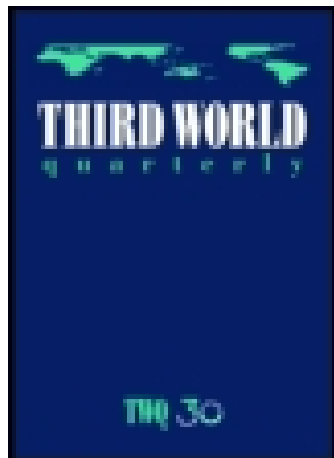


This article was downloaded by: [Pennsylvania State University]

On: 11 August 2014, At: 03:11

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office:  
Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Third World Quarterly

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ctwq20>

### Imperialism and Resistance: Canadian mining companies in Latin America

Todd Gordon <sup>a</sup> & Jeffery R Webber <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Canadian Studies at University College, University of Toronto , Canada E-mail:

<sup>b</sup> doctoral candidate in Political Science, University of Toronto

Published online: 03 Dec 2007.

To cite this article: Todd Gordon & Jeffery R Webber (2008) Imperialism and Resistance: Canadian mining companies in Latin America, Third World Quarterly, 29:1, 63-87, DOI: [10.1080/01436590701726509](https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590701726509)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01436590701726509>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

# Imperialism and Resistance: Canadian mining companies in Latin America

TODD GORDON & JEFFERY R WEBBER

*ABSTRACT* David Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession is a useful framework for understanding the predatory activities of Canadian mining companies in Latin America. Capitalist imperialism is rooted in the logic of a socioeconomic system that is driven by the competitive pursuit of profit based on the exploitation of labour, and which is prone to over-accumulation. Capital, backed by state power, pursues a spatial fix to resolve the systematic crisis of over-accumulation. The creation of new spaces of accumulation is not an innocuous process; it inevitably involves the forceful and violent reorganisation of peoples' lives as they are subordinated to the whims of capital. Strategies of accumulation by dispossession by capital therefore commonly spawn popular resistance from the affected communities. The Canadian mining industry is the largest in the world, and much of its outward investment targets Latin America. The Canadian company share of the larger company exploration market in Latin America (and the Caribbean) has grown steadily since the early 1990s, up to 35% by 2004, the largest by far among all its competitors, with seven Canadian companies among the top 20 mineral exploration investors in the region from 1989 to 2001. This paper charts these trends of Canadian mining expansion in Latin America and then focuses on the community, environmental and worker resistance it is generating in the cases of Chile and Colombia.

This article analyses Canadian mining operations in Latin America and the wide-scale popular resistance that they increasingly face. Mining investment is often surrounded by controversy, involving as it typically does dispossession of people from their land and ecological degradation; and as mining investment grows in the global South in general, and Latin America in particular, Canadian multinational mining corporations—some of the industry's largest and most powerful players—are often at the centre of that controversy.

But to properly understand this issue, and why it will probably become even more prevalent over the next few years at least, it is important to begin by saying a few things about the global context that frames Canadian mining

*Todd Gordon teaches in Canadian Studies at University College, University of Toronto and Jeffery R Webber is a doctoral candidate in Political Science, University of Toronto, Canada.*

*Email: tsgordon@yorku.ca.*

activities. This is especially important for Canadians, furthermore, when we consider that large and influential sections of the Canadian left, including NGOs, unions and the New Democratic Party, the country's social democratic party, still do not consider Canada to be a core capitalist power with imperial ambitions in the developing world.<sup>1</sup> Canada is an advanced capitalist state within a hierarchy of nations operating within the global capitalist economy.

The activities of Canadian mining companies and the Canadian state—the latter typically defending the former—must therefore be analysed within the broader dynamics of global capitalism and, in particular, the relations between countries of the global North and those of the global South. This must be our starting point. If we fail to do this, we risk flattening our analysis, and mistakenly leaving open the possibilities that the problematic behaviour of Canadian mining companies in regions like Latin America can be addressed through notions of corporate responsibility—that is, that these corporations can self-regulate in a socially responsible manner—or that the Canadian state, in supporting mining companies' activities abroad, is simply echoing the US corporate agenda. This is actually implied by Clark and North in their otherwise important contribution to the study of Canadian resource companies in Latin America.<sup>2</sup> An anti-imperialist framework highlights what perspectives like Clark and North's obscure—that the interests of Canadian mining companies and the Canadian state, on the one hand, are irreconcilable with those of the people across Latin America resisting Canadian mining development in their communities, on the other. The relationship between these two actors in fact is increasingly defined in terms of struggle, and it is only the mass struggle of the poor, workers and indigenous people of Latin America that will stop the predatory practices of Canadian mining companies.<sup>3</sup>

Against this backdrop we argue that David Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession provides a useful historical and theoretical framework for understanding the predatory activities of mining companies in the South and the Canadian state power mobilised to defend and facilitate those activities. The penetration of Canadian capital into the mining sector in Latin America paralleled the neoliberal counter-reformation of the 1980s and 1990s in the region. Since the late 1990s popular resistance against neoliberalism has manifested itself across Latin America by way of radical extra-parliamentary movements in the countryside and cities, as well as through the election of a number of populist, left and centre-left governments. In many cases the demand to reclaim popular sovereignty over privatised natural resources has been at the heart of this turning tide. Because Canadian companies are at the centre of processes of accumulation by dispossession in contemporary Latin American mineral exploration and exploitation, the Canadian state and Canadian mining capital have become targets of anti-imperialist struggles. This is plainly evident in the cases we examine in depth: the ongoing struggle against the Pascua Lama project in Chile and mining developments in Colombia.

The analysis is divided into three parts. First, we explain the context of capitalist imperialism generally, and the concept of accumulation by

dispossession in particular. Second, we demonstrate the depth and breadth of Canadian mining expansion in Latin America. Third, we examine the confrontations between Canadian capital and movements from below in the cases of Chile and Colombia.

### **Imperialism and accumulation by dispossession**

Capitalist imperialism is rooted in the logic of a socioeconomic system that is driven by the competitive pursuit of profit based on the exploitation of labour, and which is subsequently prone to over-accumulation. In this respect it is an expression of the contradictory character of capitalist accumulation. In a context of over-accumulation, Harvey argues, 'If system-wide devaluations (and even destruction) of capital and of labour power are not to follow, then ways must be found to absorb these surpluses. Geographical expansion and spatial reorganization provide one such option.'<sup>4</sup> Capital, facilitated by its respective state, whose aim is to ensure the expanded reproduction of capitalist social relations, pursues a spatial fix to resolve the systematic crisis of over-accumulation. New geographical regions are sought to absorb the existing surpluses of capital and avoid their devaluation, while flagging profitability can be improved by accessing cheap labour and raw materials in these areas. In effect, fresh spaces of accumulation are established as capitalism penetrates new territories, creating 'a world after its own image',<sup>5</sup> or as older colonial spaces are radically transformed in the interests of a new accumulation strategy. But the creation of new spaces of accumulation is not an innocuous process; it inevitably involves the forceful and violent reorganisation of people's lives as they are subordinated to the whims of capital.

This is in fact the process Marx refers to as 'primitive accumulation' in his description of the violent and bloody emergence of capitalist social relations in 17th and 18th century England in *Capital*. But, as Harvey emphasises, all the features Marx describes in his chapter on primitive accumulation are still actually a central part of capitalist accumulation. Thus '[a] general re-evaluation of the continuous role and persistence of the predatory practices of "primitive" or "original" accumulation within the long historical geography of capital accumulation is . . . very much in order'.<sup>6</sup> This 'primitive accumulation'—which Harvey more accurately refers to as accumulation by dispossession—is a key *modus operandi* of imperialism, and as such is 'omnipresent in no matter what historical period and picks up strongly when crises of overaccumulation occur in expanded reproduction, when there seems to be no other exit except devaluation'.<sup>7</sup>

With the emergence of neoliberalism we are witnessing a new phase of imperialist accumulation by dispossession. Neoliberalism is the response of political and economic leaders to the crisis of over-accumulation in the advanced capitalist economies of the 1970s, and is aimed at the restoration of profitability through the aggressive restructuring of social relations. But the profitability crisis also spurred an intensification of the geographical expansion of capital from the global North. The advanced capitalist states

have successfully sought out new spaces of accumulation, or dramatically reorganised older colonial ones in their own interests, to absorb the North's surpluses and boost flagging profitability. For instance, as is well reported, through their control of international organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank, countries of the global North have been able to submit countries of the South to their global agenda of political and economic restructuring. With the debt crisis of the early 1980s as an initial springboard, the IMF and World Bank have managed to pry open the economies of, and impose drastic bouts of neoliberal restructuring on, developing nations through their debt management practices. The structural adjustment policies associated with these practices entail the removal of trade and investment barriers for capital from the North, cuts to public services and subsidies to local producers and consumers, and the privatisation of formerly communal land, among other things. The Canadian government has been a big supporter of the Bretton Woods institutions' adoption of structural adjustment measures. As part of an effort to facilitate the expansion of Canadian economic interests in the wake of the crisis of the 1970s, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the departments of Finance and Foreign (formerly External) Affairs have been, and remain to this day, strong backers of structural adjustment.<sup>8</sup>

