

## Yanomami Reserve: a plot to limit Brazil's sovereignty

by Silvia Palacios

When he designated a mineral-rich area of Amazon region bordering Venezuela to the controversial Yanomami Indian Reserve on Nov. 15, Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello committed one of his most treasonous acts of submission to the Anglo-American political elites who, under the pretext of preserving the environment and out of supposed respect for Indian culture, seek to entrap the Brazilian nation within a system of "limited sovereignty."

This is a central feature of the new world order, inaugurated in blood and fire during George Bush's war against Iraq. Alongside their efforts to preserve the ecology at all cost, new world order warriors see the preservation of indigenous cultures (viewed as "natural zoos") as a crucial weapon in their battle to submit entire regions of the planet—especially those rich in natural resources like the Amazon—to tacit or explicit extraterritorial treaties.

The demarcation of the Yanomami reserve on the eve of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, has exacerbated the concerns of the Armed Forces and of nationalist groups inside Brazil, which see in the presidential decree not merely a lack of patriotism, but also an act which verges on treason in that it places a critical border region into ambiguous legal status. The Yanomami reserve could be used in the future as a pretext for splitting away from Brazil one of the wealthiest portions of its territory.

### A human zoo

According to Collor's decree, the Yanomami reserve along the border with Venezuela extends more than 9 million hectares—a vast territory the size of Portugal—and will be home to a group of between 4,000 and 6,000 nomadic aborigines (see **Figure 1**). The Yanomami will have exclusive

rights to inhabit this portion of the national territory.

Although Collor avails himself of the Brazilian Constitution, which recognizes the rights of the Indians to permanent possession of the lands traditionally occupied by them, he does not respect it. In the first place, Collor has granted the Yanomami lands contiguous to a neighboring nation, without respecting the constitutionally established margin for border security of 150 kilometers. In the second place, Collor could have opted to establish the Yanomami reserve in several portions, and not in a single unit as he did.

On the Venezuelan side of the same Amazon region, the government of President Carlos Andrés Pérez created a national park for the Yanomami Indians last June, which was dubbed a "biosphere reserve" to appeal to environmentalists and anthropologists alike. Thus, a bi-national Indian region has been "naturally" forged, as **Figure 1** shows—precisely the old demand of such fascist anthropological groups as Survival International, which considers such a "natural" enclave the ideal place for establishing an "Indian nation."

The Yanomami are nomads (whence the conclusion that they need an enormous amount of territory within which to survive). As humanity nears the 21st century, the Yanomami still live in a hunting and gathering mode. They are subdivided into approximately 200 independent communities. They speak four different dialects, but have no written language, nor do they have a precise numerical system. Their dialects are used both in Brazil and in Venezuela, and between the two countries, the total Yanomami population is no more than 22,000 persons.

The primitive state in which they live has generated intense international debate. For example, *Science* magazine in 1988 published several articles on the Yanomami. Anthropologist Napoleon A. Chagnon set off a huge polemic with

FIGURE 1  
**Area designated for the Yanomami Reserve**



his Feb. 26, 1988 article which described the Yanomami as one of the most violent and bloody human groups on the planet. Without any form of institutionalized justice, what reigns quite literally is the law of the jungle; it is estimated that 44% of all Yanomami men over the age of 25 have participated in the murder of at least one person. Thirty percent of Yanomami adults die by violent means.

Some Yanomami communities practice cannibalism as part of their superstitious practices, and others kill first-born children who are female. This, on top of the "natural" conditions in which they live—subject to jungle diseases and severe malnutrition—has contributed to an enormous decline in demographic growth.

Nonetheless, the British monarchy has adopted the Yanomami as their personal "noble savages," to be preserved at all cost. On July 21 of last year, the Brazilian daily *O Globo* reported that the Yanomami had been chosen as the first Indian tribe which will have its genes frozen and filed at the genetic Museum of Humanity in London, which hopes to catalogue blood samples of some 500 extinct peoples. The museum is being organized by Anglo-American scientists, and has the backing of the Human Genome Organization, headed by Sir Walter Bodmer.

All the uproar about Brazilian Indians becomes even more absurd in light of the fact that, in the strictest sense, Brazil has no Indian problems except those which have been

artificially created. There are some 230,000 Indians in Brazil, the majority of them inhabitants of the Amazon, who have been allocated some 10% of the national territory for their reservations, while the total population of Brazil is 146 million. This absurd situation was commented upon by Cardinal Agnelo Rossi, in his book *Brasil, Integração de Raças e Nacionalidades (Brazil, Integration of Races and Nationalities.)* Rossi writes: "According to the land ownership criteria of the white man, every Indian is already born with 6 kilometers of land. With this proportion, Brazil could only shelter 1.4 million people. For the present Brazilian population, four times the total land mass of the five continents should be required."

