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"ARCHIPELAGO YANOMAMI", "NATIONAL RESERVE", OR "INDIAN PARK" ?

A CASE OF A PEOPLE'S FATE.



"I AM SURE THAT MANY BRAZILIANS WILL BE ASHAMED TOMORROW FOR HAVING BEEN
YESTERDAY -- I MEAN TODAY -- ANCESTORS SO BRUTAL AS WE. I FEAR ALSO THAT
MANY HUMAN BEINGS THE WORLD OVER ARE NOW LOOKING ON US WITH FEAR. WHY
SO MUCH VIOLENCE AGAINST DEFENCELESS INDIANS ? WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF SUCH
HATRED TO HUMAN BEINGS ? WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE YANOMAMI ? "

-- DARCY RIBEIRO, 1978

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THE YANOMAMI IN BRAZIL

Ethnic Background

Traditionally the Yanomami Indians have occupied a large area of tropical rain forest in the border area between Brazil and Venezuela. In Brazil they live dispersed in at least 200 villages (cf. aerial survey carried out by the National Indian Foundation in 1977), with a total population of approximately 10,000 people. Their population is equally large in Venezuela.

There is no doubt that the Yanomami have occupied the abovementioned area continuously and for a very long time; already in 1787 the Portuguese Boundary Commission registered their presence in the area.

The Yanomami practice a type of intermittent nomadism. Their socio-economic system cannot exist without very extensive areas of land. All their villages maintain frequent interchanges for the exchange of goods and the formation of marriage alliances. Moreover, their agricultural system as a whole demands periodic rotation of croplands, and their hunting, fishing and gathering activities as well as the need for constant movements to allow soil regeneration and the replenishment of the fauna and flora determine the need for areas of land which are of considerable extent.

The Yanomami are the last large Indian nation in Brazil still maintaining its traditional way of life. Since 1974, however, the customary participants in the "drama" of the Indians have been threatening directly the physical and cultural survival of the Yanomami. Only if immediate and effective measures are taken to create a unified area of sufficient extent to allow them to maintain cultural and economic cohesion will they be saved from the disaster which in the past has struck so many other Indian peoples.

We give in chronological order principal events in the brutal contact the Yanomami have had with western society:

1974 - The Perimetral Norte highway (BR-210) cuts through 225 kilometers of the southern part of Yanomami territory in the Federal Territory of Roraima. Even disregarding other aspects which are not related to the health problems faced by the Indian population, the consequences of this penetration into their lands can be evaluated in the light of the following data:

- along the initial 100 kilometers 13 villages are practically decimated as a result of contact with the teams of the Camargo Corrêa Construction Company; these teams were recruited without any systematic attempt to evaluate the diseases of which they might have been carriers. Today the remnants of the Indians are small family groups dispersed along the roadside, reduced to prostitution and subjected to systematic ethnocide; exposed to disease and the notorious effects of the alcoholic drinks used by workers from local lumberyards and loggers. This area neighbors the Ajarani river area where FUNAI maintains a control post.
- in the upper Catrimani region near kilometer 145, in the space of 3 years, 2 measles epidemics killed about 80 Yanomami. According to the missionaries who assisted them at the time, in the 3 years which followed the construction of the highway cases of infectious disease among the Indians increased by a factor of eight. There are also numerous cases of tuberculosis and

venereal disease.

- the Yanomami of the Ajarani river region were estimated to had a population of 400 Indians in the sixties (Migliazza: 1978). They were reduced to 102 individuals by 1974 and to 79 by 1979.

- the Yanomami of the Mucajaí river region have increased in number in the last 20 years since a group of MEVA (Unevangelized Missions) have been giving systematic assistance to them. Nevertheless, because of the contact with white settlers along the middle Mucajaí river who hire Indian labor, have been registered some 20 cases of tuberculosis and venereal diseases. A substantial number of cases of (onchocerciasis) has also been registered.

1975/1976 - The publication of the geological survey by the RADAM-BRASIL Project starts a "rush" to mine cassiterite in the region of the Serra dos Surucucu in Roraima. More than 500 placer miners invaded Yanomami territory, provoking a situation which became as serious as that which followed the beginning of the construction of the Perimetral Norte Highway.

