction grips, so does opposition to it. The American oil giant, Chevron, was presented with a claim for billions in damages from Ecuadorean Indians, brought through the New York courts. In an attempt to save their lands, Amazon Indians blocked roads and rivers in Peru for some weeks in 2009. Government forces then attacked them, provoking the killing of several policemen hostages the Indians were holding. Such an uprising had been unprecedented for generations. In Peru's 1742 Indian revolt, the authorities characterized the Indians trying to protect their lands as 'savages'. They said the same in 2009.

## **Capitalism, communism, globalization**

It is sometimes argued that the root cause of all these problems is market-led capitalism, but it is also true that both Soviet Russia and communist China destroyed their indigenous peoples as thoroughly as anyone else. This was primarily achieved through timber and oil extraction and the 'collectivization' of reindeer herds in Siberia, and the hysteria of the 1960s Chinese 'cultural revolution', which imposed Maoism with as much brutality as any medieval crusade. It is also often claimed that recent, so-called 'development' projects constitute a new form of destructive 'globalization', though in fact it has been around for centuries.

A good illustration of this fact is the scramble for rubber at the end of the nineteenth century. This was provoked by Ford's mass production of the motorcar in the United States, combined with Goodyear's discovery of vulcanization in Ireland that rendered rubber hard enough to make car tyres. Some of the valuable gum came from the Congo but the