Corresponding to the emergence of structural adjustment as a strategy for gaining access to the economies of the South, furthermore, are free trade agreements, which are also aimed at codifying neoliberalism and investment rights of capital from the North in developing nations. Besides its free trade agreements with the USA and Mexico, Canada has agreements with Chile, Costa Rica and Israel. Canada has also been the most aggressive proponent of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and has pursued sub-regional deals with Mercosur and the Andean countries.<sup>9</sup> Canada has also signed Foreign Investment Protection Agreements (FIPAs) with nearly two dozen countries since 1994, most of which are in the South and eight of which are in Latin America. FIPAs signed since 1994 are modelled on chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has been cited by critics for its establishment of a strong pro-corporation investment climate, including among other things guaranteeing foreign corporations whose states are party to the agreement the same treatment as domestic corporations, while also giving them the right to sue governments for perceived failures to meet their obligations under the investment agreements. FIPA and non- NAFTA free trade arbitrations are not always publicly disclosed, so they are hard to trace. We have found that Canadian companies have initiated at least four arbitrations under FIPA and non- NAFTA free trade agreements in the past few years, and are considering two others. Three of these are in the mining sector: Vanessa Ventures' claims against Costa Rica (over the country's 2002 law banning open pit mining) and Venezuela.<sup>10</sup>

Not only has neoliberal globalisation led to a massive transfer of wealth from the South to the North via debt repayments that were compounded by the extremely high interest rates of the 1980s, but multinationals from the North have gained unprecedented access to the economies and natural

resources of developing countries, dispossessing billions of people of these resources in the process. Despite the rhetoric of free trade heard from neoliberal globalisation's advocates, what really has 'defined the era of globalization' is not trade at all, David McNally argues, but 'large-scale foreign direct investment (FDI).'<sup>11</sup> This trend is important to our understanding of the global economy, since FDI involves the long-term investment by corporations in foreign countries, and increasing influence over their economies. In the past two decades, FDI has increased at a phenomenal pace, growing by over 200% from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s alone, and in the age of neoliberal globalisation FDI has increasingly involved fixed investments in factories, mines, natural resources, communication systems and services, whereas previously foreign investment was more liquid in nature.<sup>12</sup> According to McNally, 'by 1998, total outward foreign direct investment hit a record level of \$649 billion in a single year' and some estimates suggest it reached the \$1 trillion mark in 2000.<sup>13</sup> Further, while much of this investment takes place between rich nations, FDI from the global North into the South has grown significantly since the 1990s and makes up an increasing percentage of international totals.

It is this economic trend, McNally notes, that lies behind international economic pacts like the failed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (which is undergoing rebirth through a proposed WTO investment agreement), NAFTA and the proposed FTAA, and the structural adjustment policies pursued by the IMF and World Bank. New means of accumulation by dispossession are bound up with this new regime of investor rights. Entirely new areas of investment are being opened by corporations and their governments from the North in their insatiable drive for new ways to increase profits: agreements on intellectual property rights, patenting of genetic resources and the commodification of cultural forms are all examples of this trend in the game of capitalist adventure where practically everything—including water—can be privately owned.

### **Expansion of Canadian mining in Latin America**

Latin America and the Caribbean are home to 25% of the world's forests and 40% of its biodiversity. The region contains just short of a third of the globe's reserves of copper, bauxite and silver, 24% of oil, 8% of natural gas and 5% of uranium.<sup>14</sup> The transfer from state property to transnational capital of these and other natural resources has been a fundamental component of the transition to neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>15</sup> Such natural endowments have long constituted an important part of the region's geopolitical importance, with the colonial race for mining exploration and extraction, in particular, standing out as a predominant thematic of imperialism in Latin America and the Caribbean. The pace has only intensified under neoliberal capitalism.

At the centre of the activities of the mining industry is dispossession. Like other industries within the natural resources sector, mining investment in most instances simply cannot proceed without a community—often

indigenous—being dispossessed of their land, natural resources and livelihoods. Most new areas of mining investment in Latin America are on inhabited land, and even when these areas are not directly inhabited, communities nearby are commonly affected by the inevitable environmental repercussions of mining, which include industrial run-off affecting local water sources, or the destabilisation of the migratory and mating patterns of game and the loss of arable land resulting from the infrastructural development accompanying mining. Thus mining investment, and resistance to it, is an increasing source of conflict in Latin America between poor and indigenous communities, on the one hand, and—typically—foreign mining corporations, on the other.

It is estimated that the share of worldwide exploration investment in developing countries increased from 35% in 1990 to 58% by 2001, and reached as high as 67% in 1997 before the recession.<sup>16</sup> Mineral investment in Latin America quadrupled over the same period, and in 2005 the region received 23% of the total worldwide exploration market, while its annual increase from 2004 to 2005—US\$360 million—was significantly higher than that of other regions.<sup>17</sup> Of the top 10 individual country recipients of global exploration investment, which account for 69% of the world's overall exploration budget total, five are in Latin America.<sup>18</sup> Latin America (and the Caribbean) was also by far the leading region for mining projects, with an investment of more than \$45 million in a number of major mineral and metal categories as of January 2003.<sup>19</sup> But, despite the amount of investment heading into the region and the idealistic claims of mining companies, NGOs sponsored by mining companies, public relations firms hired by mining companies and governments (particularly in the North) supporting mining companies, mining investment does not improve the living conditions in the areas in which the investment is taking place. In fact, some of the poorest areas in Latin America are those that have been subjected to mining development, as it leads to displacement, undermining of traditional economies and destruction of local ecosystems.<sup>20</sup>

The increase in mining investment in Latin America has followed the massive round of structural adjustments imposed on one country after another in the region by the World Bank and IMF in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>21</sup> As elsewhere, structural adjustment has forced open the economies of the region to capital from the North and led to a massive wave of privatisation, drastic cutting of public spending and the transformation of collective lands into privately owned property. The mining industry has benefited greatly from this round of liberalisation, and has itself been particularly clear about its goals for investment access in Latin America. The World Bank has laid out its sharply neoliberal programme for the mining industry in Latin America—calling attention to the problem of indigenous people interfering with mine development, to the need for greater flexibility in labour markets, and to the importance of liberalising investment rules by extending corporations' legal rights and guaranteeing them easier access to mineral deposits.<sup>22</sup>

The Canadian industry has also been pushing strongly for a more favourable climate for investors. Industry organisations, for instance, have

denounced what they view as unfair barriers to accessing the region's mineral deposits, including, apparently, environmental laws and other regulations benefiting 'special interests', and have been strong advocates of an FTAA that will establish a uniform 'process for hemispheric investment,' protecting the rights of Canadian companies.<sup>23</sup> Canadian and other foreign mining interests have been fairly successful, as resource-rich countries like Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Colombia have adopted mining codes that unambiguously favour foreign corporations over indigenous people, the environment and labour rights, and allow corporations greater ability to repatriate profits to their home economies while significantly reducing royalties imposed on them.<sup>24</sup> The most egregious example of this is perhaps in Colombia, where the mining code allows international capital to enter indigenous territories containing mineral deposits unfettered, while Plan Colombia also 'guarantees private sector control over natural resources, even if this means the forcible removal of the existing population from certain areas of the countryside'.<sup>25</sup>

Canadian intervention in the Latin American mining sector comes in many forms, however. Besides structural adjustment programmes enforced through multilateral organisations and investment agreements, it has also been accomplished under the guise of 'development'. In 2002 CIDA—the Canadian government's agency for overseeing foreign aid programming and delivery—made a Can\$9.6 million investment in Peru under the Mineral Resources Reform Project. The project was aimed at providing technical assistance and technological support to Peru's Ministry of Energy and Mines to improve its administration of the country's mining and energy sector. CIDA also played an important role, via financial and technical assistance, in the establishment of Colombia's new mining code, described above. These actions are defended as contributing to 'development' and 'poverty reduction', but they facilitate the Canadian mining presence, whose contribution to these things, as noted above, is non-existent.<sup>26</sup>

No doubt also encouraging Canadian mining investment in Latin America (and abroad more generally) is the Canadian government's flat-out refusal to impose any kind of human rights standards on Canadian companies' actions outside Canada. Many of these companies receive financial support from the government for their foreign investments.<sup>27</sup> Government inertia has faced growing public pressure for such standards, as well as a report by the parliamentary Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs and International Trade calling on the government to take action in this regard. Among other things, the government claims in its response to the Standing Committee's report that ensuring Canadian corporations abide by international human rights law is the responsibility of host states and, furthermore, that it does not presently have the legal authority to prosecute Canadian corporations for transgressions made beyond Canada's borders. It makes no mention of pursuing legislation allowing it to do so. The government also claims that there is no international norm for socially responsible corporate behaviour that can measure a company's deeds. Instead, the government established a roundtable process to discuss the concerns raised in the Standing Committee report, which critics condemn as simply a stalling tactic.

The government suggested that it supports human rights in developing countries by promoting development via World Bank and IMF structural adjustment measures (or ‘macroeconomic stability’).<sup>28</sup> On top of this the government refused to sign the United Nations’ Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which called for the ‘informed consent’ of indigenous people before a project can be initiated on their land. With Australia, Canada called for revisions which, according to critics, set the process back several years.<sup>29</sup> In the end Canada’s effort actually did more than that, as the negotiations for the Draft Declaration eventually collapsed. The failure of this declaration is an important victory for Canadian mining companies, since most of their current and future projects are on inhabited land, and removing the people who stand in the way of their investments is a principal aim of Canadian policy in the developing world.