To make matter worse the presence of miners' camps in the region led to physical conflict between Indians and miners. The missionaries who worked in the area denounced "the murder of Indians who insisted in remaining in the region of the mining site". These outbreaks of violence eventually led the federal authorities to intervene by ordering the mining activities in the Indian area to stop and the evacuation of the miners. At the same time, however, the authorities themselves had already foreseen requests for prospecting permits from large companies interested in operating in the region, as later became obvious.

In 1975 the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), together with the Secretary of Agriculture of Roraima created the Projeto Fundiário Boa Vista (PFBV), part of the Polamazonia Program for farming and cattle ranching. As a result, they penetrate traditional Yanomami lands in the river valleys of the Apiaú, Ajarani, and Mucajaí.

1977 - The "Cattle Raising District of Roraima", planned in 1977 to the west of the Rio Branco as far as Meridian 62° W in the County of Caracaraí, consists of two regions (Gleba A 1 and Gleba Caracaraí), covering an area of 600,000 hectares divided into 146 lots of 2000 to 23000 hectares (according to the Report of Government Activities - Roraima 1978).

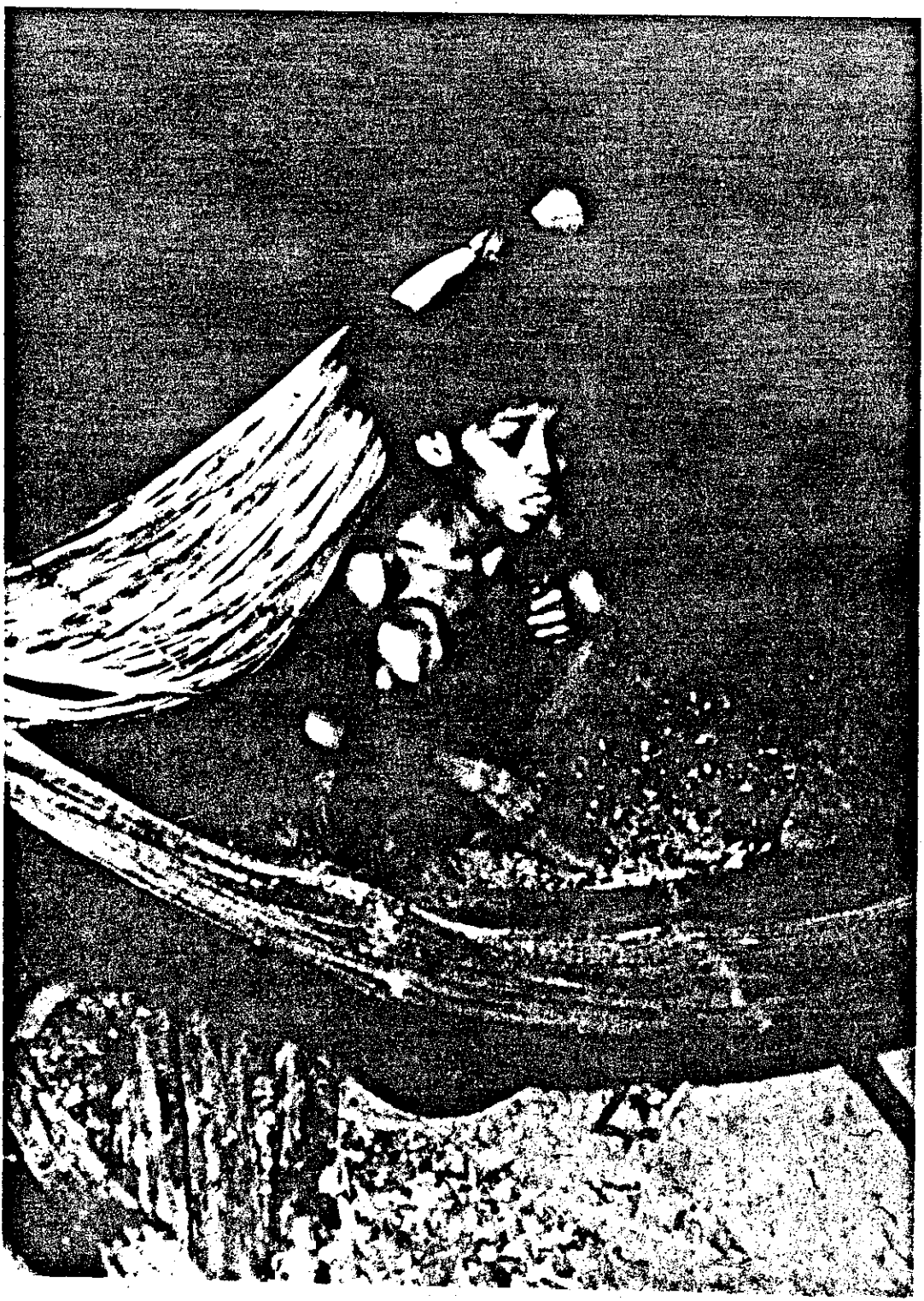
The delimitation of this cattle raising area represents a grave violation of the rights of the Yanomami Indians to the possession of the land they occupy.