The truth is that tensions over the Amazon region are as high as they are because of the impressive amount of wealth it harbors and because of the international greed that seeks to control it by any and all means. It so happens that Brazil's Indian peoples, and in particular the Yanomami, are sitting on top of a veritable wellspring of riches. Apart from being the greatest biological reserve in the world, the Amazon possesses a subsoil rich in strategic minerals, although not all are quantified: gold, tin, diamonds, niobium, uranium, etc. According to a study of the Brazilian geological service, mineral deposits discovered thus far in the Amazon are valued at \$3 trillion.

### **The role of the United Nations**

While the manipulation of ethnic differences has always, historically, been a geopolitical weapon of the colonial powers, in the case of the forest-dwelling Yanomami, all justification for their 9 million hectare reserve is a farce, as the very notion of creating a "Yanomami enclave" comes from the same representatives of the great powers which sit on the United Nations Security Council.

The plan was made clear during the deliberations of the U.N. Security Council preceding the cease-fire in Iraq. Commenting on the Anglo-French proposal to create a Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq, Soviet representative Yuli Vorontsov "raised the sovereignty issue with his rhetorical question what the Security Council might do if it were confronted with some other country—unaccountably, he picked Brazil—with a problem comparable to the Kurdish tragedy," reported the London *Financial Times* April 10, 1991.

The United Nations has not only adopted the preservation of what it calls Yanomami culture as legitimate, but has given it international status, acting with a philanthropy rarely seen in circumstances of real disaster. In 1988, the U.N. Environment Program gave its Global Prize to Yanomami leader Davi Kopenwa Yanomami; the same prize had earlier been given to the martyred Brazilian ecologist and labor leader Chico Mendez.

In December 1990, the U.N.'s Working Group on Indigenous Peoples visited the Yanomami area. Shortly thereafter, in February 1991, at the same time that the United Nations

was concealing the bombardment of Iraq's civilian population during the Gulf war, U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuellar was offering President Collor his special assistance in meeting the health needs of the Yanomami.

A flood of organizations with one-worldist agendas of imposing "limited sovereignty" similar to the U.N.'s have managed to gain a toehold in the Amazon. The Commission for the Creation of the Yanomami Park (CCPY)—created in 1978 by a group of fascist anthropologists and protected by, among others, the rabidly malthusian former Sen. Severo Gomes—was the mediator in bringing to Brazil a delegation from the French group *Médecins du Monde* (Doctors of the World). The group came to work with the Yanomami under a health program financed in part by the European Community. The directors of Doctors of the World became famous in Brazil for having proposed that the U.N. deploy "peacekeeping" troops to the Brazilian Amazon as environmental gendarmes.

Another group with a hand in the Yanomami reserve is the *Médecins sans Frontières* (Doctors without Borders), also French, which promotes restructuring the United Nations on the basis of precepts of the Anglo-American "new world order." Its influence on President Collor de Mello is notable. One of the founders of Doctors without Borders, French sociologist and author of *The Empire and the New Barbarians*, Jean Christophe Rufin, was recently in Brazil. During this, his third meeting with President Collor, they discussed ideas for restructuring the U.N. Security Council, preserving the International Monetary Fund's pet "democracies" on the continent, and other points on the global agenda for imposing limited sovereignties.

### **The possibility of conflict**

Recent developments at or near the Yanomami lands bordering Venezuela confirm that the concerns of the Brazilian Armed Forces regarding the creation of the reserve are legitimate: They show on a small scale how the elements for a border crisis could take international proportions, perfect for some kind of supranational intervention, perhaps by the U.N. Security Council. In early February 1991, the leaders of the so-called *garimpeiros*, who illegally mine for gold on Indian territory in the state of Roraima, launched a provocative campaign denouncing the geographic ambiguity of a portion of the Brazilian-Venezuelan border. One year later, in February 1992, a large group of *garimpeiros* headed by their leader Altino Machado, created another provocation by illegally entering Yanomami territory from the Venezuelan side. They were shot down by the Venezuelan national guard, and the incident rapidly escalated, leading the Venezuelan consul in Roraima to characterize the area as "a potential Lebanon." At the same time, governor of the Brazilian state of Amazonas, Gilberto Mestrinho, a fierce enemy of the eco-fascist lobby, told the daily *Folha de São Paulo* that the instability resulting from the incident could be "the

## 'The gravest crime that can be done to a nation'

*The following are excerpts of the article which appeared in the March 5 edition of Jornal do Commercio reproducing remarks by Silvio Augusto de Bastos Meira on Feb. 26, 1992. A member of the Brazilian Lawyers Institute (IAB), Meira was named by the IAB's president to take charge of the case sent to the institute by Brigadier Major Oswaldo Terra de Faria of the Brazilian Center of Strategic Studies (Cebres) challenging the Collor de Mello government's demarcation of a Yanomami reserve along the Venezuelan border.*

The matter has become polemical, with no need for it becoming so, once the evidence makes clear its negative aspects: a) its unconstitutionality; b) its unpatriotic nature; c) that it profoundly damages to national interests.

