


SCIENCE AS A MATTER OF STATE: IMPERIALISM AND SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS IN CENTRAL BRAZIL


A CIÊNCIA COMO QUESTÃO DE ESTADO: IMPERIALISMO E MISSÕES CIENTÍFICAS NO BRASIL CENTRAL




<https://doi.org/10.22228/rtf.v17i1.1322>

Glauber Lopes Xavier


 Universidade Estadual de Goiás

 Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7905-4962>

 E-mail: glauber.xavier@ueg.br

Pedro Henrique Marques Cardoso

 Universidade Estadual de Goiás

 E-mail: henri9684@gmail.com

Resumo: Este artigo analisa as pesquisas científicas organizadas pela Fundação Brasil Central (FBC) em parceria com instituições de pesquisa internacionais no Brasil Central. Grande parte destas pesquisas se configurou como importantes empreendimentos científicos, destinados a conhecer as potencialidades naturais do território. Diante disso, o objetivo foi o de analisar a política imperialista contida nestes estudos e pesquisas conduzidos por estas instituições, entendendo que tais pesquisas possuíam não apenas a finalidade de abranger questões relacionadas ao conhecimento propriamente dito, mas também o objetivo de servir de instrumento de dominação territorial nos quadros de um capitalismo periférico e dependente.

Palavras-chaves: Estado. Ciência. Imperialismo.

Abstract: This paper analyzes the scientific research organized by the Central Brazil Foundation (FBC) in partnership with international research institutions in Central Brazil. Much of this research was configured as an important scientific endeavor aimed at discovering the natural potential of the territory. Therefore, the objective was to analyze the imperialist policy contained in these studies and research conducted by these institutions, understanding that such research had not only the purpose of covering issues related to knowledge itself but also the objective of serving as an instrument of domination in the framework of peripheral and dependent capitalism.

Keywords: State. Science. Imperialism.

Introduction

The capitalist mode of production, in its constant search to increase its profits, does not rest on looking for ways to revolutionize the means of production. The 20th century, in particular, signaled more clearly that the revolution of the means of production would depend, to a large extent, on the scientific-technical revolution. The monopoly of scientific and technological knowledge by the great powers becomes a condition for maintaining the

hegemony of the bourgeois state because whoever dominates scientific activity, which is an element of capital accumulation, starts to control investments in research, regulating the introduction of innovations in the market, besides adding the results of this activity to the production process.

Thus, throughout the 20th century, scientific activity has emerged as an important element of monopoly capitalism, thus characterizing yet another form of imperialist domination. After the Second World War, in particular, scientific activity became the object of greed in the great economic centers of the world. “The struggle for the appropriation of the results of scientific work has become an increasingly decisive field of action for the economic success of companies; and technological espionage [...] has become a regular activity.”¹

From another point of view, it is important to note that scientific activity, especially from the second half of the 20th century, becomes part of the capital accumulation process. However, this is not exclusive to capitalist states. Let us remember that the USSR, during the Cold War, invested massively in scientific research centers, in addition to considerably increase the number of researchers in its territory. In summary, what we intend to expose is that scientific activity, in general terms, integrates directly with contemporary times. The counterpart of this issue, as already exposed, is that the capitalist nations will use Science and Technology as instruments of imperialist power.

To enhance the fundamental role played by science and technology, one must acknowledge the significance of propaganda in disseminating life ideals, shaping behaviors, and inducing consumption practices, as well as the transformations within factory systems and the everyday life of the working class. Marxist theorists like Gramsci (2015), Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), and Henri Lefebvre (1968) have provided significant contributions to understanding modern capitalism. In "Americanism and Fordism," Gramsci (2015) notes how commodity society extends beyond the capital-labor relationship, invading seemingly more autonomous aspects of life—those areas individuals believe they control, such as marriage, sexuality, and intergenerational relations².

Originating from the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer³ acknowledge that the alleged enlightenment of modernity has subjugated man to the realm of commodities and their phantasms. Lastly, Henri Lefebvre⁴, renowned for his studies on everyday life,

¹ DOS SANTOS, Theotonio. *Revolução Científico-Técnica e Capitalismo Contemporâneo*, Petrópolis, RJ: Editora Vozes, 1983, p. 62.

² GRAMSCI, Antonio. *Cadernos do cárcere*. Volume 4. 5ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2015.

³ ADORNO, Theodor; HORKHEIMER, Max. *Dialética do esclarecimento*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1985.

⁴ LEFEBVRE, Henri. *La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1968.

echoed this group of critical thinkers regarding the modernity project under the imperatives of the capitalist mode of production. Regardless of the challenges capitalism poses to the proletariat's emancipation, Badiou's⁵ exhortation is crucial, advocating for what he calls the communist hypothesis: "What is decisive, first and foremost, is to maintain the historical hypothesis of a world free from the law of profit and private interest."

In Brazil, in particular, the awareness of the need to implement a scientific development policy gained more strength in the last years of the 1940s, during the government of General Eurico Gaspar Dutra. At this time, the national elite, not unaware of the political-military context of the cold war, came to share the belief that scientific activity was a condition for the country's flourishing. According to Andrade: "the production of scientific knowledge and nuclear energy were seen as the solutions to overcome the nation's chronic backwardness and as a way of showing the cultural grandeur and political-military power."⁶

At the end of the 1940s, still under the Dutra government, Project No. 260/49 was proposed to the National Congress with the purpose to create the National Research Council (CNPq). This initiative came from the combined efforts of some Brazilian scientists and members of the Navy and the Army, most of them scholars of Physics, Biology, and Chemistry. Among the names that stood out in this context, it is worth remembering those of Álvaro Alberto⁷ and César Lattes⁸, important personalities of Brazilian science who left a series of contributions in the field of scientific knowledge, especially in Physics.

In the same decade, the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (1948) and the Brazilian Center for Physical Research (1949) were established. These initiatives marked a fundamental period for Brazilian sciences, aligning ideologically with developmentalism and, hence, with the national industrialization project⁹.

⁵ BADIOU, Alain. *A hipótese comunista*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2012, p.39.

⁶ ANDRADE, Ana Maria Ribeiro de. *Físicos, Mésons e Política: a dinâmica da ciência na sociedade*. São Paulo/Rio de Janeiro: Hucitec/Mast/CNPq, 1999, p. 107-108.

⁷ Álvaro Alberto was one of the pioneers in the struggle for the establishment in Brazil of an autonomous scientific policy. He followed a military career, reaching the post of Vice Admiral of the Navy. In addition, he founded the Brazilian Chemical Society in 1922 and served as professor of explosive chemistry at the Naval School between the 1920s and 1930s. Between 1935 and 1937, Álvaro Alberto dedicated himself to teaching industrial chemistry at the Army Technical School. In 1942, he took over as head of the Department of Physical Sciences at the Naval School, being also twice president of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (ABC).