a) Gleba A 1 partially overlaps the Mucajaí area which was declared to be "occupied by Yanomami Indians" by FUNAI itself (Decree 477/N)

b) In the southwestern portion of the Gleba Caracaraí there are several Yanomami residential groups that, although known to FUNAI, have not had their lands delimited.

c) In the northwest portions of Gleba A 1 and Gleba Caracaraí, near the Apiaú river, there are Yanomami Indians. These Indians live amidst settlements and cattle ranches already established in the area. Their lands are neither delimited nor do they appear in the FUNAI Report of its survey of 1977.

YANOMAMI INDIAN IN THE MATURACA REGION



d) In the northwest portion of Gleba A 1 and Gleba Caracará, in the upper Apiaú region, an area which has been known to belong to the Indians was released for colonization before being surveyed by FUNAI (FUNAI 1977) despite its foreknowledge.

Another factor should be mentioned. In the region between the Ajarani and Apiaú rivers in Roraima, 195,000 hectares of lands previously occupied by Yanomami groups that had been decimated by contact with whites during construction of the Perimetral Norte (FUNAI 1977) have been included in the agricultural projects mentioned above. The survivors have been given an area of 35,400 hectares, the so-called Ajarani area.

1978/1980 - A subsidiary of the Vale do Rio Doce Mining Company, DOCEGEO, establishes its first camp in the Serra do Surucucu in Roraima in order to prospect for cassiterite, previously exploited by placer miners. The Surucucu region is the area with the greatest concentration of Yanomami - about 4 to 6 thousand Indians, most of them still isolated from contact with whites.

In July of 1979 mineral prospecting conducted by DOCEGEO is closed down. In September, however, the illegal entry of placer miners at Couto de Magalhães (near the Serra dos Surucucu) is reported. Some 300 Indians live in the area. A new influenza epidemic breaks out at Couto de Magalhães which travels rapidly to the Yanomami of the Catrimani valley.

In February of 1980 there is another invasion by 30 placer miners coming from the State of Pará to Couto de Magalhães. They are searching for gold. FUNAI, however, fearing repercussions, has them immediately removed.

In May of 1980 the Ministry of Mines and Energy gives mineral concessions to two mining companies interested in prospecting for titanium. In August FUNAI's President declares that the same concessions have been cancelled.

In the Matucarã region in the thirties about 500 Yanomami Indians were contacted by Salesian missionaries. In 1978 only 150 of those 500 Yanomami were found by a rescue team of the Brazilian Air Force. These remnants were in an advanced stage of malnutrition and were contaminated with tuberculosis, pneumonia and malaria.

History of Proposals and Declarations

1968/1980 - The prospect of rapid economic occupation of the region and the consequent threat that this would represent for the Yanomami Indians led to several proposals and declarations regarding delimitation of Yanomami lands. Their aim was the guarantee of the rights of these Indians to the possession and occupation of their lands. Between 1968 and 1978, eleven proposals and/or declarations were produced to no avail - the problem has not been resolved.