In this context Canadian mining investment in Latin America and in the global South more generally has been increasing significantly. Canadian mining involvement in Latin America is in fact an important part of the overall growth of an increasingly aggressive search by Canadian corporations for new spaces for capitalist accumulation. As Figure 1 shows, outward Canadian foreign direct investment (or Canadian Direct Investment—CDI) is increasingly going to countries of the global South. In the early 1950s these countries combined received roughly 10% of total CDI, increasing sharply in the 1990s. By 2000 they were receiving just over a quarter before this tapered off to 23% in 2004.<sup>30</sup> Of the top 15 nation recipients of CDI in the global South, nine are in Latin America and the Caribbean, and of the 20 fastest growing destinations of global CDI, 12 are in Latin America, particularly the resource-rich nations.<sup>31</sup> Canadian direct investment into non-NAFTA countries in the Americas increased, in fact, six-fold from 1990 to 2002, making Canada one of the largest investors in the region.<sup>32</sup>

Twenty-seven percent of total CDI in developing countries is in energy and minerals, considerably higher than for other advanced capitalist countries.<sup>33</sup> This is perhaps not surprising since the Canadian mining industry is in fact the largest in the world. Canadian-based mining companies comprised 60% of all mining companies (of a total of 1138) in the world that spent more than Can\$133 000 on exploration and accounted for 43% of all expected exploration activity in the world in 2004.<sup>34</sup> Canadian companies also have a much greater outward orientation than do companies based in other regions and non-OECD and -EU countries’ share of Canadian foreign direct investment in the ‘energy and metallic minerals’ sector has grown significantly since the early 1990s.

Much of this outward investment is directed at Latin America, as the Canadian industry has moved to gain control of some of the richest deposits in the world. Indeed, after Canada, Latin America has become by a wide margin the region of the world in which Canadian companies are most active in mining exploration and development, where they spend roughly one-third of the total value of exploration in the region.<sup>35</sup> Four of the top 10—and eight of the top 18—locations for Canadian exploration investments abroad are in Latin America, with interests in some 1200 mineral properties there

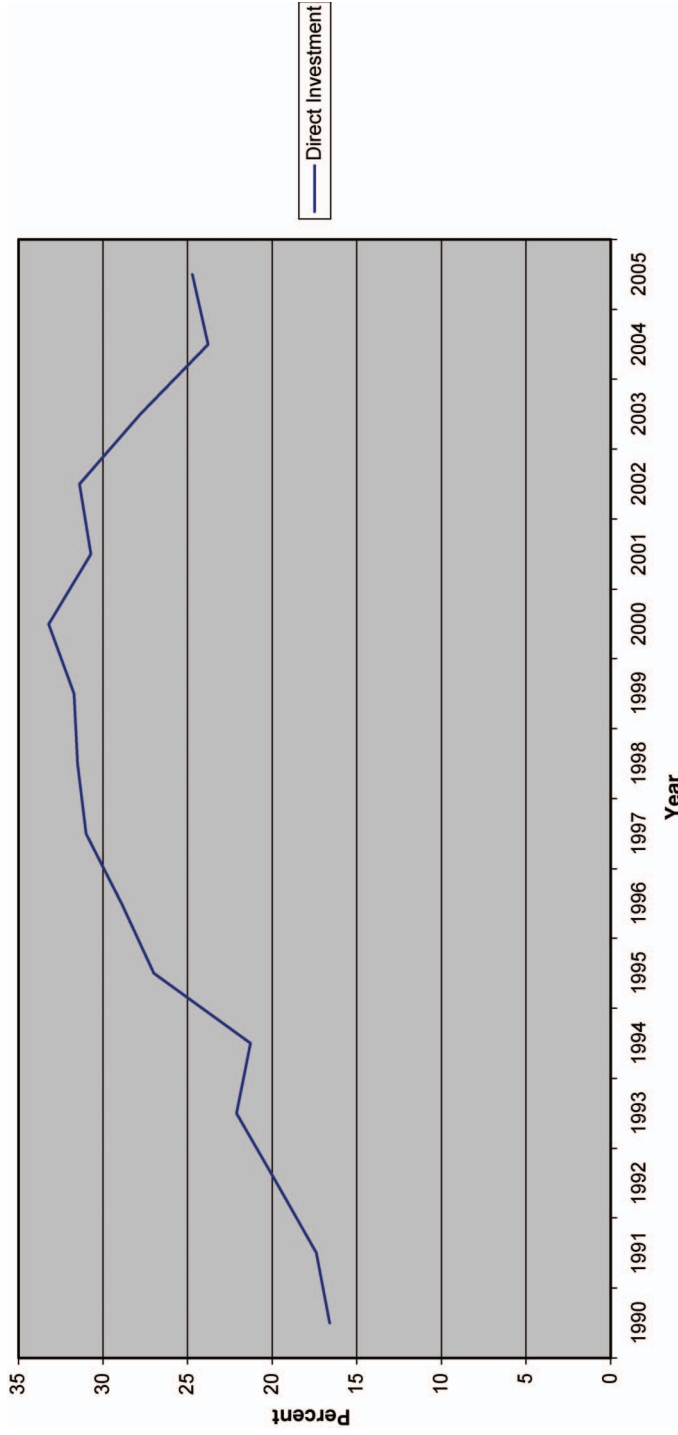


FIGURE 1. Canadian FDI in energy and metallic minerals to non-OECD countries as a percentage of total, 1990–2005.

(the largest foreign destination).<sup>36</sup> Latin America also contains the most mines, refineries, smelters and advanced projects abroad in which Canadian companies have an interest, at over 70 in total, which is nearly double those held by Canadian companies in each of the other regions of the world.<sup>37</sup> The Canadian company share of the larger company exploration market in Latin America (and the Caribbean) has grown steadily since the early 1990s, up to 35% by 2004, the largest by far of all its competitors, with seven Canadian companies among the top 20 mineral exploration investors in the region from 1989 to 2001.<sup>38</sup> Having mapped the character and depth of Canadian mining interests in Latin America, we now turn to an investigation of the forces of popular resistance which are challenging those interests.

### **Confronting Canadian capital: struggles from below**

Canadian mining activity in the neoliberal era has spawned considerable levels of popular resistance. These struggles need to be understood in the general context of the failure of the neoliberal economic model as a whole in the region, and of the emergence of radical social movements and left and centre-left governments since the late 1990s. Popular discontent with imperial domination and the social crisis under polyarchic regimes and neoliberal capitalism has increasingly found expression in extra-parliamentary social movements in rural and urban areas.<sup>39</sup> Road blockades, strikes, IMF food riots, land invasions and mass peasant and urban unemployed movements have chequered the landscapes of the region, as has an explosion of indigenous resistance. Anti-neoliberal sentiment has also been conveyed at the ballot box. The elections of ostensibly anti-neoliberal governments—whatever their actual characters once in office—have occurred since the late 1990s in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Venezuela.

While the motivations behind growing popular rebellion are multifarious, resistance to the commodification of natural resources has been a central feature. Drawing on the latest data from the Latinobarómetro, *The Economist* reports: ‘Latin Americans have reservations about the role of private enterprise in the extraction of natural resources. Only 37% think the private sector should play a big role in mining, 36% in oil and 39% in natural gas.’<sup>40</sup> It is unsurprising, therefore, that the aggressive tactics of Canadian mining companies have increasingly been met with peasant, indigenous, community, labour and environmental opposition. Popular opposition in Chile and Colombia, the subject to which we now turn our attention, is representative of a more general trend. What becomes clear in our analysis is the inevitability of popular struggle emerging in instances where imperial mining practices persist or expand, whatever rhetoric Canadian companies employ about ‘corporate responsibility’.

#### *Chile*

Chile boasts the world’s largest reserves of selenium, iodine and lithium, as well as ample deposits of iron, nitrates, coal and hydrocarbons, among

other natural resources. However, 'it is copper, the "Chilean wage," that drives the mining industry. Chile accounts for over 37 percent of the world's detected copper reserves and 34 percent of its production. Copper, in turn, makes up 80 percent of Chilean mining production, 85 percent of its mining export value, and 75 percent of its mining investment'.<sup>41</sup> Even in Chile's era of 'national developmentalism' in the 1950s and 1960s copper represented almost 75% of export earnings, leaving the country 'consistently vulnerable to the vicissitudes of world market prices for this commodity, especially its relative price compared to that of oil'.<sup>42</sup> Under Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government (1970–73), large-scale mining operations were nationalised as part of the so-called peaceful road to socialism. The military coup by Augusto Pinochet on 11 September 1973 ushered in an era (1973–90) characterised by state terrorism and brutality, backed by the imperial power of the USA and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF. Over 3000 people were killed or 'disappeared' and tens of thousands jailed or exiled. Analysts estimate that there were over 100 000 torture victims.<sup>43</sup> Workers and their unions were prime targets of the repression meted out by Pinochet's authoritarian regime.<sup>44</sup> Pinochet's paradigmatic neoliberal regime paradoxically avoided the privatisation of the mines expropriated by Allende, creating instead the National Copper Corporation (Codelco), which subsequently became the world's largest copper company.<sup>45</sup> However, in other ways Pinochet laid the basis for the neoliberal mining boom of the mid- to late 1990s by implementing a Foreign Investment Law in 1976 which guaranteed foreign capital 'remittances of profits after one year, national treatment, and locked-in tax schemes', as well as a Mining Law (1980) which 'granted further extraordinary benefits and guarantees to mining investors'.<sup>46</sup>