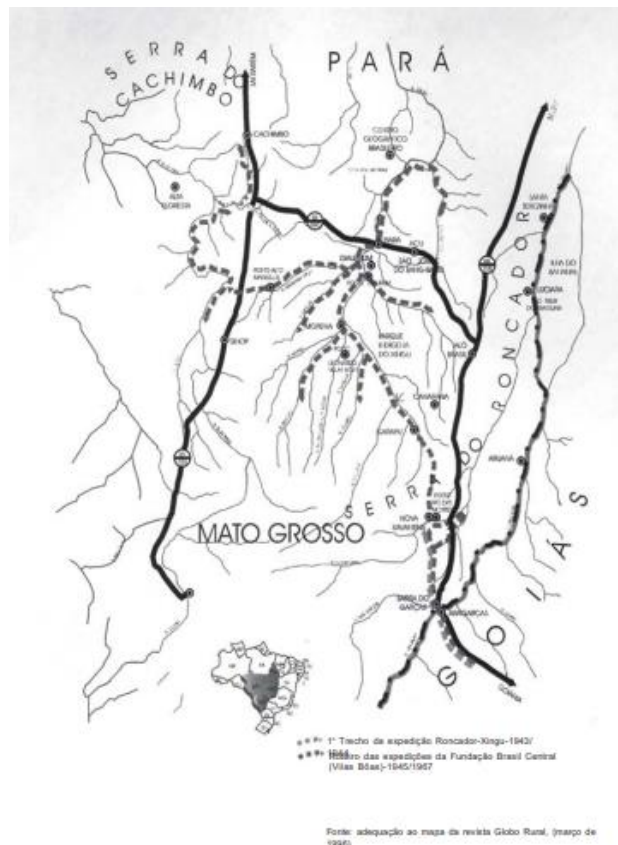
⁸ César Lattes was the Brazilian physicist who participated in the discovery of the pi meson. In addition, he was an associate at the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (ABC), and was also founder and scientific director of the Brazilian Center for Physical Research (CBPF).

⁹ BOTELHO, André. José Leite Lopes: a ciência e o desenvolvimento brasileiro, 1950-1980. *CBPF/MCT*, n.º 003/04. Disponível em: https://cbpfindex.cbpf.br/publication_pdfs/CS00304.2010_08_11_17_46_59.pdf. Acesso em: 23 mar. 2024.

However, it is vital to recognize that the national developmentalist project and the construction of the national industry's foundations are not immune to the offensive of international monopolistic capital and, in this context, to the incursions in the field of scientific research. Two events in Brazilian history during the 20th century indicate setbacks in the cycles of strengthening the structural conditions that might have ensured greater institutional and decision-making autonomy: Vargas's suicide in August 1954, leading to Eurico Gaspar Dutra's rise to power, and a decade later, the military coup of 1964¹⁰.

The Central Brazil territory began to suffer constant public policy interventions triggered by the Brazilian State from the 1940s onwards, such as several expeditions (picture below). The main objective of these interventions was to promote the economic occupation of this region. Among the various actions planned by the State to consolidate this occupation, the creation of institutions primarily intended to meet this objective, for example, the Central Brazil Foundation (FBC), created in 1943, stands out as the main one.

Figura 1. Mapa com rotas conduzidas pela Expedição Roncador-Xingu e pela Fundação Brasil Central.



Fonte: Lima Filho, 2000¹¹

¹⁰ Xavier, G. L. (2020). Estado Burguês, Planejamento Econômico e Industrialização no Brasil (1930-1980). *Revista de Estudos e Pesquisas Sobre as Américas*, 14(2), 338–372. <https://doi.org/10.21057/10.21057/repamv14n1.2020.27224>

¹¹ LIMA FILHO, Manuel Ferreira. Aragarças: a cidade encantada no sertão de Goiás. *Revista Horizontes Antropológicos*, v. 6, n. 13, jun. 2000.

It had the objective of promoting the economic and social development of the Midwest region, with its area of activity being the states of Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Goiás, as well as the then-called Federal Territory of Rondônia (current state of Rondônia), and the Federal District. The FBC was responsible for guiding public and private investments to the areas in which it operated, coordinating and distributing economic activities. Thus, the measures taken by this agency took into account the constant transformations that had been taking place in the country, such as the transformation of traditional agriculture into market agriculture, the accelerated process of urbanization and industrialization in the Southeast region, and the depletion of the agricultural frontier in South of Brazil.

Much of the research organized by the FBC was configured as an important scientific endeavor aimed at discovering the natural potential of the territory of Central Brazil. Many of these studies took place in partnership with national and international research institutions. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to analyze the imperialist policy contained in these studies and research proposed by these institutions, understanding that such research had not only the purpose of covering issues related to knowledge itself but also had the objective of serving as an instrument of territorial domination in the framework of dependent and peripheral capitalism.

In these terms, it must be borne in mind that the new imperialism differs in many ways from the old one. A fundamental aspect is that this new type of imperialism, for its success, does not imply the destruction of the sovereignty of the National States¹². On the contrary, its maintenance becomes an indispensable condition for the designs of capital in a world that is increasingly integrated under the imperatives of the market. The scientific missions carried out in Brazilian territory took place within the framework of an economic integration that, on the one hand, allowed the development of national productive forces and, on the other, implied the reproduction of a new type of dependency.

It is not the theme of this paper how the development of Brazilian capitalism took place. However, it is necessary to contextualize that the scientific missions that will be explored in the future consisted of an important expedient for the operation of imperialist policies forged by commercial interests and the exploitation of resources in the territories of peripheral countries. Thus, an “imperialism as accumulation by spoliation”¹³ was formed according to Harvey, in which the offensive of the central countries consists of the accumulation of capital by using favorable conditions for the composition of value,

¹² WOOD, Ellen Meiksins. *O império do capital*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2014.

¹³ HARVEY, David. *O novo imperialismo*. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2003.

especially the workforce and raw materials¹⁴. Although the sovereignty of peripheral National States is maintained, it does not guarantee autonomy in the decision-making processes inherent to the productive or financial market. Finally, it does not guarantee them to reach the development despite the relative technological progress.

It is inferred, based on the dialectic that permeates the development of capitalism in peripheral economies, that the development of central economies is correlated with the “development of underdevelopment”^{15,16} in peripheral and, precisely because of this, dependent economies. This model of the constitution of the capitalist dynamics occupied Latin America strongly, especially Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico, in the second half of the 20th century. In the Brazilian case, Gunder Frank points out that his industry has become increasingly dependent on foreign capital and, for this reason, the Brazilian industrial bourgeoisie “sólo subsiste mediante su dependencia de la metrópoli imperialista del sistema capitalista mundial.”¹⁷

A thorough analysis of the primary documents related to foreign missions and scientific research programs that took place under the FBC was carried out for conducting this research. Regarding the activities developed and monitored by these institutions, one has attracted attention: foreign missions and scientific research programs financed by national and international institutions that were conducted throughout Central Brazil.

