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War on Drugs is War on People

by Anthony Henman

Celestino, pictured above, is a Tenetehara Indian from Brazil. He was brutally tortured by the Brazilian police for growing marijuana. Anthony Henman reports on his story; the collison of cultures which engendered it; the use of marijuana in Tenatahara society; and how international anti-marijuana laws are being used by the Brazilian authorities to suppress traditional Indian cultures.

Celestino: It happened like this. At about ten in the morning of 19th May last year (1977), the police came looking for me in my village . . . They told me to accompany them to the local town, Grajaú . . . When we arrived, they took me to the headquarters of the Army battalion stationed there . . . A soldier called André came up to me and asked: "Are you Celestino?" I replied: "That's me alright." "You're under arrest," he said, putting handcuffs on me, as another guard drew a hood over my head . . . Then they took me inside and left me sitting on a bench, unable to identify anybody except by their voice. Some of them I recognized, including the colonel's voice . . .
Interviewer's question: Which colonel?
Celestino: Colonal Perfetti, the man in charge of the Indians. They. had been asking me a lot of questions, and I had been denying everything, when suddenly he came into the room and said: "You better try to cooperate with the boys. You tell them all you know . . ."[2]

The first part of Celestino's testimony makes an unequivocal affirmation of the fact that Col. Armando Perfetti — at that time the chief officer of FUNAI (the Brazilian government's Indian agency) in the state of Maranhao — was present at least at the outset of Celestino's interrogation. In doing so, the colonel had obviously chosen to ignore FUNAI's own official position on the Tenetehara Indians' use of cannabis, which recognized that the plant played an important role in their traditional customs, and was therefore protected by Article 47 of the Brazilian Indian Statute, which affirms: "Respect for the cultural heritage of the native communities."[3] The President of FUNAI, General Ismarth de Araujo Oliveira, had himself stated the official line: "The consumption of drug plants by the Indians does not share the negative connotation that it has among white people ... To forbid their use would be to interfere in tribal culture ... which would have extremely negative consequences ..."[4]

The condition for such freedom, of course, was to be that the Indians should not engage in the production of marijuana for trade, and a study was ordered to determine exactly how much they would need for their own consumption. Such a study, though never in fact carried out, would supposedly restrict the use of the dreaded weed to more acceptable contexts, variously described as 'relgious rites', 'ceremonies and festivals', and 'mystic rituals'.[5] Inevitably, FUNAI's liberalism on this issue has come under fierce attack not only from the security forces, but also from the drug watchdogs in the medical establishment, with at least one eminent pharmacologist being quick to point out that "even among the Indians there exist serious problems of drug abuse ..."[6] The emphasis on the so-called 'mystical' aspects of Tenetehara cannabis smoking has, therefore, less to do with the Indian's own perception of the drug's effects, than with the government's rather uneasy attempts to explain away their habit as a harmless cultural aberration, quite at variance with the 'reefer madness' of modern urban use. Such contorted logic serves only to confirm entrenched cultural stereotypes — the image of an innocent, child-like Indian as opposed to the desperate, violent, city-bred 'drug addict' — and does little justice to the Tenetehara people's own considerable understanding and appreciation of the plant.

Celestino: . . . then the colonel left the room, and they continued asking me where the weed was, applying shocks up my thighs, tying an electrode to my fingers, giving me those shocks. Each shock would send me suddenly high in the sky, and then the next moment I would be back on earth again. I kept saying to them: "You'd better kill me." They only replied: "You bastard, you better tell what you know," and started beating me with a club on my back . . .

The Brazilian Federal Police has used torture as a routine form of interrogation in drugs cases at least since the late 1960s, when such practices became institutionalized in the fight against political subversion. Abuses of this kind have frequently been reported in private by the victims. Public scrutiny, however, has usually lagged well behind the knowledge of the whole stifling apparatus of Brazil's censorship — had made special reference to the issue in an order to the news media dated 9th January, 1973: "Drugs: Any accusation regarding the use of violence by the security forces is hereby prohibited."[7] A year later, this ban was extended to include:" ... the divulging of any news item, commentary or reference to the operations undertaken by the Federal Police to identify areas where cannabis is cultivated, as well as references to drug seizures and the arrest of traffickers in any part of the national territory, so as not to prejudice investigations."[8]

It was no mere coincidence that such orders should have been made precisely at this time, for a growing demand for marijuana in the cities had encouraged many small growers to increase their production well beyond the traditional pattern of home-growing self sufficiency. The first police operations in the showcase Indian areas of Maranhao had begun as the harvest was ripening in mid-1973, and had suposedly been authorized by the FUNAI regional delegate in the state capital, Sao Luis, in open defiance of his superiors in Brasilia.[9] By 1975, virtually all the Tenetehara — or 'Guajajara', as they are known locally, a group with over 4,300 members, spread over five reservations with a total area verging on 1.5 million hectares — had shared some experience of the Feds in action. The first reports of the fearful beatings suffered while in police custody were already causing a sharp drop in the production of cannabis for sale, and for the Indians the marijuana boom was over even before it had really begun.[10]

Not entirely by historical accident, for both pressures reflected the same thoughtless national pursuit of an illusory 'development', the anti-drug campaign of the early 70s also happened to coincide with a period of widespread invasion of the Indian reserves, mainly undertaken by a spearhead of land-hungry white peasants expelled from neighbouring areas by the multinationals, the government-subsidized credit agencies, and many large private agri-business concerns. The Federal Police is officially responsible for protecting the integrity of Indian lands, but had remained strangely inactive on this issue, not least because the marijuana campaigns had imbued its agents with a profound lack of sympathy for their cause, often expressed in explicitly racist terms.[11] The feeling was of course reciprocated, and — tiring of broken promises and official vacillation — the Indians decided in November, 1976, to take matters into their own hands, attacking and burning down the invader settlement at Marajá, and expelling its thousand white inhabitants.