Unconstitutional because the Executive is not empowered to implement this demarcation without a hearing by the National Congress. . . . This institute already unanimously approved the opinion of lawyer Oto Vizeu Gil on this matter.

Unpatriotic because it orders the demarcation of lands bordering a foreign country, violating Brazilian legislation dating from the time of the Empire and continuing through the Republic, regarding the 150 km strip along the border.

Profoundly damaging to national interests because it orders the demarcation of an area of 9.4 million hectares, consisting of minerals, forests, and deserts, in which barely 4,000 nomadic Indians live in primitive conditions, distributed in small groups which are enemies of each other.

Obviously, what stands behind these demarcation measures are hardly laudable instincts which threaten Brazil's national sovereignty.

That region is a repository of minerals: gold, diamonds, uranium, silver, manganese, and many others. For many centuries, powerful nations have cast their eyes on the Amazon. . . .

The concession of sovereign rights and the alienation of territory constitute the gravest crime that could be committed against a nation. The Romans called it treason. . . . a crime demanding the death penalty. . . .

There is a certain irrationality in the demarcation of 9.4 million hectares for 3,000 or 4,000 Indians. . . . More alarming is the wound inflicted on the nation, opening wide its doors to the foreigner who penetrates with his Trojan Horse, with presents, ministers, missionaries, scientists, trying to teach their language—English—as occurs along other border areas. Isn't this the way it happened in Africa?

If today's generations don't resist—and that resistance has several phases and methods—we will arrive at a sad reality, in the future, when it will no longer be possible to fight. That time is now.

It is remarkable that to date, the National Congress has said nothing in defense of its own constitutional rights, allowing the Executive to do what it will, and bending to flagrantly unconstitutional acts. Where is the Brazilian Congress? . . .

All over Brazil, enlightened, far-sighted people are reacting.

Always vigilant in defense of national sovereignty, the Armed Forces have spoken, through high level individuals. . . .

We must join hands—as long as they aren't necessary to assume an attitude of defense and attack. . . .

It is time, my countrymen from all areas and professions, to rise up against an unconstitutional act.

pre-announcement of plans to call a U.N. force into the region."

Such provocations reinforce the state of alert in which the Brazilian Armed Forces find themselves on the Amazon question. This was confirmed in the study "1990-2000: The Vital Decade," prepared by the Superior War College, think-tank of a civil-military elite. In its chapter on the Amazon, it warns: "Self-government in Indian areas: This poses a permanent foreign temptation for the internationalization of the Amazon, beginning with the Indian enclaves, used by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs)." Finally, it concludes that, if the international destabilization scenario should intensify, defense of the area would include declara-