The transition in 1990 to the democratically elected *Concertación*—a coalition government of Christian Democrats and Socialists, which in various guises has been returned to office in each election since—increased popular expectations of social justice. However, in terms of economics the transition was one of neoliberal continuity, indeed of neoliberal deepening, with the extension of privatisation in the health and social security sectors, the continued privatisation of state enterprises, and the stabilisation of neoliberal tariff and exchange rate policies.<sup>47</sup> The *Concertación*'s 'Growth with Equity' or 'neoliberalism with a human face' model of development depends on rapid economic growth rooted in export sectors and targeted anti-poverty programmes to circumvent heightened class warfare. Stability was maintained between 1990 and 1998, when the country enjoyed a primary-commodity export boom. However, the contradictions came to the fore more clearly in the late 1990s and early 2000s when the economies of Japan, Europe, the USA and, especially, Argentina—Chile's major markets—suffered downturns.<sup>48</sup> The economic situation has since rebounded again. Parallel to the extraordinary growth of China, demand for Chile's export commodities has increased, setting off a new boom in 2005.<sup>49</sup> However, the unsatisfied demands of the popular classes have not disappeared, expressing

themselves in the past two years by way of secondary-school radicalism, striking copper miners, and protesting state health-care workers, civil servants and employees of the state bank.<sup>50</sup> The *Concertación*'s response was to put forward a moderately more progressive presidential candidate in the form of the Socialist Party's Michelle Bachelet, who successfully contested the December 2005 elections, becoming Chile's first female president. The contradictions at the base of the *Concertación* project endure, however, Bachelet having 'soberly pledged to develop a more inclusive style of governing, to stay the free-market course of La Concertación... and to enact her social justice platform'.<sup>51</sup> Contextualising the 'Chilean miracle' in such a way is important if we are to understand clearly the political economy of Canadian mining activities in the country in the current period.

The penetration by transnational capital of the Chilean mining sector accelerated in the context of the *Concertación*'s neoliberal deepening. In 1990 the *Concertación* government introduced Law 18,985, which facilitated the sale of mining properties to foreign capital. As a consequence of this, in conjunction with the fact that mineral prices were rising out of a slump, over 300 million hectares of mining properties were taken over by private interests between 1996 and 2000.<sup>52</sup> Throughout the 1990s mining growth exceeded the rate of GDP growth overall. Over \$13 billion in FDI penetrated the Chilean economy between 1993 and 2003, 44% of which targeted the mining sector.<sup>53</sup> Privatised mining in Chile in the 1990s, as elsewhere, proved to be an essentially enclave economy, with minimal 'multiplier effects' in the economy as a whole and negative employment consequences. Despite the fact that mineral extraction constituted 9% of GDP, for example, it accounted for only 1.3% of employment in the 1990s. Even as mineral production increased, 'total employment actually fell from 102 000 to 71 000 jobs'.<sup>54</sup> All the while the expansion of mining activities had terrible implications for the environment and the health of residents in mining communities. Poverty rates in mining zones exceeded the national average.<sup>55</sup>

Canadian mining capital was front and centre in these developments. Canadian companies invested more than CA\$4.4 billion in the mining industry in Chile between 1993 and 2003, making Canada the largest mining investor with 33% of total mining investment in the country.<sup>56</sup> Chile ranks fourth in the world in terms of where Canadian mining corporations are most active in exploration outside Canada.<sup>57</sup> It is unsurprising, therefore, that Canadian companies have been central targets in anti-imperialist struggles in the mining zones. In what follows, we examine in detail the conflicts at the Pascua Lama mine, an emblematic case of struggles against Canadian mining activity in Chile.

The Pascua Lama gold, silver and copper open-pit mine site is situated in the Andean mountains, 5000 metres above the Chilean Huasco Valley. The transnational site extends across the border between Argentina and Chile, in the province of San Juan in Argentina, and on the outer edges of the Atacama Desert in Chile. In order for the mine to go ahead, a special Mining Integration and Complementation Treaty had to be signed between the two

host countries. Toronto-based Barrick Gold Corp, the largest gold producer in the world, acquired the mine in 1994, and plans to sink \$1.6 billion into its development.<sup>58</sup> There are an estimated 12 million reserve ounces of gold on the Argentine side, and 17.6 million reserve ounces of gold, over 600 million ounces of silver, and substantial reserves of copper and iron on the Chilean side.<sup>59</sup> Barrick projects 'an annual production of 775 000 ounces of gold, silver, and copper over its first 10 years, with a lifespan of 21 years'.<sup>60</sup>

Since Barrick acquired the site opposition from community and environmental groups has been fierce.<sup>61</sup> The most alarming part of the project was revealed in the plans presented to Chilean authorities by Barrick in 2000 and 2004 around the issue of large glaciers blocking certain deposits in the area. As investigative journalist Jen Ross points out, it was revealed that the company's plan for Pascua Lama, 'includes an ambitious proposal to "relocate" large portions of the glaciers: 70% of the Esperanza glacier, 4% of the Toro One glacier and 20% of the Toro Two. All told, these glaciers span approximately 24 hectares. The plan calls for moving roughly 10 hectares—about 25 acres—of that surface area, which amounts to 800 000 cubic metres of ice.' Ross quotes Raúl Montenegro, an Argentine ecologist based at the University of Cordoba, who argues that 'Barrick is treating the glaciers like "piles of ice" rather than essential parts of a fragile desert ecosystem. You can't just pick up a glacier, move it, and then tell the rain to fall somewhere else.'<sup>62</sup>

Resistance has been led by the Co-ordinator for the Defence of the Huasco Valley, a coalition that brings together many local organisations among the 70 000 people inhabiting the waterways connecting the glaciers with the Pacific Ocean.<sup>63</sup> Farmers of grapes, peaches, figs, lemons and avocados, among other crops, cultivate their land in the Huasco Valley, underneath the projected mine site. There is little rainfall in the area, and, therefore, the crops are dependent on runoff water stored in the glaciers. The most obvious concern of activists, then, has been the fact that the effects of glacier removal on the ecosystem in the area are impossible to predict.

Other worries have to do with water pollution. Barrick will use 7200 kilograms of cyanide daily, as well as diverting rivers in Argentina for cyanide solution production, necessary for the extraction of gold.<sup>64</sup> Vice-president for corporate communications at Barrick, Vincent Borg, has also admitted that the company plans to utilise arsenic in their extraction processes.<sup>65</sup> The company assures the Chilean government and community activists that it has taken all necessary precautions to prevent spillage of pollutants into streams and rivers. However, Luis Fara, a farmer and councillor in the adjacent Chilean town of Alto del Carmen, points to the fact that the extreme weather conditions at the high altitude may very well overwhelm the containment systems put in place by Barrick. In addition to typical extreme weather patterns at such altitudes, the US Geological Survey has recorded three earthquakes in excess of 6.7 in magnitude in the past four years in the area. Aside from potential one-off disasters, the regular functioning of the mine promises to seriously pollute the region. Billions of

tons of waste rock are projected to be stored near the Estrecho River: 'Waste rock is hazardous due to a process called acid rock drainage, in which sulphuric acid as well as toxins such as mercury, arsenic and cadmium leach out of exposed waste-rock piles'.<sup>66</sup> These environmental concerns are intricately intertwined with the livelihood concerns of the farmers in the valley, given that any substantial leakage of cyanide, arsenic or other pollutants, would wreak havoc with their means of subsistence.

Protests have included demonstrations of 500 in Vallenar, Chile on 21 March 2005, of over 3000 in Santiago on 4 June 2005, and urban protests across Chile of over 5000 on 10 July 2005. Eighteen thousand people signed a petition rejecting the Pascua Lama mining development, and the Citizens' Foundation for the Americas petitioned the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, declaring the project a violation of indigenous and human rights of the residents of the Huasco Valley.<sup>67</sup> The movement against the Pascua Lama development has been successful in pushing the subject onto the national level of political debate. Bachelet, for example, promised to protect the glaciers as part of her presidential campaign in 2005. In February 2006 Chilean officials gave a green light to the Pascua Lama project but, not insignificantly, stipulated that the glaciers must not be 'relocated'.<sup>68</sup> Barrick agreed to this restriction and continued its public relations campaign, promoting the mining development as environmentally friendly, and a boon to jobs in a region plagued with high unemployment. The corporation agreed to pay \$60 million to cover any deleterious consequences stemming from mining activities in an apparently somewhat successful bid to quell public discontent.<sup>69</sup> As of July 2007 only the final environmental approvals were pending, after which construction can proceed.<sup>70</sup>

While, as Clark points out, 'Barrick can now only dream of' a political environment in which 'the project would have been allowed to function with virtually no political oversight', the broader correlation of social forces in Chilean society nonetheless has not been conducive to a fundamental break with neoliberal mining practices.<sup>71</sup> One indication is the fact that Bachelet has included Canada—the largest foreign investor in Chilean mining—in an exclusive list of Chile's preferential bilateral and multilateral foreign partners. According to Bachelet, Canada shares with Chile a dual commitment to commercial development and democratic values. During Prime Minister Harper's visit to Chile on 18 July 2007, he visited Barrick's Chilean headquarters, praised the company's responsible corporate behaviour, and said he was satisfied that it was 'following the rules' in Chile. Outside the headquarters, protesters under the watchful eye of Chilean police carried signs saying, 'Harper Go Home!'.<sup>72</sup> Popular struggle must continue and grow in Chile if such a rose-coloured optic of the motivations and actions of Canadian capital and the Canadian state, as well as of Chilean capital and the Chilean state, is to be effectively countered. If the imperial conquests of Canadian mining capital require some coaxing to the surface in the context of Chile's neoliberal 'miracle', nowhere are they more nakedly revealed than in the contemporary war economy of Colombia, a case to which we now turn our attention.