An interesting sidelight on this event was provided by the case of Raimundo Barroso, a local farmer who had reputedly planted large areas of marijuana on Indian soil, as a means of escaping legal responsibility for the crop should anything go wrong. Such an eventuality was unlikely, however, as despite his prominence in the local illicit trade, Barroso had never suffered any real pressure in the anti-drug campaigns. Indeed, on being threatened by the Indians with expulsion from their lands, he retorted in the presence of a journalist from Sao Paulo: "You can't touch me ... I have the support of the Federal Police."[12] One can only conclude, therefore, that a similar arrangement is also in force elsewhere, which would explain the failure of this agency to extend its repressive operations into the considerable areas of Maranhao controlled by large landowners and other political allies of the ruling clique.

Certainly, this would explain a number of strange features noted in the ongoing campaign undertaken against marijuana among the Tenetehara. In the first place, the indians constitute the perfect scapegoats, since they are the only social group in Brazil who make no secret of their use of the plant. At the same time, their limited and fiercely independent production will never be amenable to the kind of monopolization by the police and organized crime which is characteristic of the bulk trade on the world black market, and thus has little contribution to make to Maranhao's impending challenge to the already legendary producing areas in Mexico, Jamaica and Colombia. It is these factors which would explain the Federal Police's obsessive concern with proving that the Tenetehara are big-time marijuana growers, an obsession made manifest by their constant exaggeration of the size of the seizures made inside Indian areas.

In statements to the press, they have often claimed to have discovered 'vast plantations' and large numbers of 'mechanical presses' used to brick cannabis for shipment.[13] True, one press was in fact seized on a single occasion, but the material evidence for all the 'vast plantations' has never been forthcoming. When a FUNAI employee accompanied the Feds on their 1978 campaign, he observed that they had no qualms in inflating the size of their hauls when reporting back to base. The commander of the 1978 operation even had the gall to threaten him with a conspiracy charge, should he not sign a document which grossly exaggerated the amount of cannabis which had been seized and burned by his men in the field. On pointing out his error, the commander had explained that the data were "purely for statistical purposes."[14] The fact, then, that probably less than a hundred plants could be used to fabricate the reported seizures of 1,300 kilos, would obviously call into question all the Federal Police's other statistics as well, such as those for the total hauls made in Maranhao in 1978 (205 tons) and 1979 (367 tons).[15] What are such rigged numbers supposed to hide? According to one FUNAI witness — speaking to me off the record in February, 1979 — their only pur-

pose was to cover up the fact that marijuana was still leaving Barra do Corda by the truckload, and without any problems from the police.

Celestino: Once it was dark, they took me out into a field with a hood over my head . . . "Either you tell us what you know or you'll die", they said, tying me to a tree, with two soldiers standing on my feet so that I couldn't slip. Then they beat me with a leather whip on my back and across my stomach, and others came up and kicked me in the kidneys so that I lost my breath. That was when I asked one to give me his gun, so that I could put myself out of this misery . . .

The fact that so much indiscriminate violence can continue to exist without being seriously challenged is obviously the result of a carefully orchestrated campaign of public disinformation regarding the use of drugs. Nowhere is this truer than in Brazil, where the media commonly refer to all drugs by the term *tóxico* — which includes everything from harmless cannabis to the demonstrably damaging and widely used ampoules of Pervintin, a metamphetamine manufactured in semi-official laboratories in Paraguay. The words commonly used to describe users are *viciados* ('addicts') *marginais* ('criminals') and *malucos* ('crazies'). Not only the bourgeois media, but even left-wing papers such as *O Pasquim, Movimento,* and *Tribuna da Imprensa* adopt a very high moral tone when speaking of the use of drugs. Two new underground monthlies published in Rio de Janeiro, *Lampiao* and *Reporter*, have shown some cautious sympathy for the marijuana smoker, but arguably even these play up to established stereotypes, by categorizing the use of cannabis along with other forms of 'deviant' behaviour such as prostitution and transvestism.

