

resources are finite and cannot tolerate population growth. Do you think the Amazon is overpopulated?

Mestrinho: I think there is a great scarcity of people in the Amazon. Anyway, [malthusianism] is garbage. Malthus's theories were totally discredited, because man's capacity for creation is fantastic. Imagine the following: Japan has no arable land; it's an industrialized nation. But some years ago it had to organize the "Drink a Glass of Milk" campaign because it had so much. Look at Holland, for example. It's so small, but it exports dairy products for the whole world. Europe produces beet sugar, yet with all of our immense territory, we produce less sugar than Europe.

EIR: What are your calculations in terms of the population the Amazon could support?

Mestrinho: Fifty million people.

EIR: And how would you feed 50 million people?

Mestrinho: With trained people here and with technology, we could feed the Amazon and the world.

EIR: But how would food be produced?

Mestrinho: Through floodplain agriculture, which is highly productive, without causing environmental damage.

EIR: How does floodplain agriculture work?

Mestrinho: First there must be a political decision to occupy the region, with human contingents trained in the selection of species planted and produced here; you need appropriate equipment for the floodplain, such as micro-tractors or wide-wheel tractors, because of the nature of the floodplain. The river fertilizes the land and it's ready for planting. It's just a matter of making the furrows and putting in the seeds. We also have a variety of fruits. No region in the world has the conditions for producing citrus and *dendé* oil that we have. We don't have diseases or frosts that threaten citrus fruits.

On the floodplain, we could have high yields of rice, corn, beans, soy, fibers, and roots.

EIR: Do you have any message for our readers?

Mestrinho: I'd like to tell them that 95% or more of what is said about the Amazon is myth. The Amazon is virgin, almost as virgin as when Pinzon arrived here, even before Cabral, and saw the sea he called the freshwater sea. And 40 or 50 years later, Orellana came down the Amazon River and became delirious when he saw women riding on horseback 300 years before horses were brought to the Amazon.

EIR: Queen Elizabeth, the chief representative of the British Crown, which led the campaign against the burnings in the Amazon rain forest, said that 1992 was a "horrible year" for them.

Mestrinho: You see, they talked about the burning of the Amazon, but in the end, it was Windsor Castle that burned!

Oligarchy wants to grab the Amazon

This article is based on the chapter "Why the Amazon?" in the report Brazil and What's Behind International Environmentalism, produced in June 1991 by EIR's Rio de Janeiro bureau.

From the beginnings of the colonization of the American continent, the wealth of the Amazon has attracted the attention of explorers and foreign governments. Nonetheless, until recently, with the exception of episodic efforts at the beginning of the century or during World War II, or isolated undertakings such as the Amapá manganese exploration project, since the 1950s, there has been no large-scale utilization of the region's natural resources. During that period, manifestations of foreign interest in taking control over the region have tended to accompany what efforts did occur.

Over the past 25 years, two factors have especially contributed to the great interest currently displayed regarding the Amazon. The first was the 1967 discovery of the mineral deposits at Serra dos Carajás in the state of Pará, one of the most significant such discoveries internationally in recent decades. The region's high-quality iron reserves alone were valued at \$300 billion by Chase Manhattan Bank. The other factor was the rapid advances in biotechnology, of which the availability of "genetic banks" is of particular relevance, provided by the Amazonian ecosystem's tremendous biological diversity.

In terms of the region's mineral resources, one of the great experts on this matter, geologist Breno Augusto dos Santos, discoverer of the first deposits at Serra dos Carajás, wrote in his 1980 book *Amazonia: Mineral Potential and Development Perspectives*:

"Its deposits of iron, aluminum, and manganese occupy a crucial position on the world scene; the recent discoveries of copper perhaps represent the most notable event of the past ten years, in terms of new sources of this mineral; its gold and tin deposits, although only modestly evaluated, could acquire great economic importance."

Beyond this, the region also possesses great potential for some of the so-called third generation minerals, such as titanium, niobium, and platinum.

The author emphasizes other positive characteristics of the region:

"Its strategic position regarding international markets,



Carajás, the site of enormous mineral deposits in 1967. The resources of the area provide tremendous potential for the development of Brazil—as the international financiers are well aware.

particularly the U.S. and Europe, thus offers highly competitive conditions for its products. Of particular interest are the Mexican and Venezuelan markets, with which a 'symbiotic' trade could be established, exchanging the Amazon's raw materials for oil . . . providing advantageous conditions for the development of the countries involved, without the risk of 'parasitical' trade dictated by the world's large economies, with their rules of conditionalities and dependency."

The discoverer of Carajás goes on to suggest guidelines for the region's development: "Beyond this, utilization of its considerable hydroelectric potential—on the order of 100 megawatts—would allow the establishment of regional metallurgical plants, creating the conditions for solid industrial development, making it a reality."

It should be pointed out that the potential referenced here is almost double Brazil's current installed electricity-generating capacity. Not accidentally, several hydroelectric projects in the Amazon are under attack by such agencies as the World Bank and various international environmentalist organizations.