*Colombia*

The political terrain onto which popular movements are forced in contemporary Colombia can only be described as brutal and violent. Rich in petroleum, natural gas, coal, iron ore, nickel, gold, copper, emeralds and hydropower, the activities of transnational capital in mining and other extractive resource industries (most importantly, oil) play a major role in perpetuating civil war, military and para-military terror, grotesque concentrations of wealth, and the dispossession of land and resources from peasants, miners and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

Neoliberal restructuring throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century has intensified the historically unequal patterns of wealth and the orchestration of terror from above.<sup>73</sup> 'It is not a mere coincidence', contends sociologist Jasmin Hristov, 'that the implementation of the neoliberal project has been accompanied by: enhancement in the capacity of the state's security apparatus and paramilitary groups; expansion of violence and human rights [violations]; and subjection of social movements to various extermination tactics.'<sup>74</sup> Threats, terror and assassination from military and paramilitary forces are the common obstacles to social movement activism in the current setting. According to William Avilés, 'Human rights activists, political leaders on the left, trade unionists and the peasants perceived to be supporting the guerrilla insurgency represented the vast majority of these victims'.<sup>75</sup> The main guerrilla forces, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), have also committed atrocities against social movement actors, but to a dramatically lesser extent (see Table 1).

Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world for trade union activists.<sup>76</sup> Since 1991 more than 2000 labour leaders have been killed.<sup>77</sup> Forty-two percent of human rights violations against unionists take place in the mining–energy sector. Ninety-seven percent of the homicides against unionists have been perpetrated by military and paramilitary actors, with 3% being carried out by guerrillas and other armed actors.<sup>78</sup> Three million people have been displaced in the 21st century in Colombia, two million of whom were displaced from mining regions.<sup>79</sup> Levels of violence in mining zones are extraordinary. In the municipalities of these zones between 1995 and 2002 'there have been 828 homicides, 142 forced disappearances, 117 people

TABLE 1. Share of responsibility for non-combatant deaths and forced disappearances (%)

	1993	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Guerrillas	28	38	36	23.5	21.3	19.6	16.3
Security forces	54	16	18	7.4	2.7	2.4	4.6
Paramilitary	18	46	46	69	76	78	79.2

Source: W Avilés, 'Paramilitarism and Colombia's low intensity democracy,' *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 38 (2), p 403. Derived from the Colombian Commission of Jurists.

injured, 71 people tortured, 355 death threats, and 150 arbitrary detentions, every year. In addition there have been 433 massacres, which when added to the homicides gives a total figure of 6625 homicides during those eight years.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, the violence is compounded by an abysmal social situation. GDP per capita was US\$7900 in 2005.<sup>81</sup> Yet 64% of the population lives below the poverty line, 23% in absolute poverty. The worst rates are to be found in mining zones. Less than 2% of the population owns roughly 53% of the land.<sup>82</sup> Eleven million of the country's 43 593 000 citizens do not meet their basic food requirements.<sup>83</sup> Adequate health care, education and employment are exclusive privileges of a small elite. Such is the backdrop against which the political economy of Canadian mining activities in Colombia must be analysed.

Canadian investment in Colombia is concentrated in oil and gas and telecommunications, with lesser stakes in food services, footwear and paper.<sup>84</sup> Nonetheless, despite temporary interruptions in the intensity of their activities at various junctures because of instability, violence and fluctuations in mineral commodity prices on the world market, Canadian corporations have been playing an important role in Colombian mining. In an interview in 1993 the general manager of the Canadian corporation Greenstone, which was bidding to develop Oronorte into the largest gold mine in Colombia at the time, pointed out that, while the security situation for mining companies was not ideal, this cost was more than balanced by the opportunities opened by lax environmental regulation and low labour costs. He noted, 'People back home said, "Colombia? That's drug dealers and guerrillas!" But now they are realizing that Colombia has a lot of wealth. The only problem is security.'<sup>85</sup> The context for mining turned sour temporarily in the late 1990s. In 1998 Alberta mining executive Norbert Reinhart, of Greystar Resources, was held captive by FARC guerrillas for 94 days after he exchanged places with a Greystar employee who had been kidnapped. Reinhart was released unharmed, reportedly in exchange for US\$200 000 in ransom money, but the incident sparked renewed fears among Canadian mining investors and employees.<sup>86</sup> Growing security concerns paralleled declining prices in gold on the world market, causing 11 Canadian companies—Gran Colombia, Chivor, Latin Gold, Venoro, Odin, Bolivar, Randsburg, Continental, Santa Catalina, and Resource Equity—to abandon the country between 1997 and 1998.<sup>87</sup> However, the new political and economic context in Colombia is once again attractive to Canadian mining capitalists. While there are no Canadian companies currently running an active mine, there are 16 mining properties held in the country at various stages of exploration. This includes eight Canadian companies with 14 different exploration projects.<sup>88</sup> According to data in the *Canadian Mineral Yearbook*, published by Natural Resources Canada, in 2004 Canadian companies held 'the dominant share of the larger companies' exploration market in... Colombia'.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, there are clear signs that the participation of Canadian corporations in the mining sector will increase in the coming years.

Human rights organisations and trade unionists in Colombia have reported their concerns over Canadian companies' complicity in atrocities carried out in the mining industry. Conquistador Mines Ltd has been cited for exploring gold deposits in the southern province of Bolivar, where 'guerrillas and paramilitaries have battled for sympathies of local residents' and where human rights groups argue 'massacres carried out by paramilitaries have sown terror among peasants and miners who are opposed to foreign firms' activities'.<sup>90</sup> Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth have also 'raised the alarm about alleged abuses surrounding... Canadian projects'.<sup>91</sup> The *Toronto Star* reports: 'These companies are functioning inside a civil war zone, a war that has everything to do with wealth and power. Nobody—least of all the foreign gold miners—are [sic] neutral'.<sup>92</sup> One report, stemming from a 1997 Canadian human rights delegation to Colombia of trade unionists and church members, reached the following damning conclusion:

The presence of Conquistador Mines and its interest in the South of Bolivar appears to have encouraged the murder of local community leaders and the massive displacement of peasant miners and their families. The other Canadian companies in Colombia are not directly linked to human or labour rights violations, but they still benefit from the 'economics of repression.' The systematic massacres and displacements of Colombian citizens by a combined military-paramilitary assault have the dual effect of creating a vast pool of cheaper labour and giving foreign companies access to valuable natural resources they may not otherwise have been able to obtain. Repression serves to greatly reduce the price and organized resistance of labour and clears the land of people who would resist the take over of Colombian natural wealth by multinational capital.<sup>93</sup>

A clearer illustration of accumulation by dispossession is difficult to imagine. Multinational corporations functioning in the extractive resources sectors in Colombia commonly turn to paramilitaries for 'security' purposes. 'Given that private property rights [are] contested in much of Colombia', notes Forrest Hylton, 'it is not surprising that foreign corporations [pay] protection money to paramilitaries as a "capitalist insurance policy"'.<sup>94</sup> Canadian mining companies have hired the notorious US mercenary aviation firm, AirScan, for security purposes. AirScan's employees 'have been linked to a bungled 1998 airstrike on rebel forces in Colombia that killed 18 unarmed civilians, including nine children'.<sup>95</sup> The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs stated in a 2002 report that Colombia offered rich commercial opportunities in mining, limited only by security concerns: 'The report concludes, "The challenge is to balance the commercial opportunities with a wise intelligent approach to personal security"'.<sup>96</sup> Ken Luckhardt, a national representative for the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), expresses the sentiments of many human rights and trade union activists when he argues, 'If Canadian mining companies require military forces to operate, they shouldn't be there'.<sup>97</sup>

However, Canadian mining companies appear to have reawakened their interest in Colombia following the passage of the new neoliberal mining code (2001) which facilitates easier access and better conditions for foreign capital. In 2001 alone Canadian corporations invested \$869 million in the mining and petroleum sectors combined.<sup>98</sup> Greystar renewed exploration in 2003 with gusto. The company now ‘has eight drill rigs working and [its] successful return has made it something of a poster child for Colombian authorities keen to show that the country is safe for investors and ripe for investment’.<sup>99</sup> The Canadian company is understood to be ‘the vanguard of Colombia’s gold mining renaissance, as it puts the troubles of the past behind it and works toward a feasibility study for its 10-million-ounce Angostura gold property near Bucaramanga, in Santander department, having so far spent \$48-million on the project’.<sup>100</sup>