Foreign scientific missions in Central Brazil in the context of the FBC activities

There is no secret that foreign interest in Brazil’s natural wealth has been constant since colonial times. Many expeditions traveled the Brazilian territory, organized in large part by the European States, which were intended to collect information about the available natural resources. Even with political independence, Brazil continued to be the target of scientists from several countries, engaged not only in investigating the richness of its fauna and flora but also interested in extracting them.

From the 20th century, especially with the advancement of nationalist ideals, pressures to establish a policy aimed at protecting national borders from the onslaught of foreign scientists began to gain momentum. Therefore, in 1933, during the so-called Vargas Era, the Supervisory Council of Artistic and Scientific Expeditions in Brazil (CFE)

¹⁴ OSÓRIO, Jaime. Padrão de reprodução do capital: uma proposta teórica. In: FERREIRA, Carla; OSÓRIO, Jaime; Luce, Mathias. (orgs.). *Padrão de reprodução do capital: contribuições da teoria marxista da dependência*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2012. pp. 37-86.

¹⁵ MARINI, Ruy Mauro. *Dialética da dependência*. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes; Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2000.

¹⁶ GUNDER FRANK, André. *Capitalismo y subdesarrollo em America Latina*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Signos, 1970.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2010-211.

was created. A large part of the foreign scientific missions that the FBC offered support went through the supervision of the CFE. Because the historical trajectory of this agency is intertwined with the history of the FBC, it is extremely important to understand the relationship between these two institutions and foreign scientific activity in Brazil. Therefore, it is known that:

Decree No. 22,698, of May 11, 1933, of the Provisional Government, regulated the exercise of State control over scientific and artistic expeditions in Brazilian territory, both foreign and private nationals, as well as determined the creation of the Supervisory Council of Artistic and Scientific Expeditions in Brazil – CFE. The new agency would be located within the scope of the Ministry of Agriculture, under the General Directorate of Scientific Research, an agency to which several research-oriented institutions were linked before in various fields of knowledge, often with the collaboration of foreigner researchers¹⁸.

Thus, the CFE became the Brazilian agency responsible for analyzing and deliberating license applications made by researchers, whether they were linked to national or international research institutions, which were interested in undertaking some type of scientific expedition in the national territory. These expeditions had several objectives, standing out those aimed at exploring Brazilian fauna and flora, and especially those aimed at collecting data on the mineralogical potential of Brazilian lands.

According to Grupioni: “the North and Midwest regions attracted more than half of the expeditionaries who went into Brazilian territory during the years in which the Council was in force.”¹⁹ It is at this point that the CFE connects to the FBC, as the activities of the latter corresponded precisely to the Central Brazil territory – encompassing the Brazilian Midwest and some locations in the North region. The CFE started to receive logistical support from the FBC after its creation in 1943. Both institutions were extinguished in December 1967. In addition, another relevant point about the CFE trajectory that is worth mentioning is that, in 1951, it was subordinated to CNPq – an entity that assumed most of the CFE functions after its extinction.

The inspection carried out by the CFE focused mainly on foreign and national expeditions undertaken by private capital. In fact, there was some fear on the part of the Brazilian State that the national private sector would act as an instrument of international interests. It justifies the supposed rigor of the CFE in releasing license applications for

¹⁸ MACIEL, Dulce Portilho. Pesquisa científica rumo ao Oeste (1933-1968): pioneirismo sob vigilância. Anápolis: UEG, 2006. (Final report of the Research Project activities). p. 11. mimeo.

¹⁹ GRUPIONI, Luís Donisete Benzi. *Coleções e Expedições Vigiladas: os etnólogos no Conselho de Fiscalização das Expedições Artísticas e Científicas no Brasil*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1998, p. 48.

research. Therefore, it is undeniable that during its existence (1933-1967), the CFE was the main reference in the attempt to control scientific expeditions in the Brazilian hinterland.

On the other hand, the CFE operation cannot be seen naively to the point of believing that its performance guaranteed unrestrictedly the defense of national resources so much desired by foreigners in their expeditions. The existence of an inspection agency for these expeditions did not guarantee that, through agreements and sanctions, Brazil was not the target of imperialist attacks under the pretext of science development. Most of the expeditionaries who came to Brazil were from nationalities of great European powers (especially France, England, and Germany), as well as the United States. According to Grupioni, they were “the countries to which more material was exported with authorization from the Supervisory Council.”²⁰

Foreign research within the scope of the FBC

The research carried out by the initiative of foreign research entities stands out within the scope of the FBC. The documentation reveals a large amount of research carried out by individuals linked to universities and companies from other countries. The research took place as large “scientific expeditions” aimed at collecting samples of mineral, animal, and plant specimens, as well as objects produced by the indigenous groups that inhabited the visited regions. “The term scientific expedition was used to designate the movement of research teams to a specific geographical area, aiming at [...] conducting research and obtaining scientific data and knowledge.”²¹

Inland cities of Brazil, especially the regions that correspond to the Amazon and Central Brazil, has always been a target of foreign interests since the colonial times. From the 19th century onwards, for example, the presence of foreign researchers from various nationalities in Brazilian territory was constant. Most of these researchers were naturalists interested in the natural resources of Brazil. Reis questions the interest of these researchers based on the following questions: “Did they do science for science? Did they seek to discover for the pleasure of scientific adventure, under the sensation of the exploits with which they would become famous? Or were they actually working for their governments, which were looking for something more?”²²

²⁰ Ibid., p.49.

²¹ MACIEL, Dulce Portilho. Pesquisa científica rumo ao Oeste (1933-1968): pioneirismo sob vigilância. Anápolis: UEG, 2006. (Final report of the Research Project activities). p. 2. mimeo.

²² REIS, Arthur Cezar Ferreira. *A Amazônia e a Cobiça Internacional*. Rio de Janeiro: Gráfica Record Editora. 1968, p.99.

It is undeniable that the foreign scientific missions undertaken in Brazilian territory have caused some discomfort to the Brazilian State. The creation of supervisory agencies, such as the CFE, is an example of it. We also cannot disregard that many institutions (e.g., CBPF and CNPq) were founded in the national territory from this concern and aiming at the scientific production. According to Azevedo: “it is a time in which intellectual restlessness, penetration, diffusion and organization of scientific thought are inaugurated, with new directions and wider perspectives opening up to culture in the country.”²³ However, according to Reis’ inquiries, the historical course of the 20th century, marked by the onslaught of imperialist capital, confirms that science was seen as a big deal. In the words of Reis:

The scientific expeditions that traveled through the Amazon from the beginning of the 19th century to the 20th century, composed mainly of high-level Europeans, carried out a remarkable work especially regarding the inventory on what the region was worth, in what characterized it most visibly, and in what it could be useful to the interests of humanity. These intensive expeditions were not conditioned to any Brazilian participation, which was not absent from the work of research, attending them with good teams that were not given the necessary justice; but they were carried out with intentions that were not solely related to the distant or immediate objectives of science. [...] **Victor W. Von Hagen, in his biography of Spruce²⁴, observed very well that those traveling naturalists ‘were forerunners of big business.’ More – ‘they made available to business agents a guidebook with the natural resources of the Amazon’. Exact.²⁵** (emphasis added).

