

# **AMAZON FOREST, INFINITESIMAL CONSIDERATIONS.**

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Marco Antonio General Secretary of our Y.M.C.A. gave us the advice: we have to be prepared to talk about two issues of major interest nowadays in the U.S.A.: The deforestation of Amazon Jungle and Brazil's multi-billion debt. The Brazilian debt is, somehow, a relatively new issue. The Amazon Forest, nevertheless, is a very old subject discussed time to time. Probably the public opinion in the U.S.A. is concerned nowadays about the Amazon Forest because opinions of the U.S. Senator, Albert Gore. Early this century Amazon was in the stage because a frustrated Fordland, a dream of Henry Ford. Now, in the fall of 1987, a Commission with the members Albert Gore, Tim Wirth and John Heinz made, to say viciously, an important finding, with the support of a Dr. James Hansn, NASA Chief of Godard Institute for Spatial Studies: That the greenhouse effect has reached to the heart of US Senate, and immediately made the temperature in the House climb up to as far as 99 degrees Fahrenheit! Amazon was the responsible. Immediately was raised the hypothesis suggesting that the Greenhouse Effect was generated by fires in the Amazon Forest. Fires producing, they said, too much Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). Enough to provoke a hecatomb in the whole Planet, such as deice in the poles, just few decades ahead. The Senators have visited Rondonia State (in deep Amazon area) toward the end of 1998. The visit was to show their disappointment for the assassination of one regional union leader, Chico Mendes, and, as well, to see themselves, the extent on forest devastation by forest burns, along the BR-364, a federal highway. They became disappointed indeed. They could not see even one single forest burn. This was just because of one simple and very well known reason, among the Amazonians: they have arrived in December during the water's season. The forest burns can only be seen for a short period, in fact two months: August and September, in Rondônia. September/October in other subregions. In the remaining months the forest lays submerged in the immense green harmony of rains and thunder rumbles. From the moment the U.S.A. Senator returned home a red warning light was turned on: intellectual, scientific, political, diplomatic media circles start to mobilize themselves and the public opinion with a clear message: we ought to preserve the Amazon Humid Tropical forest to save our Planet. After it, old stories, half-truths and, to be just fair, some realities about the Amazon environment where thrown at the international table, generating, for sure panic, anxieties, public movements, civic meetings, forums, symposiums, preachers' sermons, all idiosyncrasies and ideologies. The game of tensions has reached to a so high level that the U.S.A. Republican Senator Bob Kasten said emphatically: when environment is the question, and more if is the Greenhouse Effect, national borders are irrelevant.

## **GREENHOUSE EFFECT.**

The Greenhouse Effect is the resultant of a group of natural physic-chemical actions from the absorption, by lower atmosphere stratum, making higher, consequently, the ambient temperature. The retention of the heat in the earth atmosphere, that stops the flux of infrared radiation, would be the result of high concentration of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other gases

generated by the burning of carbon, petroleum, natural gas and others. Now if one goes to any serious study, made up based in scientific research, will find that the contribution of Brazilian Forest Fires for the Greenhouse Effect is of no significance. The time Magazine, in January, 2nd, 1989 produces a large and serious report, with many objectivity, passion, showing that the main responsible agents for the atmosphere contamination are not in the Humid Forest. The world champions are the U.S.A., holding 22.8%; The Soviet Union with 18.87%, the whole Europe with 21.53% and Brazil, after Japan, China, Canada, with only .93%. The important contribution for the said Greenhouse Effect is not from the Forest burns, but cars, house heaters in cold countries, factories, and coal electricity plants.

### **WORLD'S LUNG.**

As is said nowadays concerning the Greenhouse Effect, in the 70's scientists and newscasters kept saying that the Amazon Forest was responsible for the generation for more than half the oxygen. Because of this was said, the deforestation could cause the dead by asphyxia of the whole biosphere. At the time, as now, was said that the Amazon Forest would have been internationalized, to preserve the survival of the whole humanity! Today any serious person, talking about this subject supported by knowledge and genuine interest, will recognize as false the stories about Amazon world's Lung. Scientists know that the Amazon Forest is not a young Forest. Because of this it generates, by photosynthesis, the oxygen it uses. A young forest will produce more oxygen than it requires. Is not the Amazon nowadays status. There we have a mature Forest.

### **FEW WORDS ABOUT THE GIANT.**

The Amazon region is a gigantic frontier. The widest portion of the Brazilian Territory. In a sight from the space the South American Amazon represents 1/20 of the earth surface; 2/5 of the whole South America; 3/5 of Brazil's Territory (8,400,000 sq kilometers). The Amazon has 1/5 of the world's available drinkable waters and 1/3 of the forests. But in opposition the Amazon has 3,5 millesimal portion of the world's population. Brazil has 63.4% of the South American Amazon Forest and shares it with another 7 Countries. The size and position of the Amazon Forest make it, along the years, both attractive and inaccessible. The economic value and strategic of the jungle is clear, making to rise, time after time, the theory of its internationalization under the face of different projects. Doubtless, Brazil need to expand its agricultural frontier to feed its now 160 million inhabitants. Brazil cannot ignore all the riches under the green cover of the trees in the forest; iron, manganese, bauxite, platinum, silver, cooper, gold and diamonds, to say few. Brazil cannot just preserve more than four million square kilometers as the Botanic Garden of our Planet, while his people suffer hunger, disease, illiteracy and all the problems of underdevelopment and poverty. On the other hand, inside Brazil there is many people interested in environmental questions, and, for sure, Amazon is one of their major preoccupations. There are groups who fight against government projects for roads and highways across the Forest. There are groups fighting against the gold miners. Groups to preserve important animal species. People against and in favor of new dams, to generate electricity to the Country and to avoid near collapse. There are groups in defense of the Indians living in areas rich in minerals that they can't exploit. There are groups outside the Country making pressure on international credit entities to boycott credits to Brazil. Just now there is many pressure, is said from U.S.A. to avoid a long term Japanese credit, to permit the

construction of a highway, across a part of the forest, enabling Brazil to be connected with Pacific Ocean, via Peru. This is almost the same thing you have in U.S.A., concerning abortion, Indians, Negroes, homeless, drugs and so on. And you know better that the majority that the forum for such discussions is the United States Capitol, where as you use to say, we the people, are there. So, what Brazil is very much concerned is to find, using its representatives' bodies, like the Brazilian Congress, avenues for the future of our Amazon Forest. Finally, I'll take in consideration the following two points:

**1** - Developed Countries of today, like the U.S.A. has changed its natural environment with no care, to give the fruits of development to its inhabitants. In fact, as said before, even today, the U.S.A. is the biggest pollution generator in the world. **2** - Brazilian authorities seems ready to find ways of cooperation that may lead to an intelligent use of the Amazon Forest, even because is clear that any project will require many economic resources, what, as everybody knows, is not available there, by now. One thing is very much important to know: Brazil is not thinking in convert the whole Amazon Forest in a gigantic factory of oxygen, rain and thunders for the pleasure of the rest of our planet. Amazon will mean more than just it.

Thank you.

**Support books:**

**1 Amazônia - Planetarização e Moratória Ecológica.**

Prof. Samuel Benchimol. Professor da Universidade do Amazonas e Conselheiro do Instituto Superior de Estudo da Amazônia.

**2 Amazônia.**

Berta K. Becker - Professora da Universidade do Rio de Janeiro.