

3rd May, 1979.

BRZ 234

To: Claudia <sup>A</sup>ndujar  
c.c. Jane White, Oxford

From: Suzanna Williams, Recife

CEDI - P. I. B.
DATA 31 / 12 / 86
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Dear Claudia,

Re: Yanomami Park Proposal

I've just received a phone call from Michael Scott (Oxfam-America) in Boston, and spoken to him, Sandy Davis and the Oxfam press officer, Larry Simons. IN the office and listening on various lines, were John Mohawk, some Iroquois leaders, Indians from Akwesasne Notes, Indian lawyers from the Indian Law Resource Centre - quite a group!

ARC, Oxfam-America and the Indian leaders mentioned above have had many long meetings about the Yanomami issue. Sandy has also corresponded with many other Indian leaders in the U.S. They have had advice from the Indian lawyers of the Indian Law Resource Centre who are experts on international aboriginal law. They have raised important points and I am communicating these to you. If there is any problem about any of these points, you are to communicate them to me right away, and I will contact them. I have told them to expect a letter from you (with legal advice) and from Tony Seeger about the legal problems which surround Article 4 of your proposal.

Perhaps an initial point to clear up is that there has been no misunderstanding about the legal position in Brazil - they are perfectly aware of the problems, and the particular laws which operate in Brazil. The point is, that they would be unable to mobilise U.S. Indian groups without treating the issue within the context of the international rights of aboriginal peoples which are being similarly violated in the U.S., Canada and Australia. In other words, in addition to giving support to the proposal which is a short-term project to try and secure the conditions for physical survival of the Yanomami, they wish to raise the issue of the long-term rights of the Yanomami to exist as a people, to be recognised as an indigenous nation.

Specifically, the points they made were these:-

1. They are very concerned to raise maximum support for the Yanomami Park Proposal through the Press Conferences on the appointed day, and also very aware of the need for sustained, long-term support for the issue, and consequently very willing to give this long-term support in whatever way they can. "They" are ARC, Oxfam-America and the Indian leaders.
2. The support of Indian leaders in the U.S. is extremely important, especially as they realise that the proposal is not being made by the Yanomami themselves, but by non-Indians on their behalf. They stressed the importance of Indian support in Brazil, which of course we are trying to get.
3. However, they will only have the support of the Indians in the U.S., and ARC and Oxfam will not support if the U.S. Indians don't, if at the same time that the issue of the Yanomami Park Proposal is raised and supported, the international issue of the rights of the Yanomami nation is raised and supported too. Thus in the Press Conferences, for which they already have a network set up in Washington D.C. ready to be mobilised as soon as they have the green light, they will raise the broader issue of Indian rights.

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The point is that the Brazilian govt. and other governments in whose countries there are indigenous populations, do not recognise the rights of these people to exclusive ownership of their land and resources. Thus in Brazil, the Indian is considered a minor and his life belongs to the State. This point, in the Yanomami context, will be raised in the Press Conferences, together with the lack of self-determination and so on.

This is very important as it will raise the international question of indigenous peoples' rights, using the specific case of the violation of ~~tām~~ in the Yanomami case. The issue at stake is the violation of these international aboriginal rights, for example the appropriation of the rights to mineral resources by the State on aboriginal territory.

To put it in a nutshell, they in the U.S. Press Conferences and subsequent campaign, will raise the issues that cannot in this context be raised in Brazil.

4. Shelton is concerned that there is in the Proposal, no real definition of the kind of jurisdiction FUNAI will have in the Park, and the type of intervention ~~will~~ which will be carried out. Comparisons can be drawn with the Xingú and Aripuanã Park, where FUNAI has clearly failed to serve any useful function whatever, and actively prejudiced the Indians.
5. Shelton is also concerned about the question of the Brazil/Venezuela border; his point being that to abide by the arbitrary division of the respective governments and recognise the border as one within the Yanomami territory, is as serious as recognising the arbitrary borders created by FUNAI in Yanomami territory in the 21 proposed areas.
6. In the publicity materials, and the preface ARC is writing for the joint ARC/IWGIA publication of the Proposal, these international rights issues will be raised, and this is the proviso for a continued support strategy in the U.S.

Claudia I hope this letter is clear and I have reported faithfully what was said to me on the phone this morning. I have just recieved from you the xerox of Shelton's letter to you of 17th April, and would also appreciate your sending me a copy of your reply letter to him. It is a very important issue, and now that I have seen Shelton's letter, and spoken to him and Mike on the phone I understand more fully the situation - I hope this letter has also made it clearer to you. As you told me, the proposed decree was modelled on other parks, such as the Xingú and Aripuanã, hence I suppose, the terms of your article 4.

If you have any comments/objections to the way the U.S. people want to do it, please let me know at once. I personally agree with the way they want to handle it and hope that you and your Brazilian colleagues will too!  
That's all for now, let me know soon, and especially dates! Andrezza is in Boa Vista today, I suppose you know.

Love,

*Suzanne*

*c.e. Mike Scott + Evelyn Dow*