The documentation produced by the FBC reveals that, although the Brazilian State has endeavored to seek ways to defend the country’s territorial integrity, this effort has not prevented researchers of various nationalities – mainly from Europe and the USA – from exploring and extracting a large amount of natural wealth in Brazil. As already pointed out, these researchers did not travel to Brazil motivated only by the scientific discoveries they could obtain, as they were, first of all, representatives of the economic and political interests of their respective countries.

It is also known that many of these scientific missions hid their true purposes. Many researchers arrived in Brazil with the premise of working on research to discover a certain disease, for example, when in fact they were interested in collecting elements of Brazilian fauna and flora. However, this practice became more difficult with the CFE creation, but it did not end. It seems, therefore, opportune to reproduce the following incident:

²³ AZEVEDO, Fernando de. *As Ciências no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 1994, p. 41.

²⁴ Richard Spruce was British and a naturalist. He started an expedition in the Brazilian Amazon at the end of the 1840s with the aim of collecting plant specimens of the region.

²⁵ Op. Cit., p.103.

An incident that occurred between the CFE and the Rockefeller Foundation was an exemplary case of the type of material collected in Brazil and destined for export to foreign nations. In early 1937, the CFE embargoed the export, carried out by members of that North American organization, of a cargo consisting of 14 volumes, ten of which with animal skins and the others, among boxes and crates, with live animals. The organization was in our country to work in collaboration with the Yellow Fever Service of the Ministry of Education and Health²⁶.

The FBC acted in the planning and organization of many scientific expeditions to Central Brazil. However, these expeditions also occurred through partnerships between the FBC and other institutions – research laboratories, universities, and study centers, among others – interested in studying nature reserves in Central Brazil, many of which unknown. In the latter case, the institution wishing to promote a particular expedition sent a letter to the FBC to request authorization and, in many cases, assistance. Most of the time this assistance consisted of logistical support for these expeditions – financial resources, transportation, and some elements of infrastructure.

The work of pioneering the inland locations of Brazil, initiated by the FBC from the 1940s, was soon gaining evidence, both on the national and international scene. Immediately, the new areas occupied the actions of the FBC became coveted by researchers of various nationalities, not to mention the interest of national research institutions. Thus, scientific research has gained great relevance among the provisions of the FBC, and its function, as already said, was not only to organize expeditions aiming at the development of technical and scientific studies but also to collaborate with research institutions interested in investigating the natural wealth of Central Brazil.

The number of documents related to the research developed during the actions of the FBC shows us that in fact scientific activity was constant during the existence of this agency. There are more than 800 pages of documents related to technical and scientific studies developed between the 1940s and 1960s. The content of this documentation is quite diverse, standing out agreements between the Brazilian Government and national and international research entities, research reports, papers produced based on studies developed in the areas where the FBC acted, requests for assistance from research organizations to the FBC, research programs and projects developed by this institution and by ‘partner’ institutions (national or foreign), and texts related to foreign scientific activity in Brazil and the issue of national sovereignty.

Considering what has been presented so far regarding the scientific activity of foreign researchers in the areas of action of the FBC, there was a great movement of these

²⁶ MACIEL, Dulce Portilho. Pesquisa científica rumo ao Oeste (1933-1968): pioneirismo sob vigilância. Anápolis: UEG, 2006. (Final report of the Research Project activities). p. 13. mimeo.

individuals in the national territory. In many cases, the purposes of these researchers were well defined, in other cases they acted under the tutelage of the Brazilian State's mistrust and, in some cases, they acted in hiding – the documentation reveals many cases of researchers who were discovered carrying out their research without consent supervisory institutions.

It is important to think that the inspection was not so effective. In this regard, it is convenient to mention the case of Englishman Ezequiel Adrien. This researcher spent the year 1946 exploring the natural wealth of the upper Tapajós River region (State of Pará) on his own initiative, claiming to be unaware of the owner of the exploited area. In early 1947, Ezequiel Adrien received the news that the area he explored was owned by the FBC. Faced with the alert, he sought out the local FBC authorities to account for what he illegally exploited. As if that were not enough, he asked to continue with his studies, claiming to contribute to science in Brazil and asking the FBC for financial help to continue his work. A curious fact was the decision of the local FBC authority – Braz Dias de Aguiar – in the face of this event. In a letter to the FBC, Ezequiel Adrien reports that:

He sought, early in 1947, the former and requested Head of the same Foundation, in the Northern Sector – Captain of Sea and War Braz Dias de Aguiar, reporting to this illustrious patriot, sincerely and loyally, everything he had collected in his investigations, everything he had seen and discovered, both in the field of the plant kingdom and in that of his specialization, the mineral. His report was so impressive and so well received by that high authority that, as a stimulus and reward for his work, a written authorization was granted to him to explore the Foundation's lands²⁷.

The documentation reveals that Adrien found valuable wealth in the region he explored. Among them are deposits of tantalite, gold, diamonds, and oil, from the mineral kingdom, in addition to hardwoods of varying quality, from the plant kingdom. After Adrien revealed himself to the local FBC authority, even though he worked in hiding for almost a year, the institution proved to be complicit with the researcher. In this sense, it is important to note that the decision of Braz Dias was motivated by the interest of the FBC in the wealth found by Adrien. On the other hand, it is noticeable a certain 'relaxation' of the FBC relative to the interests of foreign researchers in the national territory.

As the FBC progressed with its pioneering work, it simultaneously expanded the activities of researchers in these locations. The foreign scientific missions were mainly concentrated in lesser-known locations in the then states of Goiás, Mato Grosso, and Pará. National and foreign researchers had already visited many of these regions in the 19th

²⁷ Letter to the President of Central Brazil Foundation. Rio de Janeiro, February 26, 1948. Signed by Ezequiel N. Adrien. Collection of the Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District.

century, but the FBC facilitated access to the most distant locations. This was possible because of the outposts that were set up in the wake of the vanguard service.

The FBC had in its documentary archives a rich literature about some researchers who carried out expeditions throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries in areas under its control. This literature, in turn, referred to several scientists who were engaged in unraveling the soil, flora, and fauna of Central Brazil, mainly in regions of the Mortes, Xingu, and Tapajós Rivers. The existence of these studies in the FBC archives was explained by the need by the researchers of this institution to obtain as much information as possible about the pioneered regions. In this sense, the experience of researchers who were in the FBC areas in the past (mainly during the 19th century) would contribute directly to the studies developed within its scope from the 1940s. Among the researchers in this literature, the following stand out: William Chandless, Karl Von Den Steinen, Paul Ehrenreich, Henri Coudreau, Hermann Meyer, Max Schmidt, Vincenzo M. Petrullo, among others²⁸.