The association with criminal violence and sexual aberration, therefore, serves principally to deny the existence of any balanced patterns of marijuana use, so that suppression by the media of any reference to traditional usages — other than the impossibly distant 'mystic rituals' of the Tenetehara — leads inexorably to their eventual disappearance in fact, even in remote rural parts of Brazil, with behaviour becoming increasingly standardized by the cosmopolitan patterns projected on the radio and TV. The deviant image thus becomes firmly institutionalized; by Brazilian law one can claim 'addict' status even when arrested for marijuana, a loophole used by many to escape from the rigours of prison life to the relative comfort of the mental asylum. Under these circumstances, for a newspaper to call for legalization would be tantamount to proposing a liberation of the sanguinary rapes and murders that are automatically assumed to be the results of drug taking.[17] One well-known musician who dared defend the use of marijuana in public after being arrested while on tour, was subsequently threatened with a 'propagandist of drug use' charge — which carries a minimum fifteen year sentence — and finally had to pay off the police chief in question with fully twenty thousand dollars to get him to drop the case.

The climate which allows such corruption to flourish — and, by all accounts, police blackmail and extortion of well-heeled drug users is a booming industry in Brazil these days — must also be based not only on the cowardice of the media, but also on considerable compliance on the part of the academic establishment. Of all the scores of medics, anthropologists and folklorists who have studied the use of cannabis in this country, only three have ever had anything to say on the subject which was not tainted by rabid prejudice.[18] The Brazilian Ministry of Health's 1958 anthology of writings on the subject contains fully 29 reports spanning the first half of this century, all of which take it for granted that the smoking of marijuana constitutes a terrible vice, only engaged in by poor blacks and gangs of street urchins such as the 'grey rats' reported in Sergipe in the 1940s.[19] In the last two decades the solemn rhetoric of science has continued to be moulded by what one American observer has cautiously described as "the difficulties of unbiased research during a period of cultural stress, at which time the forces of law and order seem to be in the ascendency."[20] More recently, the works of noted anti-cannabis campaigners such as George Russell and Gabriel Nahas are widely publicized in Brazil, and not only by the mass media, but even by some supposedly 'alternative' groups as well.[21]

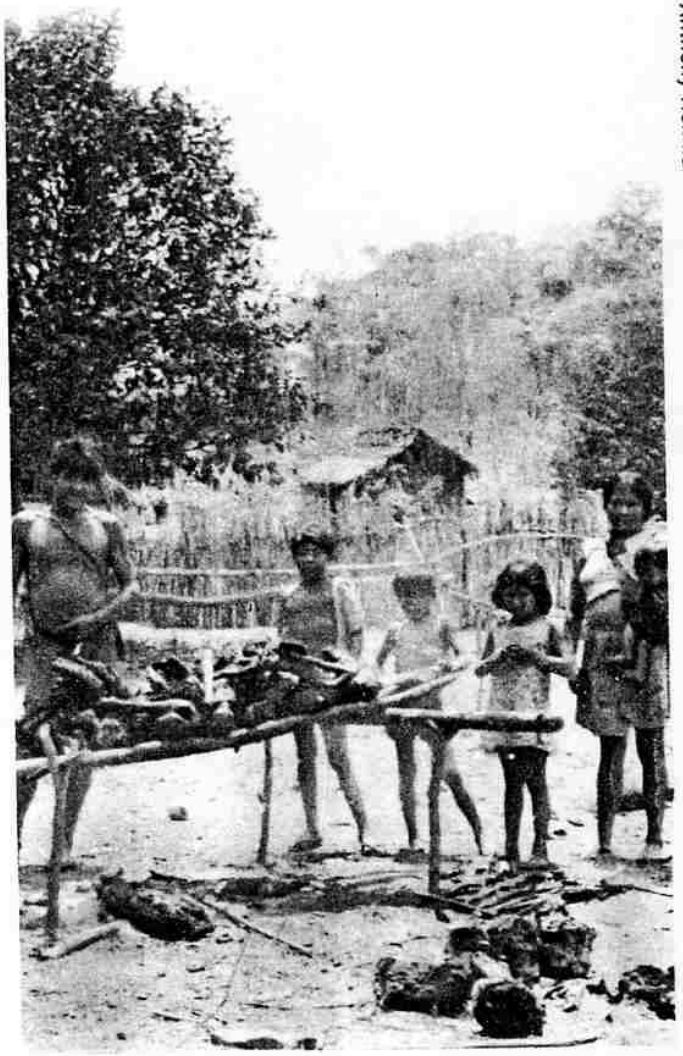
Along with the rather evident racism and class prejudice of earlier observers of the scene, the arrival of marijuana as a middle-class phenomenon has added new fuel to the flames of intolerance, often couched in the most mindless technical jargon: "the psychoses observed in marijuana users ... have, in common, a schizophreniform physiognomy, never presented in our casuistry, and other traditionally known syndromes of exogenous reaction."[22] One pharmacologist has taken a lead from the World Health Organization, attempting to categorize contemporary drug use in accordance with the classic model of the epidemic, in which "the drug corresponds to the microbe ... man to its host ... and the social environment to its medium."[23] The logic of such institutionalized paranoia is obviously itself directly responsible for most of the principal dangers faced by the drug user. These dangers include kidnapping by white-coated doctors — numerous psychiatric clinics advertise in the national press "Treatment and recuperation of drug addiction: Removals and internments from any part of the country"[24]; arrest without proof — in one case in Belem, four young men were imprisoned on drug charges which rested solely on the verbal accusation of an old woman who lived next door[25]; and murder by trigger-happy cops — one innocent sixteen year-old was gunned down in cold blood in Florianópolis on the mere suspicion of carrying marijuana.[26] He had not made even the slightest attempt to escape, but since the 'dread weed' was involved, public outcry on this case was very muted indeed .