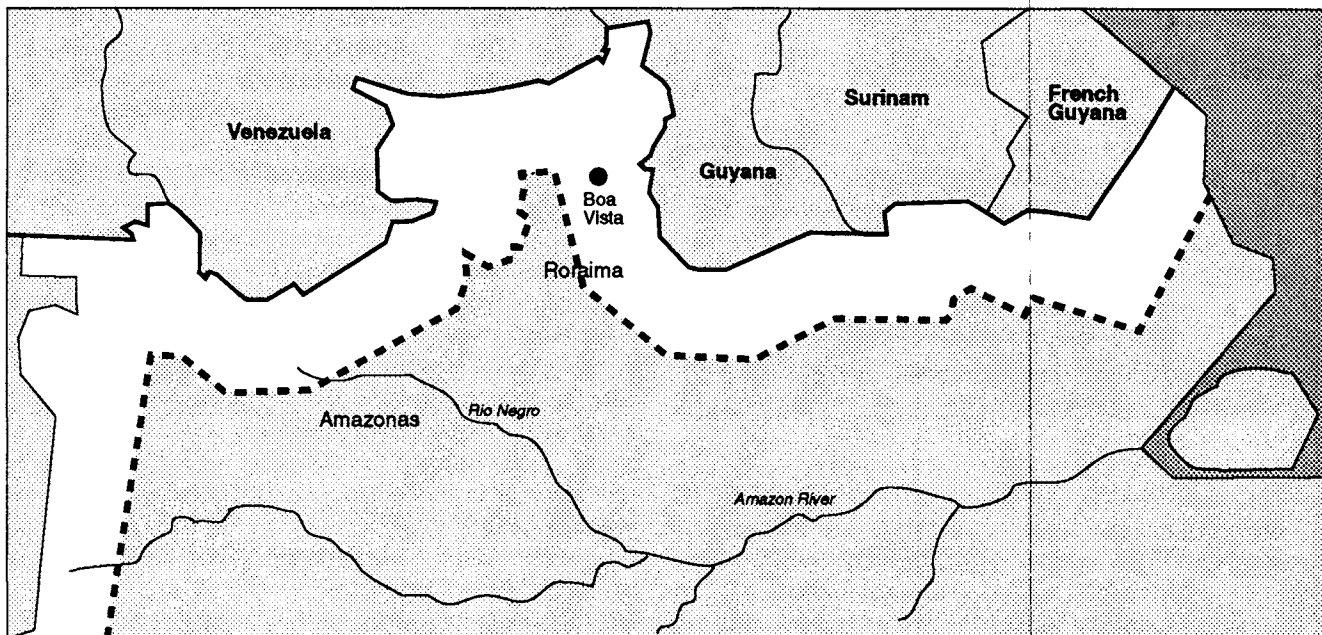
tion of "a state of war."

Such a spirit of defense was later confirmed by Gen. Atenor de Santa Cruz, former military commander of the Amazon region. During a heated moment in the battle to prevent the President from yielding to foreign pressures in the demarcation of the Yanomami reserve, the general categorically stated that if the superpowers persisted in their globalist plans to submit Brazil to their scheme of limited sovereignty, a "new Vietnam" would undoubtedly be created.

It was out of these strategic considerations that, in 1986, the border project known as "Calha Norte" was launched. Calha Norte involved the construction of eight military posts, to extend from the Brazilian divide with French Guyana to

FIGURE 2

**Brazil's 'Colha Norte' development project**



the region of Solimoes, along the border with Colombia (see **Figure 2**). Calha Norte was considered a national security priority, integrating military reinforcement with the economic development of the region and undertaking to selectively populate the 150 kilometer border strip in accordance with security concerns.

Since the Yanomami reserve was created within the same strip of land, the Armed Forces have been restricted from involvement in establishing of any population centers not comprised of Yanomami Indians. Further, they are prohibited from maintaining any kind of physical presence in the area, or from maintaining permanent supply posts, thereby leaving the reserve area vulnerable to invasion by terrorists, drug traffickers, and even foreign forces. Such restrictions contradict the way in which development of the Amazon region was begun in the mid-18th century, when large population centers were established around military fortifications erected by the Portuguese along the river banks.

**Treason to the Fatherland**

None of the political forces which oppose the demarcation of the Yanomami reserve as it has been decreed has given up the fight. On the contrary, they have escalated. In the past their attacks were directed at José Lutzenberger, the recently fired environment minister (see *Report from Rio*), who functioned as a fifth-columnist for the British crown, but today their batteries are turned directly against President Fernando Collor.

On Feb. 26, the Institute of Brazilian Lawyers (IAB), the

country's oldest organization of lawyers, issued a severe and unexpected legal opinion which synthesized the growing wave of civil-military hostility to Collor's decision (see box). According to the IAB opinion, the presidential decree on the Yanomami reserve is unconstitutional, unpatriotic, seriously detrimental to the national interest, and could well be characterized as treason to the Fatherland. "The concessions of rights linked to sovereignty, the alienation of lands constitutes the gravest crime that could be committed against a nation. The Romans called it treason to the Fatherland—what is called *perduellio*—as a crime demanding the death of the traitor," states the IAB. The IAB opinion had been requested by the Center of Strategic Studies (Cebres), a private think-tank which frequently expresses the viewpoints of Brazil's retired officers corps.

In addition to the striking IAB opinion, there exists another organized initiative seeking to reverse Collor's decree. This is a "class action suit" brought by the well-known lawyer Americo Chavez against both President Collor and Justice Minister Jarbas Passarinho. The suit states, "It is necessary to point out that the space allotted to the Yanomami Indians possesses the greatest mineral wealth in the world. . . . We do not protest the Yanomamis' right to have a reserve to assure their existence. What we do criticize is the exaggeration of the measure." The suit also includes a summary of the international pressures by ecological groups that were brought to bear, and which were ultimately responsible for the presidential decree. The suit was accepted by a federal judge in Rio de Janeiro Feb. 15.