The great natural wealth of Brazil encouraged researchers from various regions of the world to develop their research in this country. Some of them, for example, chose to live here permanently, being naturalized. In this sense, the case of the German Heinrich Maximilian Friedrich Hellmuth Sick, known as Helmut Sick, is worth mentioning. This researcher arrived in Brazil in 1939, interested in collecting data about Brazilian birds. After starting his expedition in the national territory, he decided not to return to Germany, choosing to stay in Brazil and continuing his studies. In 1946, Helmut Sick was admitted by the FBC as a researcher, becoming one of the main ornithologists in Brazil throughout the 20th century.

During his time at the FBC, Sick developed several studies on birds, plants, and minerals in Central Brazil. Furthermore, he was also interested in knowing some indigenous habits during his expeditions to the inland of Brazil, thus carrying out some studies on certain indigenous tribes in the region of Mato Grosso. Finally, he was a

²⁸ Document description: Chandless William (Report with maps of the survey of the Mauhé, Abacaxis and Canumã rivers, 1867); Karl Von Den Steinen (Map of the survey of the overland route from Cuiabá to Batovy and the descent through it and Xingú to Forte Ambé, 1884); Paul Ehrenreich (After Steinen's second expedition, of which he was part. Ehrenreich returned by land from Cuiabá through the south of Goiás, 1888); Henri Coudreau (The author surveyed in 1895-1896 the Tapajoz de Itaituba to Slatto Augusto and Telles Pires until "Sete Quedas," 1897); Hermann Meyer (He carried out in 1897 and 1898 two expeditions to the tributaries of Xingú. It does not appear that reports and maps were published, but it is very likely that he had performed topographic surveys because especially his last expedition was carried out with great resources. 1898); Max Schmidt (Description of the journey made by the author in 1900-1901, from Cuiabá to Culissehu and the village of Auetí. 1901); Vincenzo M. Petrullo (Petrullo made two reconnaissance flights over Culissehu, Coluene, and Sete de Setembro in 1931, later visiting these rivers by canoe. 1931). Literatura sobre os formadores do Xingú, o Telles Pires e o Canumã, Rio de Janeiro, 1947. Collection of the Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District.

member of projects developed by the National Museum in partnership with FBC, in addition to participating directly in the elaboration of the project that aimed to create a Museum of Zoology and Botany in Aragarças.

Helmut Sick worked at the FBC for more than fifteen years, more precisely from 1946 to 1960. During that time, he managed to collect valuable and abundant material of Brazilian fauna and flora, bringing together important collections of zoological material. These collections were organized in collaboration with national and foreign scientific institutes. Much of his research, at least what he considered to be the most valuable, was carried out in the Mortes River region and Upper Xingú region. Many species of birds from these regions were unknown to science, being discovered and cataloged pioneered by this naturalist. In a report to the FBC, Sick described a little of his experience in the Xingú region:

Following the Expedition, I arrived in July 1947 at Camp Jacaré, where I stayed for half a year, returning to Rio in February of this year. I brought from there rich collections of naturalistic material, preserved dry and in liquid to serve systematic research. My main interest is in studying the life of animals in the region, especially birds, a subject on which I have gathered a lot of data²⁹.

Numerous studies carried out by Sick have gained notoriety both nationally and internationally. As previously exposed, many of his scientific productions were published in partnership between the FBC, the National Museum, and some scientific research institutions. Sick also represented the FBC in some international scientific events, such as the XI World Congress of Ornithology, held in Basel, Switzerland, between May 24 and June 12, 1954, the most important of them. The Congress brought together scientists from all over the world, with the participation of more than 600 ornithologists. During the event, Sick held a lecture on the 'Brazilian avifauna'.

Among the most outstanding achievements of Sick in scientific circles, the following stand out: wide collections of zoological material, comprising mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects, spiders, and other invertebrates; varied collections of botanical material, including dry material for herbarium and fresh specimens for nursery; ecological studies, annotated and illustrated by drawings; ethnographic studies, especially related to zoology, botany, and human physiology; and photographic documentation related to the fauna and flora of Central Brazil, referring to the indigenous of the region and activities of the Roncador-Xingú Expedition.

The results of the research were published in numerous national and foreign scientific journals, in addition to being used in publications of books and newspapers.

²⁹ Report by Helmut Sick to the FBC – Biological Research of the FBC in Central Brazil; Dr. H. Sick, March 7, 1948. Collection of Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District.

Among these publications, three valuable discoveries made by this researcher stand out regarding the nature of Central Brazil, whose titles are: *Sobre a extração do sal de cinzas vegetais pelos índios do Brasil Central*, published by *Revista do Museu Paulista* in 1949; *Uma nova raça de cardeal procedente do Brasil Central, *Paroaria baeri xinguensis**, published by *Revista Brasileira de Biologia* in 1950; and *Um novo Piprídeo do Brasil Central: *Pipra vilasboasi**, also published by *Revista Brasileira de Biologia* in 1959³⁰.

It is important to reflect on Helmut Sick's stay at the FBC. Even though he played an important role regarding the scientific production in Brazil at the time he was linked to this institution, many of his studies were destined free of charge to German scientific entities. This attitude can be questioned, considering the historical context of that time, still marked by the foreign interest in knowing – and extracting – the natural wealth of Brazil. A significant amount of materials collected by Sick was sent to Research Centers and Museums in his country of origin.

Anthropological research was also well explored during the years of activity of the institutions studied here. The National Museum was one of the Brazilian institutions that most invested in expeditions destined to unveil the peculiarities of the natives of Central Brazil. Regarding foreigners, mainly American, English, German, and French alternated on missions in the inland of Brazil to collect as much data as possible about indigenous peoples. The FBC documentation shows two major anthropological expeditions carried out in the 1940s, that of the American anthropologist Harry B. Wright and other of the Canadian Kalervo Oberg.

Regarding the American expedition, which occurred in 1947, the documents are not as clear as this researcher's intentions, which is very intriguing. In the case of Oberg, he developed ethnological studies in the Xingu during an expedition organized by the Smithsonian Institution in 1948. This expedition was questioned by the then president of the FBC at that time, Viçoso Jardim, who claimed that Brazilians of good repute should also participate in the expedition to avoid 'unnecessary exchanges' considering the purpose of the studies. In response to President Viçoso Jardim, the director of the Smithsonian Institution, Donald Pierson, forwarded the following justification:

You can be sure that representatives, such as Dr. Oberg and me, from the Smithsonian Institution, which has a long tradition of research in various parts of the world, are only interested in studies that provide additions to our knowledge; never in sterile and futile competitions. It is also an American point of view. In fact, in letters, and through verbal communication, I have always sincerely asked for the collaboration of the National Museum and all other research organizations in this great country.