The apparatus of this fearful repression includes many other dismal features as well: a special agreement of cooperation between the Ministry of Health and the Armed Forces, signed recently in lieu of a more expensive provision of special clinics to deal with genuine drug problems[27]; a telephone hot-line in Sao Paulo on which spontaneous informers can denounce their fellow-citizens as 'pushers' and 'addicts' without having to give their own names[28]; and a new, and singularly alarming, regulation which allows the Council of Anti-Drug Prevention full powers to veto any publication on drugs which does not conform to their own guidelines.[29] This means that the article you are reading will almost certainly never be published in Brazil itself ...

Celestino: With a hood over my face, I had no way of seeing, them asking me many questions, passing that thing up my legs, I was in shorts. Them passing that thing which gives a shock, which eats you up with little nibbles to the skin.
Question: Where did they pass it?
Celestino: Here on my thighs. They gave me those shocks on two occasions. When I first arrived, and out in the field.
Question: And what's that on your stomach?
Celestino: That's the mark of the beating they gave me. Now I'm so sick I can't even work any more . . . I feel that pain when I eat too much, my stomach swells up and the pain comes on. I feel pains here too.
Question: In your back?
Celestino: Here above the kidneys. The fact is they beat me very hard. Such big hairy brutes. I don't know how they didn't kill me.

Celestino's incomprehension of the torture which he suffered is based on the fact that the smoking of marijuana has long been considered a normal, even a healthy, thing in the state of Maranhao. Almost certainly cannabis was introduced to this part of the New World by slaves from Angola, and the local word for it, *diamba*, as well as the term common in other parts of Brazil, *maconha*, are both derived from the Ambundo language of central Africa.[30] Myth would have it that seeds were carried over concealed in cloth dolls, and that it was in wide use among the communities of runaway slaves (*quilombos*) which flourished in northeastern Brazil early in the colonial period.[31] Actual documentary proof of the use of cannabis only dates, however, from the early nineteenth century, which nevertheless is considerably earlier than the first evidence available elsewhere in the Americas, such as in Mexico, Colombia, Cuba or Jamaica. Prepared as an infusion by the slaves at court, it was adopted even by queen Carlota Joaquina, wife of the Portuguese king who lived in exile in Brazil during the Napoleonic wars.[32] By October 1830, the smoking of marijuana was so widespread in Rio de Janeiro that the Municipal Council issued an edict which prohibited the sale and importation of the drug, and "the use of the *pito do Pango* (a name for a marijuana water-pipe current at the time) as well as its presence in public establishments."[33]

It is likely that a good deal of the smoke available in Rio at that time — as indeed, today — came ultimately from northern Brazil, and one might suspect a reference to cannabis in the governor of Maranhao's letter to Lisbon in 1784: "who on this occasion was sending a plant ... which the nations of the North, and principally the men of Hamburg, make use of for rope." He added that "were it to be of interest and used to good ends, it would be possible to fill a whole ship of the said plant."[34] Africans had first been introduced to Maranhao in large numbers to work cotton in the late 1700s, and by the first half of the nineteenth century at the latest the Tenetehara Indians were experiencing repeated contacts with groups of fugitive slaves who settled in the lower Pindaré drainage.[35] The use of cannabis — called *petem-ahê* in Tenetehara, which has the meaning of both 'wild tobacco' and 'strong smoke' — almost certainly followed this route.[36] It seems likely, therefore, that the plant has been incorporated into the Indians' way of life for at least 150 years, or approximately ten generations, to the point where many local wags genuinely believe that "in the old days, before we settled down and planted tobacco, our ancestors only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A group of Tenetehara Indians

smoked marijuana." Indeed, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the use of *diamba* was so common in Maranhao, even in the state capital, Sao Luis, that a French trader became notorious in the town for the inspired excesses he committed while under its influence.[37]

Celestino: Then I was taken by the police to the village, where the Indians got really angry with me, not with them, the police . . . saying that it was I who went around telling them where to look for the marijuana, which isn't true. When we got back to Grajaú . . . the man on the typewriter said to me: "Hey, you're not going to start telling everyone in the village that you were beaten up by the police, are you?"
Question: Do you remember the name of any of the policemen?
Celestino: I remember the name of the one that came to fetch me, Rui, and the soldier André and another called Oscar, then there was one called Alencar, I remember those four well. Now, I don't know exactly which of them was doing the torturing, as I had a hood on, and couldn't see . . . and whenever I wanted to shout: "Stop it! Please stop it!" they would come up and cover my mouth, squeeze my throat, saying: "Stop shouting you bastard, stop shouting, stop shouting!" And they said they would take me up in a plane and throw me down from the sky, that I would die like that . . . And then suddenly this courage came to me, as if god spoke to my heart, saying: "Talk! You better not talk!" In a flash I felt as if I was floating off the ground, my courage was so great . . .

