

## Report from Rio by Geraldo Lino

### NGOs assault Brazil on environment

*Non-governmental organizations are trying to brainwash Brazilians and dictate the government's budget.*

**D**issatisfied with what they consider to be Brazil's slowness in implementing environmental protection measures promised during last year's Eco-92 conference, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are trying to broaden their influence in the country.

NGOs' dissatisfaction became evident in mid-June when the U.S.-based Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) released a report at U.N. headquarters in New York entitled "One Year After Rio: Keeping the Promises of the Earth Summit." The report said that Brazil was one of the worst offenders in its failure to comply with the agreements signed at the conference. NRDC director Jacob Scheer told *O Globo* that Brazil's poor record "is our worst disappointment. We had hoped that it would lead the developing countries in areas relating to respecting the environment. But Brazil has done nothing: It hasn't ratified the biodiversity treaty nor will it ratify the climate treaty before 1994."

The growing influence of the NGOs was seen in a survey by the Museum of Astronomy and Related Sciences of Rio de Janeiro, which revealed that 41% of 3,650 people surveyed pointed to the burning of the rain forest as the country's major environmental problem; another 25% pointed to nuclear energy. Survey coordinator Samyra Crespo said the results show that the population "is being influenced by the opinions of the ecologists from the wealthy nations, publicized by the Brazilian media." But answers from 72 people consid-

ered "opinion-makers" (businessmen, politicians, government workers, scientists, and leaders of social movements), produced the opposite result. This group identified the major problem as lack of basic sanitation.

The NGOs are also attempting to participate in the decision-making processes for projects financed by the World Bank. At the end of June, a meeting between bank representatives and some of the major Brazilian NGOs laid the basis for that. At the meeting, the director of the bank's department for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rainer Steckhan, affirmed that "the factor limiting involvement of institutions in seeking resources for Brazilian environmental projects is conditioning approval of the project and the loan to the participation of an NGO in the process." As *Jornal do Commercio* reported June 25, Steckhan said, "I'm making that observation because in the advanced countries, the NGOs participate in up to a third of the process, an example which could be followed in Brazil."

According to Steckhan, the NGOs want to negotiate the government budget, something he said would be "very difficult," since the bank only deals with national governments.

Those who participated in the meeting with Steckhan included Jairo Costa of the Brazilian Foundation for the Conservation of Nature (FBCN); Roberto Klabin of the SOS Mata Atlantica Foundation; Eneas Salati of the Brazilian Foundation for Sustainable Development; and Claudio Padua from the U.S. organization The Na-

ture Conservancy (TNC).

The Nature Conservancy has just launched an international campaign to "adopt an acre" to raise funds to "purchase" a part of Mata Atlantica in the state of Paraná for the purpose of "preserving it." In statements published in the July 14 *Gazeta Mercantil*, the director of TNC's Development Program, Jeanne C. Pen, said that other areas of interest to TNC in Brazil include the "threatened" ecosystems such as the Cerrado, the Amazon, and the Pantanal. Perhaps it is a coincidence that these regions are of vital strategic interest for any plans to develop the country's interior.

Contributors to the campaign include Coca Cola, J.P. Morgan, Dow Chemical, Smith Kline and Beecham and other multinational corporations, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, one of the most active sponsors of the Anglo-American establishment's campaigns against Ibero-American nations, particularly Brazil. The foundation is one of the primary backers of the World Resources Institute in Washington, which in 1990 accused Brazil of being the world's third largest contributor to the greenhouse effect, because of the gases emanating from the burning of the Amazonian rain forest.

The foundation also helped to finance the book *The Military and Democracy: the Future of Civil-Military Relations in Latin America*, known in Ibero-America as the "Bush Manual," which calls for the virtual dismantling of the continent's armed forces.

TNC, founded in 1951, is one of the most powerful of the U.S. environmental NGOs. It is organized like a corporation, with 1,200 employees, and offices throughout the United States and abroad, particularly in Ibero-America and Asia. Several Brazilians are on its payroll, and it plans to open an office in Brazil next year.