³⁰ Collection of the Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District.

Brazil is so extensive and there are so few researchers, that there is all the need for sincere and prolonged cooperation³¹.

Another case that requires attention and which was the subject of disputes between the FBC, the Presidency of the Republic, the Goeldi Museum (located in the State of Pará), and the National Museum concerns a collection of 9,400 pieces of indigenous ceramics from the Tapajós that the FBC acquired, through purchase, from an American – Robert Brown – in 1945. In 1948, the government of the State of Pará asked the Presidency of the Republic the donation, by the FBC, of this collection to the Goeldi Museum. The FBC did not agree with the decision of the presidency, causing some estrangement between these instances of power. In early 1951, the National Museum intervened in the case by asking the FBC to loan the collection of ceramics to carry out studies. In this case, the FBC decided, by means of an agreement, to assign the collection to the National Museum, without losing ownership of it. Years later, in 1959, this collection would be definitively donated to the National Museum.

The most intriguing aspect of this event is the acquisition of this ceramic collection by the FBC. The collection was owned by an American, kept in a chapel in Santarém, Pará, and protected, according to the documentation, by the US government. Unfortunately, the documentation does not reveal how the United States acquired this collection, even before Brazilian institutions. It is possible that it was acquired through an expedition undertaken by American scientists, and that it went unnoticed by supervisory agencies. The fact is that, even after the acquisition by the FBC, this collection remained the target of greed by many foreign researchers. In 1953, the American archaeologist Helen Palmatary, from the Philadelphia Museum, was in Brazil and developed many studies on this collection of ceramics – most of them published in the USA.

Regarding foreign missions in Central Brazil, the 1950s were not very busy. The documentation does not reveal much in this regard, leaving an unusual gap. If we look at the context of that moment, the 1950s were of great political-military and economic upheaval, as they corresponded to the initial 10 years of the Cold War. The scientific production of the powers involved in this conflict increased and, in fact, Brazil was still the target of the interests of them. On the other hand, relevant research by foreign institutions and researchers in Central Brazil, in the course of this decade, does not appear in the FBC documentation. Another explanation for this gap may be the loss of this documentation.

Unlike the 1950s, the 1960s were quite eventful regarding the FBC scientific activities. Both national and foreign research entities have invested heavily, in partnership

³¹ Letter sent to the FBC presidency. Institute of Social Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, Donald Pierson, May 20, 1948. Collection of the Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District.

with the FBC, in scientific projects in Central Brazil. National institutions such as CNPq, the University of Brazil (UFRJ from 1965), the University of São Paulo (USP), and other research institutions were involved in scientific missions in the inland of the country. Among the foreign institutions, the Royal Geographical Society deserves the most attention, considering the amount of research carried out by it in the national territory. It is important to highlight that during this decade, the FBC organized one of its main expeditions to explore the Brazilian territory – the Xavantina-Cachimbo Expedition. In addition, the 1960s were marked by the rise, through a coup, of the military to power, initiating an authoritarian regime – a fact that consumed the direct influence of international interest, especially of the USA in Brazil.

The case of the Xavantina-Cachimbo Expedition

The Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition, started in mid-1965, with an estimated duration of three years, was organized to open a land communication route through the construction of a highway between Xavantina (in the southwest of Mato Grosso) and Serra do Cachimbo (in the south of Pará). This expedition was part of the elementary objective of the FBC, which was to establish a land communication route between the Southeast and the Brazilian Amazon. The region covered by this expedition corresponds to the transition area between the Cerrado and the Amazon. The areas covered by this expedition were practically unexplored by economic or scientific activities, being, therefore, of interest to many national and foreign research institutions. Thus, the pioneering-colonization work carried out by the FBC was accompanied by constant participation by researchers.

From an economic point of view, the construction of this highway would contribute to the outflow of agricultural production from that region of Mato Grosso and Pará. However, from the scientific point of view, this initiative was of great relevance for research in the field of anthropology, archeology, geology, mineral resources, botany, and many other matters of cultural, social, and economic interest, as the expedition would pass through entirely unknown areas.

The expedition left at the beginning of June 1965 from a place close to Vila de Xavantina (MT). At first, it employed 60 men divided into two groups: the vanguard, responsible for studying the terrain and opening trails; and the rearguard, in charge of building the road and providing provisions. Still in 1965, the expedition covered a total of 210 kilometers, building, on this route, a highway, eight airfields, and several bridges. The FBC expected, with the Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition, to reach the Posto de Cachimbo, in Pará, in 1967, after opening 800 kilometers of road, aiming to make the Brasília-Manaus

connection by land – an objective of which the road between Vila Xavantina and the Posto de Cachimbo corresponded to only a part³².

The presence of foreign research institutions in the country was intensified with the arrival of the military to power in 1964, especially in the FBC activities, which took place under the so-called new imperialism. Many documents of this period have an argument that the FBC pioneer work could not be carried out without the assistance of foreign organizations. It is clear in a letter sent in 1964 by the FBC president Aloysio Lontra Netto to the ambassador of Portugal regarding the pioneering work carried out by the FBC in Central Brazil. According to Aloysio:

[...] In the modern world, it can even be said that such a task [**pioneering-colonization**] transcends national responsibilities to become a problem for the whole of humanity in its battle in search of well-being, prosperity, and abundance. An extraordinary work in which the bravery and creative spirit of the Portuguese race were present from the beginning, the Brazilian Civilization maintains with the Homeland of Your Excellency indissoluble bonds of friendship and collaboration. The remarkable achievements of the Portuguese colonizer, whether in the past or the present, are followed with admiration by the Brazilian people. [...] Furthermore, nothing prevents the Foundation from maintaining collaborative ties in this regard with any Entities, public or private, national or foreign³³ (Emphasis added).

The Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition was great pioneering action in Central Brazil, allowing the existence of an entire scientific atmosphere in the course of its activities. The agreements between the FBC and many research institutions advanced as the expedition's vanguard service advanced. Universities from various locations in Brazil and the world sought the FBC to establish these agreements, most of which were successful. Some departments of the Brazilian Army, the National Department of Highways, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Indian Protection Service, in addition to many State and Municipal institutions, were also involved directly and indirectly in the expedition.

³² Regarding the material resources involved in the expedition, at least those requested at its inception, the collected documentation includes the following information: antimalarial tablets were requested from Mr. José Paulo Filgueira Filho, then head of the Goiano Malaria Sector. Major Luiz Vinhas Neves, director of the Indian Protection Service, was asked to provide 30 caliber 20 shotguns. Mr. Raimundo de Moura Brito, Minister of Health, was requested to supply a Cessna 182 aircraft engine and a Cessna-310 aircraft. The minister was also asked for 1,000 trisulfa antidiarrheal tablets; 1,600 ultracarbon antidiarrheal tablets; 400 vials of 1,500-unit antitetanus serum; 200 anti-influenza vials, among other medications and medical supplies. Eighteen bags of coffee beans were requested from the delegate of the Brazilian Coffee Institute Agency. In April 1965, the Director of the Army's Material Directorate was requested to supply the following materials and their respective quantities: water flask (300); canvas helmet (1000); canvas leggings (500); Haversack (300); Backpack (300); lunchbox (300); canvas belt (300). These details were sourced from Letters to the President of the Central Brazil Foundation. Central Brazil Foundation Archive, National Archive – Regional Coordination of the Federal District.