Almost certainly, one of the main reasons that Celestino suffered so much was his steadfast refusal to 'sing' for his captors. According to the Tenetehara code of conduct, it is a matter of honour to deny any involvement in activities likely to cause offence, and to deny it

with a special vehemence when the offended parties are themselves trying to browbeat the Indians into admission of their guilt.[38] Compare his words while under torture:

> *. . . the police kept on saying over and over: "He knows he's got a field of marijuana, but he won't tell us here." And I replied "No, I have never been mixed up in that business . . ."*

with his own frank admission to a friendly FUNAI interviewer:

> *Question: Have you ever sold marijuana?*
> *Celestino: Yes, sir, But small quantities, you know, a couple of kilos at a time. Yes I have sold marijuana . . .*

As a result of the police operations in the last few years, it is not easy to get any Tenetehara to talk openly to strangers about their use of cannabis. In the case of my own visits to the area in 1978 and 1979, it took two quite separate journeys and a good number of shared joints to establish enough confidence and convince them that I was not with the *Federal*, as it is known locally.[39] Some of the Tenetehara reserves — particularly that of Bacurizinho — have become very sensitive on the issue, and probably only a quarter or a third of the adult men ever plant cannabis and use it as a regular thing. Even in other areas, where it is smoked by the vast majority of the men — and by most boys over the age of eight or so — there are nevertheless a fair number of cases of individuals who never use the drug at all. Such behaviour is respected, even if laughed at playfully on occasion, and a 'light head' is certainly no impediment to non-smokers participating in the gatherings where marijuana is consumed.

These gatherings take place characteristically at night, and very large quantities of marijuana — rolled without any tobacco admixture in large conical cigars, and wrapped in brown paper or a special tree bark called *tamari (Couratari tamary* Berg.) — are normally used on such occasions, as each man rolls a joint and passes it to his friends. On one occasion that I witnessed, no more than a dozen men consumed at least a pound of marijuana in a single sitting. There is no particular order observed in the passing of the joint; it does not move in a disciplined circle as in our own culture, but proceeds anarchically in any direction from one man to the next, with each smoker taking as little as a single puff, or as much as he wants and needs. These evening gatherings commonly take place to discuss community affairs, or to honour a cannabis-smoking visitor, and provide an occasion for myth recitals and long speeches from the older leaders, and jokes and tales of sexual prowess from the younger men. Contacts with the drug culture of the surrounding Brazilian population are evident in the use of challenges in Portuguese such as *xinga a bicha*! ('curse the bitch!') to which one is supposed to reply in the rhymed couplets established by tradition, the most common of which begins:

> Ó diamba, sarabamba!
> Quando eu fumo a diamba
> Fico com a cabeca tonta
> E com as minhas pernas zamba.[41]

References such as these — describing marijuana as 'the bitch' and its effects as a dizzy head and rubbery legs — would suggest that the 'forbidden fruit' aspect of cannabis has definitely made some impact on Tenetehara society, no matter how virtuous individual users may consider the plant to be. This idea is borne out by the absence of marijuana in important tribal rituals, and particularly in the context of shamanism, where trance is always achieved exclusively through the smoking of strong tobacco.[42] Even at the all-night singing and dancing sessions which accompany the introduction of adolescent girls into adult society, men commonly get 'stoned' in the shadows, well away from the crowd. This discretion has probably resulted from a feeling common throughout rural Brazil, which sees cannabis smoking as an essentially male activity, and rather different in this respect to the almost universal use of tobacco. When women do smoke marijuana, which is relatively rare, they do so mainly in other female company, and only the most venerable and respected of the older women would ever go straight up to a man and ask him for a smoke. Probably the main use of the plant by women is boiled up as a medicinal tea, which they prepare by the law of sexual opposites exclusively from male plants, which are not much good for smoking anyway.

Something of the same discrimination or complementarity can also be seen in the observances surrounding the actual cultivation of marijuana. Throughout Brazil, when the plant is two or three feet high, it suffers a statutory pruning, which is seen to prevent it turning male. This act is undertaken with seriousness and respect and cannot be witnessed by women, who must also avoid touching the plant, or even passing nearby if they are menstruating, again to keep it from becoming male. The Tenetehara usually germinate as many as ten or fifteen seeds together in rough baskets of prepared earth about half a foot wide, either placing these straight in the ground, or moving them from their houses to the fields once the seedlings are three or four inches high.[44] Once planted out, each clump separately in the middle of other food crops, these small stands usually consist of about half a dozen plants, of which some remain very weak and weedy, while others turn male and are pulled out. Probably only one, two or at most three plants in each clump finally grow to full size.