- In the FUNAI document No.94/68 of 12 June 1968 the Head of the 1st Regional Inspectorate of FUNAI recognized as Indian land the territory between the Piranteira Falls on the lower Catrimani and the headwaters of the Catrimani and its tributaries.
- In December 1968 a proposal for the creation of a Yanomami Park was submitted to the Presidency of FUNAI by the anthropologists Kenneth I. Taylor and Alcida R. Ramos.
- Later, on the 13th and 14th of July 1969, these anthropologists supplemented their initial proposal with information acquired from the missionaries of the Catrimani Mission.
- In March of 1969, in document No. 15/69 addressed to the Head of the 1st Regional Inspectorate of FUNAI, the Bishop of Roraima requested the creation of a Yanomami Indian Park.

- In 1969 a draft of a decree intended to create a Yanomami Indian Park was submitted by the then Minister of the Interior, General José Costa Cavalcanti, to the President of the Republic, General Arthur da Costa e Silva, for his signature. It was published as a draft, unsigned, by the Ministry of the Interior - National Indian Foundation.
- In November of 1972 the Bishop of Roraima again requested the Indigenous Council of FUNAI to take steps for the creation of a Yanomami Indian Park.
- In April of 1974 yet another proposal for a Yanomami Park, with an annexed topographical study, was sent to the Presidency of FUNAI by the missionary Father João Batista Saffirio, who was then in charge of the Catrimani mission.
- In 1975 the Yanoama Project, prepared and directed by the anthropologist Kenneth I. Taylor, then under contract to FUNAI, provided for study of the creation of a Yanomami Park (O Estado de São Paulo, 26/2/75).
- On 10 May 1976, the anthropologist Kenneth I. Taylor, former coordinator of the Yanoama Project, sent to FUNAI a "proposal for the correct and appropriate demarcation" of Yanomami lands (Projeto Terras Yanoama, section 4, page 6).
- In April 1978 the Roraima Diocese at the request of the President of FUNAI and of the Delegate of the 10th Regional District of FUNAI, Sr. Juliano Escóssia of COAMA-FUNAI, sent another proposal for the delimitation of an Indian Reserve in the Catrimani River area.
- On 11 August of 1978 the Roraima Diocese, following contact with FUNAI personnel, presented yet another proposal designed to clarify and complete the previous one mentioned above.
- On 28 June of 1979 a Group of Brazilian citizens called on the Brazilian Government through the Minister of the Interior, Sr. Mário Andreazza, and the President of FUNAI, Dr. Adhemar Ribeiro da Silva, to create a 16 million acre Indian Park for the Yanomami. The Group later known as CCPY (Commission for the Creation of the Yanomami Park), also urged the government to initiate a vaccination program for the Yanomami Indians with the greatest urgency.
- In May of 1979 the coordinator of the Amazon for FUNAI, General Demócrito Soares de Oliveira, submitted a document to the President of FUNAI, General Ismarth de Araújo Oliveira, suggesting the delimitation of 5 separate areas in Roraima as a result of studies undertaken with the MEVA (Unevangelized Field Missions) missions.
- In February of 1980, at the suggestion of FUNAI's superintendent, Dr. Pedro Paulo Fatorelli, a work-group was organized to prepare the most recent proposal for the creation of a Yanomami Park. At the suggestion of Dr. Pedro Paulo Fatorelli, the Yanomami Park proposal was designed to include all the existing Yanomami villages (even those left out by the CCPY proposal). As a result, the area of the Park was substantially increased. The official FUNAI document urges an area of 25 million acres for the Yanomami of Brazil.