³³ Letter sent to the Ambassador of Portugal, João de Deus Ramos, December 21, 1964. Aloysio Lontra Netto, FBC president. Collection of the Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District.

The initiative to establish agreements with other institutions also came from the FBC. The acting president Aloysio Lontra Netto at that time, as already mentioned, sent a series of letters to national and international institutions warning about the idealization of the Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition. Aloysio sought to establish partnerships between these institutions and the FBC, arguing about the scientific benefits that this expedition could bring to humanity. In a letter to the Rector of the University of Recife, Aloysio explained:

The expedition will travel through regions never visited by civilized beings, some of them inhabited by indigenous populations who have never had any contact with our people; in addition to fauna and flora, which can be the object of research, these regions also offer scholars the opportunity to prospect for soil and subsoil to collect data on natural resources and prospects for their use. [...] Interested entities will be able to be benefited from the facilities offered by the Foundation, as they get in touch with it to agree on the implementation of the collaboration plans to be approved³⁴.

In other cases, Netto took advantage of the presence of some researchers in Brazilian universities – motivated by some special event or invitation – to reiterate his desire to count, in the FBC activities, with the support and collaboration of researchers from foreign institutions. In an official correspondence to the Visiting Professor at the National University of Brasilia, Dr. Robert Norman Berryman, linked to the University of New York, Netto forwarded, in July 1965, the following text:

Doctor Robert Norman Berryman, Ph. D., Visiting Titular Professor of Experimental Psychology at the National University of Brasilia, is hereby empowered by the President of the Fundação Brasil Central, whose signature appears below, to enter into contact, in the name of this institution, with Universities, Foundation, Scientific Organizations, and other interested groups, with the view of establishing an atmosphere of understanding conducive to mutual cooperation in scientific research and in solving the pioneering problems of populating undeveloped areas, building centers of agricultural and industrial production, facilitating the interactions of peoples with different traditions-problems which all fall within the scope of action of the Fundação Brasil central³⁵.

Many Embassies, through their respective representatives, sought the FBC in an attempt to sign agreements so that institutions in their countries could develop studies in the areas explored by the Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition. Among them, the embassies of Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Canada, and the USA stand out. The interest in resources in many documents was clear and, even though the Brazilian military, who had power at that time, insisted on the thesis of national sovereignty, what was perceived in

³⁴ Letter to the Rector of the University of Recife, Dr. Murilo Humberto de Barros Guimarães, June 3, 1965. Aloysio Lontra Netto, FBC president. Collection of the Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District.

³⁵ Letter sent to Robert Norman Berryman, July 13, 1965. Aloysio Lontra Netto, FBC president. Collection of the Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District.

fact was the almost free delivery of these resources to foreign capital – which shows the Brazilian submission to imperialism. The Brazilian government, for example, contributed to the dissemination of the Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition both in national and international media. It further motivated the interest of foreign researchers – renowned or not – in developing their studies in Central Brazil. In a letter to the Cultural Diffusion Division of USP, Swiss J. M. Jaquet submitted the following request:

J'ai appris par la presse de Genève qu'une grande expédition scientifique était à l'oeuvre dans le Centre-Ouest brésilien, pour étudier cette région dans des domaines très variés. Je suis licencié en Géologie et Minéralogie et termine en ce moment mon Diplôme d'Ingenieur géologue à l'Université de Genève (Suisse). Je serais très vivement intéressé de savoir si votre Fondation serait disposée à accepter le concours d'un jeune géologue et si oui, dans quelles conditions. De mon côté, je serais prêt à vous communiquer tous les renseignements me concernant, ainsi que les références nécessaires³⁶.

Regarding the foreign scientific activities carried out during the expedition work, the Royal Geographical Society and the Royal Society,³⁷ both British institutions, were undoubtedly the ones that had the greatest involvement in the research carried out in the pioneered areas. The research was quite diverse, most of them in the field of geology and mineralogy. The closer ties between Brazil and other countries not only in the scope of scientific research but also in other areas attest to the fact that the 1964 coup opened Brazil's doors, definitely, to the economic interests of the great capitalist powers.

Brazil undertook the formation of its heavy industry in alliance with foreign companies, mostly American, under the military dictatorship (1964-1985), having clearly opted for the development of its capitalism based on the association and dependence on international capital³⁸.

It is important to remember that federal public authorities, during the years of the Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition's existence, were mostly composed of military personnel, including the FBC president of that period, Aloysio Lontra Netto. He was responsible for

³⁶ Letter to the Cultural Diffusion Division of the University of São Paulo (USP). Geneva, 4 November 1965. J. M. Jaquet (Assistant in the Laboratory of Geology at the University of Geneva). Expédition scientifique patronnée para la Fondation di Brésil Central. Collection of the Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District. Translation: I took notice from the Geneva press that a great scientific expedition was taking place in the Midwest of Brazil to study this region in a wide variety of fields. I have a degree in Geology and Mineralogy and I am currently completing my Engineering degree in Geology at the University of Geneva (Switzerland). I would be very interested in whether your foundation is willing to accept the help of a young geologist and, if so, under what conditions. I would be ready to send you all the information related to me and the necessary references.

³⁷ The work of these institutions in the scientific activities of the Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition took place jointly. Although they are different institutions, their objectives and names, due to the similarity, are mixed up. We will use the abbreviation RS/RGS (as it appears in the official documentation) in the text of this paper to refer to both institutions to facilitate understanding.

³⁸ XAVIER, Glauber Lopes. O imperialismo na América Latina e a atualidade da Teoria Marxista da Dependência. *Revista Katálysis*, Florianópolis, v. 21, n. 2, p. 387-395, maio/ago. 2018. p. 391. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1414-49802018000200387&lng=pt&tlng=pt>

forwarding the FBC official invitation to the RS/RGS, encouraging this institution to participate in the expedition. As soon as the RS/RGS received the invitation in mid-1965, it communicated to the Brazilian Embassy in London its interest in participating in the scientific activities of the Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition.

The RS/RGS response was immediate, expressing a desire to receive more information about the expedition, and stating, in a telegram to the FBC President sent by the Director and Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, Laurence Kirwan, that the RS/RGS concern with geographic and scientific research in Brazil was a reality that had been going on for years. This agreement would be signed definitively in 1966, when the RS/RGS started sending its first researchers, the ecologists Dr. A. F. Mackenzie (RGS member), Dr. M. F. D. Poore (Oxford Forestry Department), and Dr. Hunt (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew).