In the early months of the harvest, the Tenetehara smoke almost exclusively the leaves which are constantly trimmed from the plant, drying them very simply by leaving them fifteen minutes in strong sunlight. The whole plant is only cut when the white hairs or pistils on the flowers begin to turn brown, and is usually dried hanging upside down under a shade. The buds are separated when dry, then packed tight for storage in gourds or large knots of bamboo (called *mutucas* in Portuguese), and kept either in the house or under ground, where they are said to become better cured. Larger quantities are also cured by laying the dried buds outside at night to rehumidify with the dew, then piling them indoors during the day to ferment. After a few days of this treatment they have turned from their original 'home-grown' lime colour to a much

darker brown or black. This is the standard demanded by outside buyers, though the Tenetehara themselves usually prefer to smoke their cannabis very fresh and green. Local terms for different qualities of marijuana describe its outward characteristics: *manga rosa* ('pink mango') implies a blotched, ruddy colouring, *cabeca de nêgo* (negro's head) a tightly curled and darkish preparation — or else determine its quality in relation to the whole plant: *rabo de rapôsa* ('fox-tail') denotes a bud longer than one hand, thicker than a thumb, while *pêlo de macaco* ('monkey's hair') indicates a grass full of the long stalks which occur at the base of the leaf and, by extension, conjures up a very inferior product, full of leafy material.[45]

What of the Tenetehara understanding of the drug's effects? Outside of the big night-time gatherings — where, as we have seen, it is used mainly as an euphoriant — the principal application of cannabis is as a stimulant, smoked before engaging in hard work such as clearing the forest or preparing the soil. The Indians commonly report that marijuana "makes one feel like working"[46], and their major complaint to FUNAI after the 1978 Federal Policy raids was: "How do you expect us to plant our fields? You know that we only plant our fields after smoking marijuana ..."[47] At the same time, it would not be fair to say that the Tenetehara exhibit any real psychological dependence on their use of cannabis, for the second half of the year sees a distinct dwindling of their supplies, and many men probably go for several months at a stretch every year without any marijuana at all. The improvidence which characterizes their relationship with material possessions in general is also clearly manifest with regard to marijuana — they smoke pounds of the stuff when it is available, and rarely keep back small emergency rations for later. Seeing the way I held on to my meagre half-ounces for a rainy day, the Indians clearly thought that I was crazy ...'Hey, *karaiw* (white man), where's your little bag of dust?" they would say, chiding me for my careful thriftiness.

In their view, furthermore, the stimulant/euphoriant properties of cannabis are also complemented by another very important feature, the ability of the drug to 'tame' or 'enchant' the animals which they hunt for their meat. Among the great number of plants used in Tenetehara hunting magic marijuana has a special place, its qualities allowing the hunter to creep up on game unawares, and 'transfix' the quarry long enough to aim and fire. Though the expression these Indians use to describe the sensation of being 'stoned', *hêmongatú*, means simply that 'everything's all right', it is often employed together with the Portuguese term *bicudo*, which has the sense of 'beaked' like a hawk. I am certain that this refers not only to the powers of sensual focussing and concentration while under the influence of marijuana, but also to the human capacity to 'fly' — sensorially, telepathically, and ultimately even in the fully disembodied state which characterizes the best mystical traditions of the Amazon basin ...

Question: Do you know of any other Indian who suffered in the same way as you?
Celestino: Djalma . . . he lives in a place called Morro Branco, just outside Grajaú. Senhor Mourao (the local FUNAI agent) went to fetch him there, and when they brought him in he was put into the same room where I had been . . . later, when he found out that it was the police, he tried to escape, to run away. That was stupid. They opened fire on him and surrounded him by a fence, where he got his leg stuck and fell on the ground. They brought him back, and he suffered as much as I did. His feet were all swollen . . .
Question: And what do you expect FUNAI to do about all this?
Celestino: I expect FUNAI to take some action on my case. Look, I'm telling you this, because I'm not the sort of person who goes around spreading rumours. When I say something it's because I really feel it. Not even the life of the colonel will pay for the beating I received. Not even all his wealth will pay, it won't pay for it, because it really won't. Because he says he's the big chief looking after all the Indians, and at the same time he isn't, he's against the Indians. That's what I say, and I would say it to his face, and he could even have me killed . . .

Celestino was fortunate that he told his story to a sympathetic listener, José Porfírio Fontenele de Carvalho, who has dedicated a lifetime to protecting the Indians of Brazil. On taking over the post in Barra do Corda in early 1978, he was genuinely shocked by the evidence that torture had been condoned by his immediate superior, Colonel Armando Perfetti — an ex-military policeman with no previous experience of working with Indians, and whose job had only been given him as as political favour. One might suppose an exemplary tale to have come out of this case, a shining example of idealism fighting back against patronage and corruption. But caution! It would be worth examining the subsequent development of this particular encounter in detail, for it demonstrates quite clearly how obscure machinations can ride rough-shod over the normal process of justice wherever the dread issue of drugs is involved .

Celestino's testimony was recorded at the end of February, 1978. Early in May, and greatly against his will, *senhor* Mourao — the FUNAI agent in Bacurizinho, a weak-kneed bureaucrat who was loath to take sides against the all-powerful colonel — was finally obliged to make a statement about his involvement in the arrest of the Indian Djalma Guajajara. He admitted that: "I witnessed ... Dr. Nazareno (the Federal Police interrogator) giving him two blows on the ears with cupped hands. As I did not approve this aggression against the Indian, I left the place, and have no way of knowing what happened afterwards[48]..." It would have been enough to ask Djalma himself, of course, but neither did *senhor* Mourao do this, nor did he volunteer any information on the subject until cross-questioned by Porfirio Carvalho.