Brazil's international role

Breno Augusto dos Santos also warns against foreign interference in the region: "In different periods of its economic history . . . the Amazon always had its interests manipulated by the foreign centers which control the markets for its products. In fact, what has happened in practice is the policy of exploring the 'granary'—or rather the 'treasury,' to use a more appropriate image. . . . From time to time, the great

world powers send their messengers out to preach the internationalization of the 'granary'; they make a few indirect, and then more concrete attempts, sometimes successfully, such that the looting of its wealth can be carried out more freely and efficiently."

Finally, Dos Santos underscores that the full exploration of the Amazon's mineral resources could assume tremendous importance for the country's future: "In this context, Brazil today enjoys a rather privileged position, being perhaps one of the few nations with the potential and conditions to transform itself in the short term into a great producer of mineral and metallurgical goods, and thus occupy a distinguished position alongside Australia, Canada, the U.S.S.R., and South Africa."

The Amazon's 'genetic banks'

From the beginning of the 1970s, when the international environmentalist campaign was launched, the Amazon's biological wealth has attracted great interest. This increased with the advances in biotechnology, which allowed the region's biological resources to be considered "genetic reserves" for a flourishing industry.

Already in 1972, one of the first "sacred books" of the environmentalist movement, *Blueprint for Survival*, written by one of the movement's "gurus," Edward Goldsmith, addressed this issue:

"Genetic diversity is essential to the security and continuity of man's food supplies, given that it is the *sine qua non* of the reproduction and introduction of plant species. How much greater is the number of varieties, plus the probabilities



An ecological safari on the Amazon River. International environmentalist groups are traipsing about the Amazon, policing the preservation of its "biodiversity," at the behest of the cartel companies.

for the development of new hybrids with resistance to different types of plagues, diseases or climatic extremes. It is important to continuously develop new hybrids, since the resistance to a specific disease is not a permanent quality. . . . The variety of plant species which can be found in nature is infinitely greater than anything we can grow in artificial conditions. It is possible to find the majority of them in the still underdeveloped countries."

The author of the report therefore suggests that:

- "certain jungle areas, or tropical rain forest or arctic tundra be considered reserves, as they are the least understood and most vulnerable;
- "their inhabitants be given rights to the land on which they have traditionally lived and on which they depend, and be allowed to remain on them without pressures of any type;
- "severe restrictions be posted at the entrance to these areas for any person who doesn't live there permanently (while at the same time free movement of the Indians be permitted)."

While the author of *Blueprint for Survival* didn't go to the extreme of suggesting limiting national sovereignty over such regions, he did suggest that:

- "funds for administration of these areas or payments to the country as compensation for non-exploration be collected by members of the United Nations in proportion to their respective GNPs;
- "an international entity be named to oversee a program of ecological research, whose results would be freely communicated to participant countries."

It's obvious that *Blueprint for Survival* already outlined many of the concepts currently used by the strategists of the new world order against countries, like Brazil, possessing large tracts of forest.

More recently, the "bible" of the international environmentalist movement, the *Our Common Future* report, issued by the Brundtland Commission, outlined these issues more explicitly:

"The preservation of the species is not justified simply in economic terms. It is also greatly motivated greatly by aesthetic, ethical, cultural, and scientific considerations. For those who demand a rendering of accounts, the economic values inherent in the species' genetic substances already justify its preservation."

The report admits:

"Today, industrialized nations derive far greater financial benefit from jungle species than the underdeveloped countries do. . . . The industrialized nations possess the scientific and industrial capabilities to make use of jungle substances in industry and in medicine."

In another section, the commission says, "Many of the countries less able to administer their resources are the richest in species: The tropics, where at least two-thirds of all species can be found and a greater proportion of endangered species, coincide approximately with the area known conventionally as the Third World. Many developing nations recognize the need to protect endangered species, but don't possess the scientific infrastructure, institutional capability or financial resources necessary to do so. Industrialized nations which attempt to reap some of the economic benefits of genetic resources should help Third World nations in their conservationist efforts."

For the report's authors, the implication is: "Development models should be altered to become more compatible with the preservation of the planet's very valuable biodiversity. Modifying economic structures and land use appears to be the best long-term strategy to guarantee the survival of tropical species and their ecosystems."

Another explicit formulation of the oligarchs' interests can be found in the report *The Crucial Decade: the 1990s and the Global Environmental Challenge*, produced in 1989 by the Washington, D.C.-based World Resources Institute, one of the most influential think tanks involved in formulating the new world order's environmental strategy. For the World Resources Institute, "although most tropical forests are in the developing countries, the United States cannot afford to take the role of a disinterested observer. The genetic resources in these forests are important to U.S. agriculture because plant breeders must periodically return to the wild source for disease-resistant or drought-resistant genes. The forests are vital to medicine, since one-fourth of all prescription drugs are derived originally from plants, and scientists have barely begun to analyze the millions of species found in tropical forests."