These researchers were in charge of making an initial survey of the areas that would be explored by the official expedition, scheduled to start in May 1967. The RS/RGS developed a work plan for the main expedition, which initially contained a soil scientist, a forest ecologist, a vertebrate zoologist, a social anthropologist, and a doctor of medicine. In addition, British researchers would count on the collaboration of researchers from national entities, mainly from the National University of Brasília and the University of São Paulo.

At the end of 1966, the RS/RGS submitted its first report to the British authorities and the FBC. It was entitled “Expedition of Recognition to Central Brazil,” elaborated by the researchers A. F. Mackenzie, D. R. Hunt, and I. R. Bishop – the latter joined the expedition later. The report contains a detailed description of the entire course of the expedition, narrating the trajectory of the RS/RGS researchers from London to Brazil, as well as the route from Rio de Janeiro to Xavantina, also passing through São Paulo and Brasília. This report also includes testimonials from researchers regarding their meeting with authorities from CNPq, the University of Brasília, USP, and, interestingly, from PROSPEC S/A (Company specialized in soil studies).

In addition to these issues, the report points out some observations regarding the soil, vegetation, and animals in the region that was explored by the Xavantina-Cachimbo expeditionaries. However, the most intriguing aspect of this report concerns the inspection of this foreign expedition. As already exposed, scientific exploration by foreign researchers who intended to develop their research in Brazil needed a license, issued by the CFE. However, the RS/RGS was authorized by the Ministry of Agriculture to carry out its studies without the need for a license to be issued by the inspection agency. As a result, the responsibility of accompanying British expeditionaries during their studies was left to the FBC alone.

Another conflicting point contained in the text of the report concerns the interest of other nations in developing scientific studies in Central Brazil. It is understood, therefore, that the

military was willing to offer every kind of facility so that the foreign initiative would become interested in the natural wealth of Brazil, considering that this interest was also motivated by the invitations that the Brazilian government sent to many countries. In fact, the Brazilian government has given great autonomy to the work of the RS/RGS in the national territory. The researchers report at a certain point in the document:

We understand that, despite invitations to various countries, Britain was the first to take the decisive steps to join this program. Canada, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France and several other countries have shown interest (we believe that the Russians, upon hearing of our visit, indicated that they would be interested, but did not receive an invitation). As we were the first to arrive, and very well received for such fast service, it is to be expected that we will have the leadership of any research programs that may develop in the future³⁹.

The recognition work carried out by British scientists in 1966 was essential in ensuring that the RS/RGS interest remained firm for the main expedition, scheduled for early 1967. The schematic plan for the main expedition was organized aiming at promoting studies related to the soil science, plant and vertebrate ecology, in addition to studies in the field of parasitology. The expedition financing was the responsibility of the invited institutions (RS/RGS), and the FBC was responsible for providing logistical support – mainly air and land transport.

The British from the RS/RGS started their research, already on the main expedition, around May 1967. On this occasion, the FBC faced a serious economic crisis, even responding to many inquiries for administrative irregularities. It is possible that, because of this, the institution has failed to monitor closely the scientific explorations carried out by the English, causing a certain easing of inspection. On this issue it is important to remember, as already explained, that the RS/RGS did not have a license to carry out its research. This license should have been issued, at that time, by the CFE, which did not happen. The FBC carelessness, followed by the great autonomy that English researchers ended up possessing, led to questions by the National Security Council (CSN).

From this, the National Security Council began to demand from the FBC further explanations regarding the scientific expedition undertaken by the RS/RGS in the pioneering areas of the Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition. According to the CSN, the FBC was being silent on the RS/RGS scientific work, which could compromise the country's internal security. In June 1967, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sérgio Corrêa da Costa,

³⁹ Report prepared by the RS/RGS. Reconnaissance Expedition to Central Brazil. A. F. Mackenzie, I. R. Bishop, D. R. Hunt. October 1966. (Original in English). Collection of the Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District.

sent a letter to Colonel Dalmo Pragana, Secretary-General of the Ministry of the Interior, questioning this FBC omission. The Minister thus reported:

Because of this omission, we are faced with a de facto situation, arising from the circumstance that the English scientists designated by the “Royal Society” are already in Brazil under the terms of an invitation addressed by the Central Brazil Foundation. It is therefore important to find an appropriate and immediate solution to safeguard the prestige of the Brazilian federal administration. [...] The Itamaraty understands that this Ministry will carry out, or will be carrying out, urgent consultation with the General Secretariat of the National Security Council on the specific aspects of internal security⁴⁰.

In July 1968, with the FBC extinct, the CSN requested the National Information Service (SNI), through confidential documentation, the following inquiries regarding the scientific exploration of the RS/RGS: names of foreign and national components, with their respective functions in the expedition; works already presented; type of national participation; research end forecast; whether the technical apparatus of the research would remain in Brazil; in addition to other data deemed useful. These conditions were imposed for the English to continue their research. The Xavantina-Cachimbo expedition opened about 400 kilometers of road until it was stopped. Therefore, the initial three-year project was not completed. The road opening connecting Xavantina to the Posto Cachimbo was resumed around ten years later. However, the opening work was assigned to contractors at that time.

Final considerations

Central Brazil is a part of the national territory full of natural wealth, and the large influx of foreign researchers in these areas was justified by the international interest in exploring the natural resources available there. This practice, in turn, was part of the imperialist strategy of the great powers committed to exploring raw materials, especially from countries with dependent economies. In other words, a typical strategy of the capitalist mode of production in the context of FBC activities. The presence of imperialist capital in the process of integrating the territory of Central Brazil into the international economic context was an element underlying the process of integrating the national territory and FBC activities.

It is confirmed by the high number of scientific missions that occurred in Brazil, made possible through foreign financing, among other sources of obtaining resources. The

⁴⁰ Xavantina-Cachimbo Expedition – participation of English scientists. Letter sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior, June 13, 1967. (Urgent – Reserved). Collection of the Central Brazil Foundation. National Archives – Regional Coordination in the Federal District.

research volume in the Foundation documentation, aimed at the exploration of Brazilian fauna and flora, is quite extensive, especially regarding the prospecting of ores. This documentation reveals a significant number of scientific studies carried out in Central Brazil by the foreign initiative.

The frontier space, in this case, was also a space for the expansion of scientific activity, which, in turn, was an activity characteristic of the capitalist advance. Thus, the Central Brazil frontier was the terrain for innovations of capitalist expansion, being also the target of imperialist greed. The analysis of the FBC documentation confirms that the foreign scientific missions were elaborated in the context of a territorial domain policy. Another important conclusion is the understanding that many foreign scientific expeditions carried out in Central Brazil were developed under the conditions of peripheral and dependent capitalism.

Recebido em 20 de janeiro de 2024
Aceito em 03 de abril de 2024