Proposal of 1979

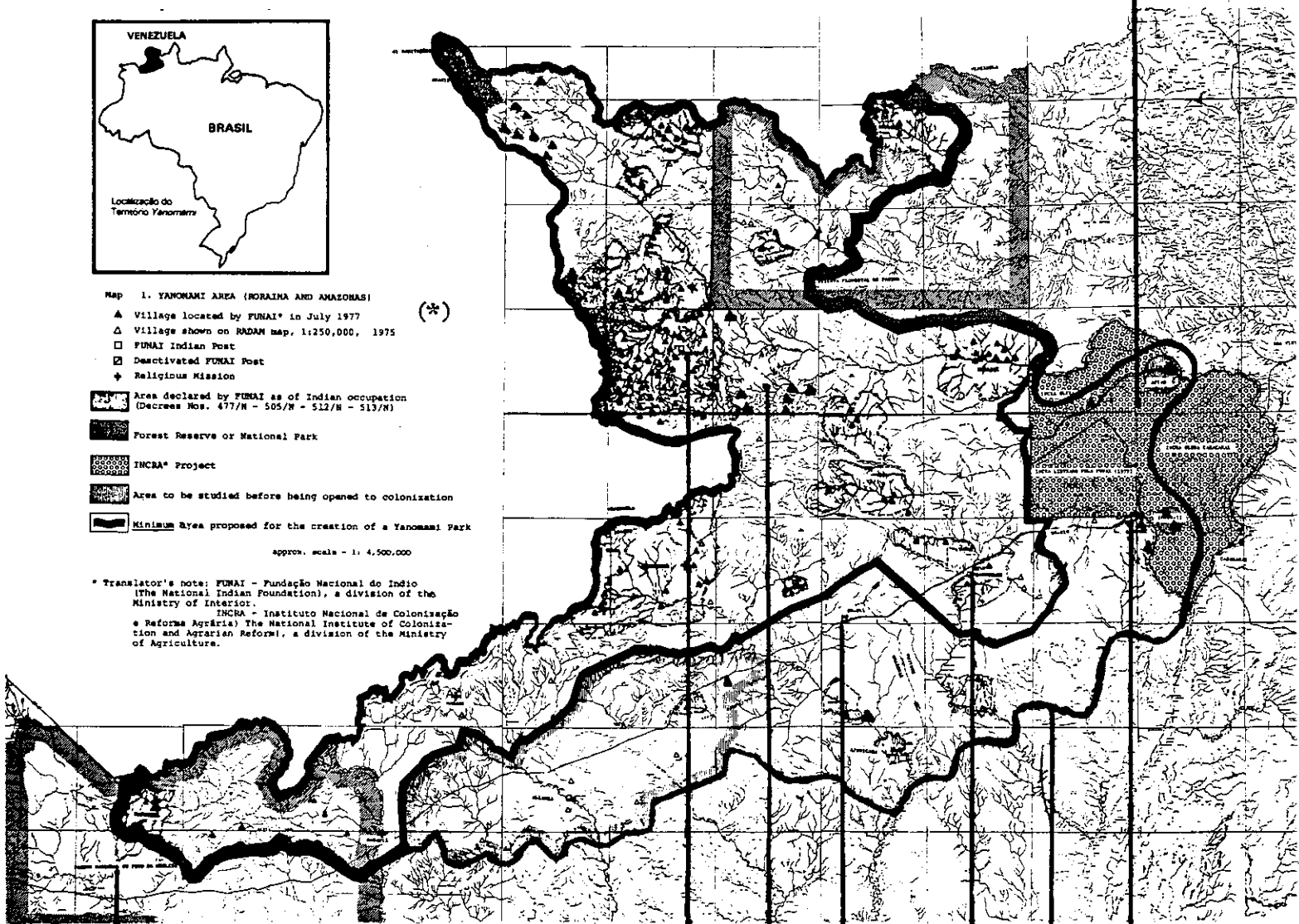
The history of the Yanomami Park proposals over the years has turned into a unique saga. Until the present day no solution to any problem has been accepted, each one disappearing in some obscure ministry bureau. The 1979 proposal has received the greatest amount of attention and publicity, as the result of a systematic campaign that followed its presentation to the authorities in 1979. One can, therefore, say that the 1980 Proposal is the direct result of a consistent national and international campaign involving, in one way or another, many nations of the West. Even though pressures against the park from the Territory of Roraima have intensified, the Minister of the Interior, Mário Andreazza, in the course of 1980, in the name of the Federal Government, has manifested his willingness to seek a solution to the Yanomami question. We shall, however, analyze in the following pages of this report what this solution consists of and what its possible consequences could be.