By the end of that same month of May — marijuana harvest time in Maranhao — Carvalho had been given the opportunity to experience at first hand the abuses and intimidation of the Federal Police, as this is traditionally the season for their annual rampages through the Indian reserves. Initially with some tact, and thereafter with mounting anger and despair, Carvalho had attempted unsuccessfully to convince the commander of the 1978 operation of the damage his campaign was causing to inter-ethnic relations in the area, already highly explosive as the result of land conflicts between the Tenetehara and the surrounding white population. One FUNAI observer, Elomar Gerhardt, was forced to accompany the police on their expedition into the Indian areas, and subsequently submitted a very perceptive report of the quite idiotic and brutal excesses

committed in their fruitless quest for the hundreds of acres of cannabis which they were certain existed, hidden just round the next corner.

Eventually Carvalho penned his own sharp criticism of the 1978 anti-drug campaign, and — together with Celestino's torture account and Gerhardt's fine satire of the Feds in action — sent off a complete report, first to colonel Perfetti himself in the state capital, and then to the FUNAI headquarters in Brasilia. Perfetti, an anti-cannabis hardliner, clearly had to do the utmost to discredit the stories of his involvement in torturing Indians. As a result Carvalho and his collaborators began to suffer a round of very ostensive surveillance from agents of the Federal Police. Determined to prove the involvement of FUNAI personnel in the trade of marijuana from Tenetehara reservations, the police went to great lengths to fabricate evidence, including the arrangement of clandestine encounters with Carvalho in abandoned buildings in Sao Luis. Certain that he was being set up — most probably for incrimination in a big drug raid — Carvalho steadfastly refused to come to any off-the-record accommodation with the Federal Police. And when the enraged Perfetti sent out a new man to take over his job in Barra do Corda, Carvalho got into his car and drove the two thousand miles to Brasilia to present his case personally to the President of FUNAI.

By dint of an impassioned eloquence, Carvalho was temporarily reinstated, and it was not long before his reports were leaked to the press by some well-intentioned minor functionary at FUNAI. The last week in August 1978 saw the Brazilian media making a series of sensational disclosures about the case, most of which liberally mixed the themes of drugs, Indians and torture into the sort of best-selling pulp which does so much to maintain the false equation of drugs and violence. The perfidious Perfetti counterattacked by claiming that he had never heard of the Indian Celestino, and finally hit the front page on 23rd August when he "attributed the inspiration for the accusations made against him to the marijuana dealers who operate in upstate Maranhao."[49]

At the same time, FUNAI's own commission of inquiry — heavily leaned on by the Feds and local political interests — decided to discount Celestino's version of events, and in an act of consummate cynicism, exonerated Perfetti, punished Carvalho and two of his subordinates for divulging official documents, and ordered their transfer to other areas.[50] In October, FUNAI's main institutional critics, the Catholic clergy, took the unprecedented step of publishing a full version of Carvalho's, Gerhardt's and Celestino's testimonies in their monthly CIMI bulletin. Shortly afterwards, the Indian Celestino himself travelled to Brasilia with a group of Tenetehara leaders. Confronting General Ismarth, then President of FUNAI, he repeated his accusations against Perfetti and confirmed his earlier account of torture.[51] As a result of this decisive intervention, Carvalho, Gerhardt and their other companion were immediately given back their jobs, but a compromise was found in allowing Perfetti to stay on as well, despite his by now public identification as a torturer.

In June 1979, almost a year later, the Federal Police concluded its own lengthy inquiry into the torture 'allegations'. Claiming that Celestino could not actually identify his torturers by name since his head was in a hood, the top dog at the department of Political and Social Order ruled that his testimony was legally 'irrevelant' and 'invalid'.[52] Two months earlier the 1979 anti-drug campaign had claimed a new victim, the sixty-year-old Cicero Jeovita, who was severely beaten on the soles of his feet and expelled from one village by the police for being a 'false Indian' and 'marijuana peddlar'. The new FUNAI delegate in Maranhao,[53] major Alípio Levay — Perfetti's replacement when the latter eventually fell, not as a result of the torture case, but of his proved complicity in the invasion of Indian territory by unscrupulous landowners — simply limited himself to a straight denial that this latest round of torture had ever taken place.[54]

Since the abuse occurred outside of Carvalho's official jurisdiction, there was nobody even to question the right of the Federal Police to continue terrorizing the Tenetehara in this way. Indeed, infiltration by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of Brazil's Health Ministry and police establishment[55] — and through them the recruitment of minor FUNAI agents and countless other petty officials — had by now brought the new style of all-out war on drugs sharply into focus. Inevitably, such anachronisms as Indians claiming that their cultural traditions allowed them the liberty to smoke marijuana freely were coming under fierce and sustained attack. After all, in the noble struggle against the killer weed, such trifles as the human rights of a group of backward Indians can be trampled on at will.

