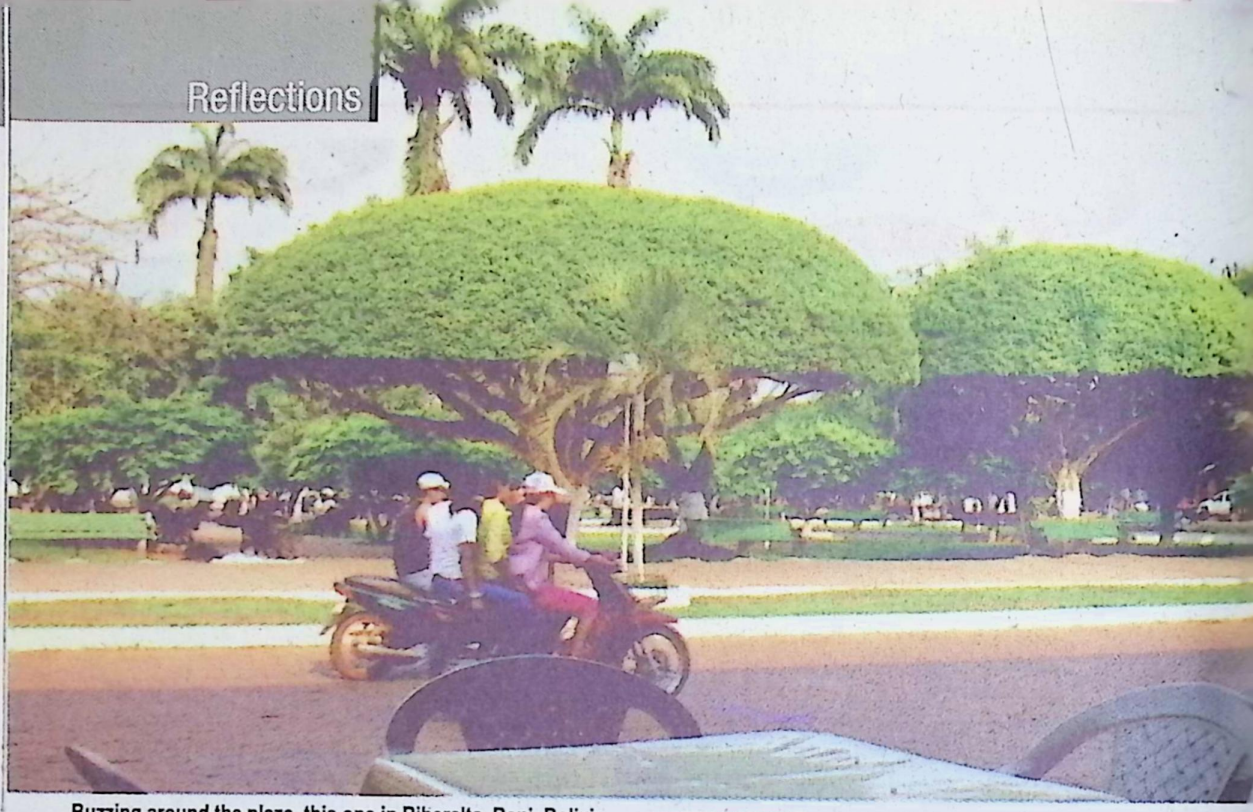


Buzzing around the plaza, this one in Riberalta, Beni, Bolivia.

Reminiscing with a River

ANDREW EAGLE



The Mamore, great earthworm of a river, in Guayaramerin, Bolivia, looking to Brazil.

O Mamoré, generous sustenance giver, tributary, great earthworm of a river: I see you from above, pushing off and pushing on, northwards flowing, northwards growing, like an uneven, winding hem across the landscape. I see you from the plane, ever the direction shifter, you turn and return, loop and loop once more – almost full circle, several times, before you go about switching course again. Of the Beni, of the lowlands of Bolivia's east you are a lifeline: the cargo boats ride you as their highway while as ecosystem extraordinaire you shelter creatures – in you the pink dolphins find their home. And with these important tasks, I ask, is it any wonder that as you weave across the savannah you are as commander of the Moxos Plains? What a view! O wild and majestic Mamoré, I know it too, that beyond the horizon the Amazon waits for you. So, below the patchy cloud in the day's midst I see you twinkle as though winking at the sun, as I ready to re-embrace the jungle heat, as the tiny plane like a careless sparrow drops from the sky – and in, to land, at Guayaramerín.

O Mamoré, do you remember when we met? It was as that open-air truck, the *camion* from remote San Ignacio de Moxos, cautiously sidled down your muddy bank trying not to overturn in a rut, as it took to the ferry on its way eastwards to the Holy Trinity, Beni's capital, La Santísima Trinidad. As you well know that was towards the end of the few-hour journey, for of course Trinidad was first established on your very bank, until, it seems, you tired of the dizzy distraction of the town-dwellers and urged them on, was that it? Through flooding and disease you pushed them back, not far, to relocate in 1769. What you might not know is how in the wild ranch-and-mission country of San Ignacio that morning I'd gone to meet the bus only to be