Lands Belonging to the National Institute of Colonization (INCRA):



- Map 1. YANOMAMI AREA (SORAIMA AND AMAZONAS)
- ▲ Village located by FUNAI* in July 1977
 - △ Village shown on RADAM map, 1:250,000, 1975
 - FUNAI Indian Post
 - ⊠ Deactivated FUNAI Post
 - ✦ Religious Mission
 - Area declared by FUNAI as of Indian occupation (Decreets Nos. 477/M - 505/M - 522/M - 513/M)
 - Forest Reserve or National Park
 - INCRA* Project
 - Area to be studied before being opened to colonization
 - Minimum Area proposed for the creation of a Yanomami Park
- approx. scale - 1: 4,500,000

* Translator's note: FUNAI - Fundação Nacional do Índio (The National Indian Foundation), a division of the Ministry of Interior.
 INCRA - Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária The National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform, a division of the Ministry of Agriculture.



National Park of Pico da Neblina (Salesian Mission and FUNAI posts)

Serra do Surucucu Region (FUNAI post):
 Couto de Magalhães Region:

Highway BR-210,
 Northern Perimeter Highway:

Catrimani Valley Region:
 (Consolata Mission Station)

Ajarani River Valley (FUNAI post)

Limits of Actual Yanomami Territory

(*) NOTE: Map shows 22 Yanomami Villages not located on either 1977 FUNAI Map or 1975 RADAM Map. Villages located by K.I. Taylor (IWGIA Document 37, 1979: 44; and 1980 communication.)

Present Situation

In the face of the accelerated invasion of Yanomami lands, FUNAI issued 4 decrees (477/N, 505/N, 512/N, 513/N) in 1977-1978, declaring "of Yanomami Indian occupation" several areas in the Federal Territory of Roraima and in the State of Amazonas. FUNAI's initiative, however, resulted in the administrative delimitation of 21 Indian areas, all very small and separate each from the other, referred to by many as the "Yanomami archipelago".

The 21 areas circumscribe groupings of villages, leaving between them open corridors which, it is obvious, will facilitate the surrounding of the Yanomami areas by colonization fronts and subsequent encroachment of the Indian areas by white settlers, therefore multiplying the possibilities of conflict and creating a situation which the authorities will find impossible to control.

The scheme for discontinuous parcels of Yanomami lands is not only harmful in that it facilitates the usurping of Indian lands, but is also inviable for three fundamental reasons:

- to reserve for the Indians only the area which includes their dwellings and immediate surroundings is to deny them, in the short run, access to the large area which is needed for their hunting, fishing, and gathering activities and to prevent them from continuing the type of "intermittent nomadism" which is determined by the ecological depletion of their surroundings and the consequent need to allow for the regeneration of their environmental equilibrium (soil, fauna, and flora).
- the fragmentation of the Indian lands will lead to the rapid destruction of their traditional subsistence system. Isolated in ecologically depleted areas, the Indians will be reduced to a situation of total economic dependence on the national society. The solution that FUNAI has found (the delimitation of 21 discontinuous areas) disrespects the provision of the Indian Statute (Article 23) which states that "possession by the Indian is

held to mean effective occupation of the land he holds in accordance with tribal usages, customs, and traditions and on which he lives or exercises an activity indispensable to subsistence or economically useful".

- to establish discontinuous areas isolated by open corridors is to jeopardize, if not prevent, the economic, ceremonial, and marriage exchanges which are essential to the maintenance of the social dynamics of inter-village relations and those between sets of villages, a fundamental feature of the cohesion of Yanomami society.

The Indian Statute itself (Art. 2, VI) determines that "in the process of integration of the Indians into the national community, the cohesion of the native communities and their cultural values, traditions, usages, and customs" must be respected;

- to break up the Yanomami territory will multiply the points of contact with national society and, as a consequence the risk of transmission of infectious diseases (measles, tuberculosis, influenza) which are lethal to these Indians. The dispersal of the Indian areas will also make it more difficult to establish an adequate program of medical assistance (see Decree No. 58,824/66 which promulgates I.L.O. Convention 107 about Indian and tribal populations, Art. 20, item 1 and 2).