1. in Veja 19/12/79
2. This and all subsequent extracts from Celestino's testimony have been taken from the full version published in the Boletim do CIMI no. 50, October 1978.
3. Law no. 6.001 of 19/12/73.
4. FSP 24/7/73, and Beltrao 1977:224-7.
5. FSP 19/7/73, CB 26/7/73, ESP 18/10/78, 22/6/79, 5/8/79.
6. Murad 1977:118.
7. JB especial *Os Documentos da Censura* 18/6/78.
8. idem.
9. Beltrao 1977:224-7 for 1973 coverage of this issue.
10. Gomes 1977:248.
11. This is made manifest also in the perceptive account of their 1978 operation by a FUNAI eyewitness, in CIMI, no. 50.
12. ESP 15/1/76.
13. Beltrao 1977:224-7.
14. CIMI no. 50:28.
15. ESP 20/5/79.
16. The intimate involvement of the police in 'fiscalizing' the marijuana trade in rural Brazil is self-evident. A good early source on this subject is Araújo 1961:318, who is describing the scene in the 1950s in the state of Alagoas, quotes a local mayor as saying: "What marijuana has done is give a lot of money to the police, that's the truth . . ."
17. see Veja 19/12/79 on "the desperate dependence of drug addicts . . . which generally results in violence . . . and barbaric crimes of rape and murder . . ."
18. Araújo 1961:316-322, Wagley and Galvao 1949:41-2, Hutchinson 1975.
19. Ministério da Saúde 1958.
20. Hutchinson 1975:182.
21. Nahas in Manchete, Nov. 1979. Russell 1978 was published by the Sao Paulo disciples of Rudolf Steiner, at the Clínica Tobias.
22. De Pinho 1975:299.
23. Murad 1977:90.

24. C do P 17/6/79.
25. P do P 28/10/78.
26. ESP 28/6/79.
27. ESP 24/7/79.
28. ESP 25/7/79.
29. ESP 25/5/79. A telling example of the Brazilian style of 'approved' literature on drugs is provided by Schmidt 1976, a truly disgusting publication full of lurid illustrations of the horror and rampant paranoia its author brings to bear on the subject.
30. Pernambuco 1937:187.
31. Carneiro 1966:18 and Pio Corrêa in Hutchinson 1975.
32. Cintra 1934.
33. Doria 1915 in Min. Saúde 1958, Hutchinson 1975.
34. Marques 1970:517. Other candidates for this identification include the tropical mallow or *malvas -Urena lobata* L. and *Sida* spp.
35. Gomes 1977:70,90,108.
36. Other groups of Indians have also learned of the use of cannabis by contact with Afro-Brazilians. See Doria 1915 for unnamed native groups in the northeast, and Tastevin 1923 on the Mura who live near Manaus.
37. Iglésias, in Min. Saúde 1958:16.
38. A trait also noted by Gomes 1977:248.
39. Monteiro 1966:289 provides a good example of the difficulties of the straight ethnographer who attempts to research marijuana smoking in a single field trip and without doing it himself: "Nobody feels encouraged to volunteer information to unknown visitors . . ."
41. Iglésias, in Min. Saúde 1958, recorded the exact same verse at the turn of the century, a thousand miles away in Pernambuco. Other examples of the poetic folklore surrounding the traditional use of cannabis in northern Brazil can be found in Araújo 1961:320 and Duarte 1974:215 for the state of Alagoas. and Monteiro 1966:294 for Amazonas.
42. The present-day pattern matches that reported by Wagley and Galvao 1949:42 thirty years ago. Neither is marijuana used in the strict, female-dominated Afro-Brazilian animistic cults — the *candomblés* of Bahia and *voduns* of Maranhao. The 'visionary' effects of cannabis smoking are, however, widely recognized among the black fishermen who live along the north-western coast of Maranhao, many of whom smoke during lonely vigils at sea and report encounters with the mythological beasts drawn from the syncretic Afro-Islamic-Portuguese traditions — see Dias 1974.
44. Identical forms of cultivation were reported for the Tenetehara in the 1940s by Wagley and Galvao 1949:41.
45. Dark-cured forms of marijuana (*cabeca de nêgo*) are generally more common and more appreciated in Alagoas — see Duarte 1974:215 — than in Maranhao, where the lighter, reddish *manga rosa* is widely considered the best 'export' quality that the state has to offer. However, perhaps more out of necessity than choice, the local people — both Tenetehara and black — often smoke green weeds of a distinctly 'home grown' type. Some of this uncured marijuana from Maranhao used to trickle through to Sao Paulo in the 1940s — see Pereira 1945:180.
46. Wagley and Galvao 1949:42.
47. CIMI no. 50:30.
48. CIMI no. 50:11.
49. EMa 24/8/78.
50. ESP 10/10/78.
51. ESP 18/10/78.
52. ESP 22/6/79.
53. ESP 5/7/79.
54. ESP 3/8/79.
55. Gerhardt (in CIMI no. 50:12) reported that the officer in charge of the 1978 campaign opened his presentation of the aims of the operation by reference to the 'infallible statistics' of his American advisers. At the other end of the see-saw, the pharmacologist José Elias Murad (1977:112) had reported meeting a number of Brazilian narcs at what he called 'the best institution' in Washington DC, the DEA!

Press sources:
CIMI: Boletim do Conselho Indigenista Missionário, Brasília.
CB: Correio Brasiliense, Brasília.
C do P: Correio do Pará, Belem.
EMa: Estado de Maranhao, Sao Luís.
ESP: Estado de Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo.
FSP: Fôlha de Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo.
JB: Jornal do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro.
Manchete: Editôra Bloch, Rio de Janeiro.
P do P: Provincia do Pará, Belem.
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