Far-right president, Álvaro Uribe Vélez—elected in 2002 and re-elected in 2006—has a lot to do with the resurgence of investor confidence. The business press reports that, ‘Mr Uribe . . . has implemented some of the most competitive taxation conditions in the world, not just in Latin America’.<sup>101</sup> Peter Baxter, exploration manager of Vancouver’s Bema Gold Corp, was impressed with Uribe after seeing a presentation by him at a mining conference in Medellín: ‘Colombia is a lot better than I thought. Seeing President Uribe was impressive.’<sup>102</sup> The reasons for the positive reception of Uribe by transnational mining capital are straightforward. According to Hylton, ‘Uribe’s [administration] is a semi-authoritarian form of parliamentary government that does not respect individual rights or international law’.<sup>103</sup> He was the preferred candidate of the paramilitaries in both the 2002 and 2006 elections. Before ascending to the presidency, Uribe spent two years as governor of Antioquia, two years in which the anti-guerrilla militias known as *Convivirs* (Rural Vigilance Co-operatives) displaced roughly 200 000 peasants.<sup>104</sup> In the banana zones of that department the homicide rate increased under the governorship of Uribe: ‘in 1995, it doubled to 800; in 1996, 1200; and in 1997, 700. In 1998, the year after Uribe’s departure, it dipped to 300’.<sup>105</sup> At the 2006 mining conference in Medellín, Uribe declared: ‘Colombia will be attractive for investors . . . Colombia is ready to be a major mining country’.<sup>106</sup>

The Canadian state and Canadian mining corporations did not simply benefit from the neoliberal mining code of 2001 through happy coincidence. They played a central role in its development, beginning in 1996 as the project to develop a new mining code was initiated. According to a recent book by Colombian trade union lawyer and activist Francisco Ramírez Cuellar, ‘Actions by Canada’s government cooperation agencies like CIDA . . . and CERI (Canadian Energy Research Institute, an NGO representing Canadian-based mining and energy companies), have created situations of conflict of interest with its private mining companies. CIDA–CERI has provided aid in the creation of mining, petroleum and environmental legislation in Colombia, and the multinational companies that provide financial support to CIDA–CERI have been in a position to benefit from the new laws’.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, Ramírez Cuellar reports that the code was written by a

Colombian lawyer ‘connected to the Canadian company Corona Goldfields’.<sup>108</sup>

Resistance to the CIDA–CERI-influenced 2001 mining code and the ongoing exploitative activities of Canadian mining capital in Colombia persists, despite the most trying of circumstances. The mining union Sintraminercol (Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Empresa Nacional Minera), is at the forefront of these struggles. Sintraminercol was founded in 1991 and began its activism around specific demands for labour improvements within the mining sector. However, according to Ramírez Cuellar, the union subsequently extended its political horizons, challenging corruption and repression at the highest levels of the Colombian state. The broader political objectives of the union invited death threats and attacks upon its leaders, but it also forged the basis for a militant social movement unionism, ‘linking the union with the community’. The union, ‘began to expand [its] focus beyond labor rights, to take on the challenge of building a mining sector that would benefit our country’s people as a whole’.<sup>109</sup>

Sintraminercol’s struggles, however, take place in a more generalised environment of social movement weakness and right wing (para)militarised assault in defence of imperialism and neoliberal capitalism. Despite inspiring resistance by Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities against violent dispossession, as well as struggles by workers and the urban poor, the panorama remains bleak:

militarily strong Left insurgencies, imperially supported police and armed forces, and a semi-autonomous, increasingly powerful coalition of private right-wing narco-armies weakened the radical–popular movement. Patterns of counterinsurgent terror against civilians... were reinforced during the cold war, and repackaged under the anti-terrorist rubric after 11 September 2001. Not for the first time, in response to struggles for peace and justice, terror and official amnesia have become the lingua franca of Colombian politics and society.<sup>110</sup>

The important points to emphasise from an anti-imperialist perspective are that Canadian mining activity in Colombia is presently resurgent, and that such activity is deeply implicated in the war economy of violence and dispossession from which it benefits. This emphasis is especially vital to develop in light of the Canadian state’s consistent manipulation of the political realities in contemporary Latin America. On his most recent trip to the region, Prime Minister Harper made a thinly veiled allusion to Hugo Chávez’s government in Venezuela, warning that the rest of Latin America has to avoid a return to ‘the syndrome of economic nationalism, political authoritarianism and class warfare’. By contrast, embracing Uribe’s record in Colombia, Harper stated, ‘When we see a country like Colombia that has decided it has to address its social, political and economic problems in an integrated manner, that wants to embrace economic freedom, that wants to embrace political democracy and human rights and social development, then we say, “We’re there to encourage you and we’re there to help you”’.<sup>111</sup>

### Conclusion

Our Chilean and Colombian case studies of popular resistance against Canadian mining imperialism in Latin America could easily be expanded. At the time of writing, intense conflicts are unfolding between the Canadian corporation Skye Resources and Mayan Q'eqchi' indigenous peasants in Guatemala.<sup>112</sup> In Ecuador Ascendant Copper is pitted against activists who are struggling against the company's Junín mining project.<sup>113</sup> In Mexico the community of Cerro de San Pedro is waging a battle against the Canadian gold mining company Metallica Resources Inc.<sup>114</sup> The activities of the Da Capo Resources mining corporation—which later merged with the US corporation Granges Incorporated, becoming Vista Gold Corporation—laid the groundwork for the *Masacre de Navidad*, or Christmas Massacre, in the Bolivian mines of Amayapampa and Capasirca in 1996. Ten civilians were killed and 40 others wounded as a result of military repression of protests supported by the corporation. Two of the dead were 15 years old.<sup>115</sup> In the Bolivian case indigenous communities and miners rose up together against the encroachment of capitalist social relations, the dispossession of communal land and the commodification of natural resources in the overwhelmingly indigenous department of Potosí.<sup>116</sup>

In Peru popular movements against Canadian mining imperialism are widespread.<sup>117</sup> Canadian capital was at the forefront of the mining drive in that country in the 1990s. There are over 60 active Canadian mining firms operating in Peru, with a presence in over 50% of all mining projects in the country, and total investments valued at more than US\$4 billion.<sup>118</sup> Expansionary mining activity by foreign capital has led to increasing conflict with miners, peasants, environmentalists and indigenous movements around the dispossession of land and resources from local communities, the contamination of water sources and the diversion of rivers, exploitative labour practices, unemployment, the terms of technology transfers, the extraction of natural riches for the nearly exclusive benefit of foreign capital, and the threat to existing agricultural activities. Perhaps the most infamous site of confrontation between community and labour groups and Canadian mining capital, which pivots around all these issues, is Tambogrande, located in the northern region of Piura, 1050 kilometres from the capital Lima. In Tambogrande the Canadian company Manhattan Minerals Corp has faced ongoing and widespread popular resistance to its expansion plans.<sup>119</sup> The pattern stretches across much of the rest of Latin America. Indeed, as recent studies on mining in Africa demonstrate, the argument made in this paper can be generalised, to a large degree, to encompass Canadian mining activities in the global South as a whole.<sup>120</sup>

We have demonstrated that Canadian mining operations in Latin America must be analysed within the broader dynamics of global capitalism, in order to develop a coherent anti-imperialist perspective. David Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession shows how a dynamic interpretation of Marx's primitive accumulation can shed significant light on the processes of capitalist imperialism in the neoliberal era. Such dispossession is clearly at the

centre of Canadian mining activities in Latin America, and these activities depend on the power of the Canadian state and that of host states. The empirical record reveals Canada to be a major imperialist force in the mining sector of Latin America. Canadian mining investment in the region is massive, and increasing, as part of a larger Canadian corporate drive for new spaces of capital accumulation. As Karl Polanyi famously noted, drives to commodify land and labour spur counter-movements from within the affected societies.<sup>121</sup> Since the end of the 1990s a plethora of popular movements in Latin America have shown this to be true. Our exploration of movements in Chile and Colombia has documented the centrality of demands for the reclamation of popular sovereignty over privatised natural resources in many of the contemporary struggles being waged by Latin Americans. Emancipation from Canadian mining imperialism will only come to pass through the deepening and expansion of such mass movements of liberation.