To aggravate even more the health situation of the Yanomami, the encroachment and ecological depletion of their lands will rapidly result in chronic malnutrition and exaggerated parasitic infestation.

Invasions by placer miners and mining companies continue. On 19 August 1978 general Ismarth de Araujo Oliveira, former President of FUNAI signed a three year contract with 3 subsidiaries of DOCEGEO linked to the Vale do Rio Doce mining company, thus giving concession for prospecting in 10 different lots in the heart of Yanomami lands, the Serra do Surucucu where more than 4000 Yanomami live. (O Estado de São Paulo, 4/9/80) On 13 May 1980 the Minister of Mines and Energy signed another three year contract giving prospecting rights to two mining subsidiaries, Mineração Tapajós Ltda. and Mineração Guariba Ltda., at the Serra de Couto de Magalhães, neighboring the Serra de Surucucu.

Congressman Hélio Campos of the Territory of Roraima on 19 December 1979 presented a proposal (Projeto de Lei No.2294) to the Brazilian Congress which advocates the removal of all Indians living along the borders of Brazil. In effect, Campos proposes relocating some 90,000 Indians who inhabit the frontier regions to the interior of the country, using national security as pretext. Included among the 90,000 Indians are the Yanomami. This proposal of Congressman Hélio Campos is clearly genocidal.

FUNAI enters a new phase of "decentralization" in the first six months of this year. Decentralization means the transfer of responsibility for Indian affairs to the States and Territories. In the States and Territories, where local interests in economic development and land occupation are most critical, this leaves the indigenous population totally vulnerable to

local interests. One can state, therefore, that with this new FUNAI policy the Yanomami, will be more than ever at the mercy of local politicians. At the same time FUNAI can comfortably wash its hands of the responsibility it has as "tutor" of the Indians in Brazil, especially in the case of the Territory of Roraima, known to be traditionally anti-Indian.

It is also known that, if and when, the lands of the Yanomami are officially declared an Indian Park or "Reserve", the Yanomami region will turn into a multi-interest area over which various government agencies will have jurisdiction. Among them, declared President Nobre da Veiga in February 1980, would be the Ministry of Mines and Energy.

On 5 August 1980, during a broadly publicized TV program, Mário Andreazza further declared that a possible solution to the Yanomami problem could be the creation of a "national reserve".

This insures the presence of federal control over such a reserve (s), for the creation of national parks, forest reserves, ecological stations, mineral reserves, and the like are designed precisely to insure such a presence with the control of military posts along the borders.

The presence of these governmental agencies in and of itself would not represent a dangerous intrusion into the Yanomami territory. There is, however, the risk that these natural reserves remain "reserved" by the state in order to later declare them areas of national interest. In other words, they would become areas open for economic exploitation, which would inevitably result in breaking up of the Yanomami nation, in loss of land, spread of diseases and economic dependence for the Yanomami. A "multi-interest" or "national reserve" is, therefore, very different from an "Indian Park" for which, by law, FUNAI is the only body responsible. Differently from a "national reserve", an Indian Park does not generate conflicting interests between national agencies and the Indians, because the reason for its existence is precisely to guarantee protection for the Indians so that they can survive as a people.

At present the most crucial questions regarding the future of the Yanomami are;

- 1 - How much longer will the Brazilian government take to officially demarcate Yanomami lands?
- 2 - Will there be a unified territory for the Yanomami nation, or will there be reserves within a multi-interest area co-administered by various federal agencies?
- 3 - What form will this demarcation take and how just will it be to the Yanomami?
- 4 - What is FUNAI's role in the decision making process regarding this demarcation?

- 5 - Will FUNAI have equal decision making power in relation to the other governmental agencies interested in the natural resources of the Yanomami territory?

- 6 - If a "multi-purpose" reserve (s) is created instead of an exclusive Indian Park, how much longer will the Yanomami succeed in remaining the largest unacculturated Indian nation still surviving in the Americas?

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