

THE YANOMAMI PEOPLE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM - 1980

1. Whereas the Indians, known as Yanomami, which inhabit the extreme north of Brazil (in the Federal Territory of Roraima and the State of Amazonas) represent the last and largest Indian Nation of the Americas still maintaining its traditional patterns of culture, (The Yanomami in Brazil: 1979, ARC/IWGIA/SI Document) and have only sporadic or no contact at all with the national society which surrounds them; (Proposta de Criação, FUNAI: 1980)
2. Whereas for twelve (12) years various entities have repeatedly urged the authorities to create a PARK for the Yanomami people, both from within and outside of Brazil;
3. Whereas the Minister of the Interior of Brazil has publicly declared that a suitable land reserve will be created for the Yanomami by the end of 1980; (Jornal do Brasil, 1.8.80; O Estado de São Paulo, 1.8.80; TV Globo, 5.8.80)
4. Whereas FUNAI at the present moment recognizes as YANOMAMI INDIAN LAND an area consisting of twenty-one (21) separate "islands" (lots) which together represent only about one third (1/3) of the LAND actually used by the Yanomami; (Portarias 477/N; 512/N; 505/N; e 513/N)
5. Whereas the law (INDIAN STATUTE-art.23) defines as his lands of "effective occupation(the land)he holds in accordance with tribal usages, customs and traditions and on which he lives or exerts an activity indispensable to subsistence or economically useful" - independent of the existence of prior deeds or titles; (idem article 25)
6. Whereas ~~mining~~ permits have already been issued for prospecting in densely inhabited Yanomami land (Serra das Surucucus and Serra Couto de Magalhães); (Diário Oficial, 16.5.80, Alvarás Nrs. 2539 and 2540 and FUNAI Authorization 064/78) and

- pressure continues to reopen placer-mining activities through local (Federal Territory of Roraima) politicians; (Multinational Monitor, 02/1980; O Estado de São Paulo, 7.12.79)
7. Whereas Congressman Helio Campos of the Territory of Roraima presented a proposal to the Brazilian Congress which advocates the removal of all indians living within 150 kms. of the board^{er}s of Brazil using national security as pretext. Included among the 90.000 likely to be affected are the Yanomami; (Projeto de Lei nº 2.294/79)
 8. Whereas the contact between the Yanomami and such outside groups as the road-builders sent into Yanomami land to build Highway BR-210 has had calamitous effects; in the area of the upper Catrimani river valley, after the construction of the same highway, two measles epidemics killed approximately 80 Yanomami; (The Yanomami in Brazil: 1979 ARC/IWGIA/SI Document)
 9. Whereas in 1975 and 1976 published reports of the existence of tin ore in the area of the Serra das Surucucus provoked a rush of prospectors which caused a situation of equal gravity to that caused by highway BR-210 and led Minister of the Interior Rangel Reis to order that mining activities in the area be halted; (Diário Oficial, Portaria 422, 2.9.1976)
 10. Whereas the existence of onchocerciasis, a disease originally African and presently widespread among the Yanomami, justifies measures to control contact between the Yanomami and the National Society; its spread would be most serious, as permanent blindness is its result in all people; (Goodland: 1975)
 11. Whereas the commission on Human Rights, United Nations Economic and Social Council, declared in Geneva on 24 August, 1979 that "Unless (Brazilian) government plans were changed, it was expected that the largest surviving Amerindian tribe in South America, numbering some 17,000 people would cease to exist within 20 years",
 12. Whereas 3000 (three thousand) placer-miners searching for gold have invaded the region of the Uraricaá valley, a Yanomami area with an approximate population of 500 indians; (O Estado de São Paulo, 5.11.80)

For the above mentioned reasons it should be evident:

That the creation of a park of SUFFICIENT AND UNDIVIDED AREA, as proposed by FUNAI in 1980, is the only viable solution for the physical and cultural survival of the Yanomami;

That the low degree of acculturation of the Yanomami, combined with their lack of immunity to "white men's" (virotic) disease, does not permit the indiscriminate exploration of their lands;

That the creation of a park of adequate size is the most honorable solution that Brazil can adopt to assist one of the oldest civilizations of the Americas, for which the Brazilian Indian Law guarantees "freedom to remain in its habitat, and availability of resources permitting its progress and development". (Indian Statute - art. 2, V)

In this sense, we wish to call the attention of all people involved in the preservation and protection of human dignity and in particular by the situation of the Yanomami to the necessity for the CREATION OF THE YANOMAMI PARK, as promised by the Minister of the Interior, but as yet not realized.

November 1980