## Notes

- 1 There is a long history of left nationalism in Canada that we cannot go into in this article. It is prevalent in unions, NGOs and important left-wing magazines like *Canadian Dimension*.
- 2 TD Clark & L North, 'Mining and oil in Latin America: lessons from the past, issues for the future', in L North, TD Clark & V Patroni (eds), *Community Rights and Corporate Responsibility: Canadian Mining and Oil Companies in Latin America*, Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006.
- 3 It is also fundamental, of course, that anti-imperialist movements within Canada mount struggles against the Canadian state and mining capital. However, this subject lies outside the scope of this paper.
- 4 David Harvey, 'The "new" imperialism: accumulation by dispossession', in L Panitch & C Leys (eds), *Socialist Register*, Halifax: Fernwood, 2003, p 64.
- 5 K Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, New York: International, 1995 [1848], p 13.
- 6 Harvey, 'The "new" imperialism', p 74.
- 7 *Ibid*, p 76.
- 8 D Black & P McKenna, 'Canada and structural adjustment in the South: the significance of the Guyana case', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 16 (1), 1995, pp 55–78; M Burdette, 'Structural adjustment and Canadian aid policy', in C Pratt (ed), *Canadian International Development Assistance Policies: An Appraisal*, Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994, pp 210–239; C Pratt, 'Humane Internationalism and Canadian Development Assistance Policies', in *Canadian International Development Assistance Policies*, pp 334–370. For a more recent elucidation of the government's position on this, which avoids the use of 'structural adjustment' but effectively is calling for it, see Departments of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Finance, *Report on Operations Under the Bretton Woods Related Agreements Act*, Ottawa: International Trade and Finance Branch, 2004; and CIDA's section of Canada's new international policy statement, *International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World—Development*, Ottawa: Canadian International Development Agency, 2005.
- 9 J Daudelin, 'Foreign policy at the fringe: Canada and Latin America', *International Journal*, 58 (4), 2003, pp 637–667.
- 10 [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/dispute-en.asp](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/dispute-en.asp), accessed December 2006. The International Institute for Sustainable Development monitors international investment treaty developments, including arbitrations. See [www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org).
- 11 D McNally, *Another World is Possible*, Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2002, p 38.
- 12 *Ibid*, p 38.
- 13 *Ibid*, p 38.
- 14 J Seoane, 'Movimientos sociales y recursos naturales en América Latina: resistencias al neoliberalismo, configuración de alternativas', *OSAL*, 6 (17), p 93.
- 15 E Galeano, 'No es suicidio, es genocidio y ecocidio', *OSAL*, 6 (17), 2005, pp 15–19; and E Leff, 'La geopolítica de la biodiversidad y el desarrollo sustentable: economización del mundo, racionalidad ambiental e apropiación social de la naturaleza', *OSAL*, 6 (17), 2005, pp 263–273.

- 16 World Bank, *Mining Reform and the World Bank: Providing a Policy Framework for Development*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003.
- 17 H Campodónico & G Ortiz, *Características de la inversión y del mercado mundial de la minería principios de la década 2000*, Chile: ECLAC, 2002; and Metals Economic Group, *Special Report on World Exploration Trends*, 2006, at [www.metalseconomics.com](http://www.metalseconomics.com), accessed January 2007.
- 18 Metals Economic Group, *Special Report on World Exploration Trends*.
- 19 These are copper, diamond, gold, iron, nickel, Platinum Group Minerals, silver and zinc. See A Lemeix, 'Canada's global mining presence', *Canadian Mineral Yearbook*, 2004, Ottawa: Natural Resources Canada, 2004.
- 20 J Kuyek, 'Legitimizing plunder: Canadian mining companies and corporate social responsibility', in North *et al*, *Community Rights and Corporate Responsibility*, pp 205–206.
- 21 J Petras & H Veltmeyer, 'The peasantry and the state in Latin America: a troubled past, an uncertain future', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 29 (3), 2002, pp 41–82.
- 22 World Bank, *A Mining Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 1996, pp 79, 25; and World Bank, *Mining Reform and the World Bank: Providing a Policy Framework for Development*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003, p 11.
- 23 Canadian Mining Industry, 'Escalating market access concerns and economic implications for the Canadian minerals and metals industry', Brief to the 1999 Mines Ministers Conference, Charlottetown, 13 September 1999, at [www.mining.ca](http://www.mining.ca), accessed April 2005, pp 3, 4; and Mining Association of Canada, *Annual Report*, Human Resources Committee, 2005, at [www.mining.ca](http://www.mining.ca), accessed April 2005, p 3.
- 24 E Bastida, 'A review of the concept of security of mineral tenure: issues and challenges', *Centre for Energy, Petroleum and Mineral Law Policy*, 17 (7), 2000, at [www.dundee.ac.uk/cepmlp/journal](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/cepmlp/journal), accessed July 2005. The recent rise of popular movements, and governments supported by these movements, in Venezuela and Bolivia has been a cause of concern for the Canadian mining industry. These governments are restructuring their natural resources sectors, including increasing royalties on foreign companies and limiting foreign ownership. How extensive these reforms will be is still unclear at this point.
- 25 J Hristov, 'Indigenous struggles for land and culture in Cauca, Colombia', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 32 (1), 2005, p 110.
- 26 Kuyek, 'Legitimizing plunder', pp 205–206.
- 27 Most of this is provided through Export Development Canada (EDC), which only takes into consideration the human rights implications of a project to the extent it could impact on their investor's profits, and hence its investments. Since EDC revised its disclosure policy (as a result of public pressure) in November 2005, it has financed Bema Gold's Kupal gold and silver mine in Russia and Alcan's (with two foreign partners) construction of a 350 000-tonne/year aluminum smelter in Oman. Currently EDC is considering financing Gold Reserve's Brisas gold and copper project in Venezuela, Tiberon Minerals' Nui Phao mine in Vietnam, Equinox Minerals' Lumwana copper project in Zambia and Falconbridge's Koniambo ferromanganese mine in New Caledonia. See [http://www.edc.ca/english/disclosure\\_9238.htm](http://www.edc.ca/english/disclosure_9238.htm).
- 28 'Government response to the fourteenth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade—Mining in Developing Countries—Corporate Social Responsibility', 2005, at [http://cmtc.par.gc.ca/cmtc/CommitteeList.aspx?Lang=1&PARLSES=381&JNT=08SELID=e24\\_&COM=8979](http://cmtc.par.gc.ca/cmtc/CommitteeList.aspx?Lang=1&PARLSES=381&JNT=08SELID=e24_&COM=8979), accessed November 2006; and Halifax Initiative, 'Moving beyond voluntarism: a civil society analysis of the government response to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade's 14th report, "Mining in Developing Countries—Corporate Social Responsibility," 38th Parliament, 1st Session', 2005, at [www.halifaxinitiative.org/updir/Final\\_Civil\\_Society\\_Analysis-Eng.pdf](http://www.halifaxinitiative.org/updir/Final_Civil_Society_Analysis-Eng.pdf), accessed October 2006.
- 29 Kuyek, 'Legitimizing plunder', p 210.
- 30 Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Sixth Annual Report on Canada's State of Trade*, Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 2005; and Cansim Databases, at [www.statscan.ca](http://www.statscan.ca), 376-0053, accessed September 2006.
- 31 Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Sixth Annual Report on Canada's State of Trade*.
- 32 Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Opening Doors to the World: Canada's International Market Access Priorities*, 2003, 2003, at [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca), accessed July 2005; and Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Foreign Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2005, Chile: ECLAC, 2006.
- 33 Industry Canada, *Trade and Investment Monitor*, Ottawa: Industry Canada, Microeconomic Policy Analysis Branch, 2004; and ECLAC, *Canada's Trade and Investment with Latin America and the Caribbean*, Washington, DC: ECLAC, 2003.
- 34 Lemeix, 'Canada's global mining presence', p 7.3.

- 35 *Ibid.*, pp 7.4, 7.6.
- 36 These countries are, in order: Peru, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela and French Guiana. *Ibid.*, p 7.7.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p 7.9.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p 7.11; and Campodónico & Ortiz, *Características de la inversión*.
- 39 WI Robinson, 'Global crisis and Latin America', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 23 (2), 2004, pp 135–153.
- 40 'The Latinobarómetro poll: the democracy dividend', *The Economist*, 9 December 2006, p 46.
- 41 TD Clark, 'Canadian mining in neo-liberal Chile: of private virtues and public vices', in North *et al.*, *Community Rights and Corporate Responsibility*, p 90.
- 42 M Taylor, 'From national development to "growth with equity": nation-building in Chile, 1950–2000', *Third World Quarterly*, 27 (1), 2006, p 72.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p 76; and P Winn, 'The Pinochet era', in Winn (ed), *Victims of the Chilean Miracle: Workers and Neoliberalism in the Pinochet Era, 1973–2002*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004, p 21.
- 44 Winn, 'The Pinochet era'; and TM Klubock, 'Class, community, and neoliberalism in Chile: copper workers and the labor movement during the military dictatorship and restoration of democracy', in Winn, *Victims of the Chilean Miracle*, pp 209–260.
- 45 Clark, 'Canadian mining in neo-liberal Chile', p 92.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p 92.
- 47 Winn, 'The Pinochet era', p 51.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p 59.
- 49 Taylor, 'From national development to "growth with equity"', p 81.
- 50 O Sepúlveda, 'Chilean students launch mass protests: biggest mass movement since Pinochet', *International Socialist Review*, 49 (5), 2006, at <http://www.isreview.org/issues/49/chilestudents.shtml>, accessed 16 January 2007; and 'A worrying precedent: Chile's miners', *The Economist*, 9 September 2006, p 58.
- 51 M Jiménez, 'Chile's new leader to stay course', *Globe and Mail*, 17 January, p A18.
- 52 Clark, 'Canadian mining in neo-liberal Chile', p 94.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p 95.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p 97.
- 55 *Ibid.*, pp 97–99.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p 101.
- 57 Lemeux, 'Canada's global mining presence'.
- 58 K Patterson, 'Struggle at the top of the Andes', *The Ottawa Citizen*, 1 October 2006, p A6.
- 59 J Ross, 'Glaciers under threat by mining in Chile', *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 39 (3), pp 16–19.
- 60 Clark, 'Canadian mining in neo-liberal Chile', p 105.
- 61 'Barrick Gold tells Chilean hearing it's "perfectly feasible" to move three glaciers', *National Post*, 20 April 2005, p FP3; 'Greens bid to block Barrick in Chile', *National Post*, 10 February 2006, p FP4; J Ross, 'Moving heaven, Earth and glaciers', *Toronto Star*, 4 June 2005, p H5; and S Pratt, 'Are mining companies running over human rights in foreign lands?', *Edmonton Journal*, 30 October 2005, p A18. Here we focus on Chilean resistance, but it should be noted that there are also opposition groups active in Argentina. See MC Cotarelo, 'Recursos naturales y conflicto social en la Argentina actual', *OSAL*, 6 (17), pp 67–77.
- 62 Quoted in Ross, 'Glaciers under threat', pp 16–19.
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 Clark, 'Canadian mining in neo-liberal Chile', p 106.
- 65 Ross, 'Glaciers under threat', pp 16–19.
- 66 Patterson, 'Struggle at the top of the Andes', p A6.
- 67 Clark, 'Canadian mining in neo-liberal Chile', p 108; and Ross, 'Moving heaven, Earth and glaciers', p H5.
- 68 Patterson, 'Struggle at the top of the Andes', p A6.
- 69 Ross, 'Glaciers under threat', pp 16–19.
- 70 R Foot, 'Anti-mine protesters greet Harper on Chile visit', *Vancouver Sun*, 19 July 2007, p C4.
- 71 Clark, 'Mining in neo-liberal Chile', p 110.
- 72 R Foot, 'Anti-mine protesters greet Harper on Chile visit'.
- 73 F Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia*, London: Verso, 2006, pp 80–86.
- 74 J Hristov, 'Uribe and the paramilitarization of the Colombian state', *New Socialist*, 59, p 14.
- 75 W Avilés, 'Paramilitarism and Colombia's low-intensity democracy', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 38 (2), p 380.
- 76 International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), *Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights*, 2006, at <http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223986&Language=EN>, accessed January 2007.

- 77 C Campbell, 'Addicted to blood coal', *Maclean's*, 20 March, p 36.
- 78 F Ramírez Cuellar, *The Profits of Extermination: How US Corporate Power is Destroying Colombia*, trans Aviva Chomsky, Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2005, pp 86–87.
- 79 Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia*, p 4; and Ramírez Cuellar, *The Profits of Extermination*, pp 84–85.
- 80 Ramírez Cuellar, *The Profits of Extermination*, p 85.
- 81 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *CIA: World Fact Book*, Washington, DC: CIA, 2006, at <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/co.html>, accessed January 2007.
- 82 Ramírez Cuellar, *The Profits of Extermination*, pp 82–83.
- 83 Hristov, 'Uribe and the paramilitarization of the Colombian state', p 14.
- 84 A Ismi, 'Profiting from repression: Canadian investment in and trade with Colombia', *Americas Update*, 2000, at [www.http://141.117.225.2/~asadismi/colombiareport.html](http://141.117.225.2/~asadismi/colombiareport.html), accessed January 2007.
- 85 K Dermota, 'Greenstone goes for the gold mining', *Globe and Mail*, 15 June 1993, p B7.
- 86 'Colombia not safe, Foreign Affairs Ministry says', *Vancouver Sun*, 4 May 2002, p A2. Forrest Hylton provides a portrait of the 1990s: 'If multiple sovereignties and fractured territories had been a notable feature of the political landscape in the 1980s, both the insurgencies and the paramilitaries made qualitative leaps in control over resources, population, territory, and transport routes during the 1990s. This was achieved through greater recourse to terror, especially on the paramilitary side, as counterinsurgency operations were increasingly privatized and subcontracted.' Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia*, p 80.
- 87 Ismi, 'Profiting from repression'.
- 88 [www.northernminer.ca](http://www.northernminer.ca), accessed January 2007.
- 89 Lemeiux, 'Canada's global mining presence', p 7.12.
- 90 P Knox, 'Canada's role in Colombia probed', *Globe and Mail*, 1 June 2001, p A11.
- 91 K Patterson, 'The trouble with junior: small-scale companies dogged by controversy', *Ottawa Citizen*, 3 October 2005, p A4.
- 92 'The brutal price of fly-by-night mining', *Toronto Star*, 21 January 1999, p A1.
- 93 Ismi, 'Profiting from repression'.
- 94 Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia*, p 91.
- 95 D Pugliese, 'Soldiers of fortune', *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 November 2005, p A1.
- 96 'Colombia not safe'.
- 97 A Robinson, 'Mining conference to tackle range of controversial issues', *Globe and Mail*, 13 May 2002, p B3.
- 98 C Arsenault, 'Digging up Canadian dirt in Colombia', *Canadian Dimension*, 40 (6), 2006, pp 32–35.
- 99 P Harris, 'Colombia's troubles pale next to golden opportunities', *Globe and Mail*, 4 January 2006, p B6.
- 100 *Ibid*, p B6.
- 101 *Ibid*, p B4.
- 102 Quoted in *ibid*, p B4.
- 103 Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia*, p 105.
- 104 *Ibid*, p 93.
- 105 *Ibid*, p 94.
- 106 Quoted in Harris, 'Colombia's troubles pale next to golden opportunities', p B4. For Hristov, 'Uribe's re-election [in 2006] signifies: 1) The continuation of a system characterized by unequal, exploitative, alienating and exclusionary social relations; 2) The aggravation of the country's subordinate position in the global capitalist hierarchy; 3) The consolidation of US imperial (military and economic) presence; 4) The legalization of illegality, a fusion of the legal and the illegal in such a creative way, that the government can claim the paramilitary no longer exists, when in reality it has profoundly penetrated the very fabric of state institutions and the national economy; 5) The initiation of a new phase of the model: the unified Colombian para-narco state; 6) The invigoration of social struggles.' Hristov, 'Uribe and the paramilitarization of the Colombian state', p 15.
- 107 Ramírez Cuellar, *The Profits of Extermination*, p 38.
- 108 *Ibid*.
- 109 *Ibid*, p 29.
- 110 Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia*, p 129.
- 111 For the statement alluding to Venezuela, see Richard Foot, 'Harper touts third way, emulate Canada not US PM says in Chile', *National Post*, 18 July 2007, A1. For the statement on Colombia, see Richard Foot, 'PM defends entering free trade talks with Colombia', *National Post*, 17 July 2007, p A4.
- 112 D Paley, 'This is what development looks like, Part I: Skye Resources and land reoccupation in Guatemala', *The Dominion*, 11 January 2007, at <http://www.dominionpaper.ca/articles/899>, accessed January 2007; and D Paley, 'This is what development looks like, Part II: Canadian mining firm burns homes', *The Dominion*, 11 January 2007, at <http://www.dominionpaper.ca/articles/900>, accessed January 2007.

- 113 L Weydt, 'Ecuador: escalation in the Junín Copper conflict', *Upside Down World*, 20 December 2006, at <http://upside-downworld.org/main/content/view/555/5/>, accessed January, 2007.
- 114 'Urgent action: support the Mexican community of Cerro de San Pedro in their struggle against a Canadian-run mine', *Kairos*, 4 February 2007, at <http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/urgent/uaMetallica060428.asp>, accessed February 2007.
- 115 K Patterson, 'Open veins: bloody conflicts are erupting around the world over Canadian mining projects', *Ottawa Citizen*, 1 October 2005.
- 116 L Orellana Aillón, 'La "Masacre de Navidad": un fragmento de la violencia estatal y resistencia popular en Bolivia', *Nueva Sociedad*, 153, 1998, pp 104–119; and A Roncallo, 'Bolivia's Amayapampa and Capasirca mines: social resistance and state repression', in North *et al*, *Community Rights and Corporate Responsibility*, pp 63–86.
- 117 W Stuek, 'Mining firms agree to Peruvian payment', *Globe and Mail*, 25 August 2006, p B5; and D Szablowski, 'Regulating corporate and community engagement in a large mining project', in North *et al*, *Community Rights and Corporate Responsibility*, pp 37–59.
- 118 J de Echave, 'Mining and communities in Peru: constructing a framework for decision-making', in North *et al*, *Community Rights and Corporate Responsibility*, pp 17–36; and de Echave, 'Peruvian peasants confront the mining industry', *Socialism and Democracy*, 19 (3), 2006, pp 117–127.
- 119 E Orozco, 'Manhattan Minerals likes prospects in Peru's Tambogrande project: gold and copper mine', *National Post*, 3 January 2002, p FP4; C Mauro, 'Peruvian farmers try to prevent strip mining', *Vancouver Sun*, 12 February 2003, p C2; K Leger, 'Murder, mayhem and mining: Canadian company caught in fracas over Peruvian plans', *National Post*, 15 May 2001, p C1; F Ojeda Riofrio, 'Tambogrande: a community in defence of its rights', in North *et al*, *Community Rights and Corporate Responsibility*, pp 60–62; R Kozak, 'Manhattan mine scheme rejected: citizens in Peruvian village vote solidly to disallow project', *National Post*, 4 June 2002, p FP10; ME García & JA Lucero, 'Un país sin indígenas? Rethinking indigenous politics in Peru', in N Grey Postero & L Zamosc (eds), *The Struggle for Indigenous Rights in Latin America*, Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, pp 158–188.
- 120 B Campbell, 'Peace and security in Africa and the role of Canadian mining interests: new challenges for Canadian foreign policy', *Labour, Capital and Society/Travail, capital et société*, 37 (1–2), 2004, pp 98–129.
- 121 K Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001 [1944].