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Pesquisa Geral

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Brasília, Sexta-Feira, 22/3/19

A Pró-Yanomami

Os Yanomami

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Esta seção apresenta um conjunto de documentos de referência sobre diversos aspectos da ação da entidade na defesa dos direitos Yanomami (Terra Indígena Yanomami, direitos humanos, saúde, educação e preservação do meio-ambiente). Trata-se de documentos recentes ou "históricos", de documentos produzidos pela Pró-Yanomami (CCPY) ou de documentos oficiais.

... ● **Arquivo Pró-Yanomami - English Version**

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1990 has been one of the most traumatic years in the history of the Yanomami people; as it enters its final month the pressure to bring about a solution for the crisis is greater than ever, but the same obstacles that have kept the land and lives of the Yanomami exposed to garimpeiro invasion continue to prolong their agony. Nevertheless, October and November saw a series of important developments which left the impression that the momentum built up by the campaign to save the Yanomami may at last prove sufficient to force the Brazilian government into keeping its word on providing them with consistent health care -though the rights to their traditional land promised under Brazil's Constitution remain far from guaranteed.

YANOMAMI PARK BACK ON THE OFFICIAL AGENDA

By late October, Federal Indian agency FUNAI's president Cantidio Guerreiro Guimaraes had been forced to abandon his public position in favour of dividing Yanomami territory into small "islands", a policy repeatedly denounced by CCPY and others. The latest FUNAI proposal, which Justice Minister Jarbas Passarinho (to whose ministry FUNAI is subordinated) eventually passed on to President Fernando Collor, requested the revocation of the decrees which created both the "islands" and the so-called "garimpeiro reserves" inside Yanomami territory. After five years of invasion, destruction and death, FUNAI's official position has at last returned to that set out in Draft Decree 1817E, which proposed the creation of an Indigenous Park in the full 9.4 million hectares of traditional Yanomami territory. This decree, drawn up in 1985 with the assistance of CCPY, was promptly shelved by the government of then President Jose Sarney.

In a parallel move, Environment Secretary Jose Lutzenberger RISO drew up a medida provisoria (provisional presidential measure) which would cancel the demarcation of the areas of Yanomami territory which lie outside the "islands" as National Forest. The creation of the National Forests had left Yanomami lands wide open to invasion, since mining and other economic activities are permitted in such areas.

Resistance from the military to the demarcation of Indian lands in an area classified as a "sensitive border zone" continues to be strong, however, as was admitted by Justice Minister Passarinho -who himself has strong military connections. Pressure from the military hierarchy, who would rather witness the genocide of the Yanomami people than relinquish any part of their control- over Amazonia, prevented President Collor from accompanying his professed sympathy towards the proposal for the Indigenous Park with any concrete action. The decrees drawn up by FUNAI and by Lutzenberger remained unsigned.

Meanwhile, the government of neighbouring Venezuela showed Brazil an example by announcing plans to create an Indigenous Park for the estimated 14,000 Yanomami who live within Venezuelan territory. News that the garimpeiro invasion had spilled across the border caused considerable concern in Venezuela, culminating in the arrest of nine Brazilian prospectors who are still being held in a Venezuelan jail. The

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environmental destruction caused by garimpeiro activity has already reached a wide area of the Orinoco valley, on the other side of the mountains that separate Brazil from Venezuela.

POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY FOLLOWS ELECTIONS

The state and Congressional elections, held in two rounds on October 3 and November 25, had mixed results for the Yanomami cause. On the national level, President Collor's supporters gained space in Congress but were defeated in the contest for several of the most important state governments. Senator Severo Gomes, one of the most outspoken champions of the Yanomami cause, did not attempt reelection. However his successor as Senator for the state of Sao Paulo is Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy of the Workers' Party, who was elected with a strongly-defined platform on human rights and environmental issues and who is sympathetic to the Yanomami cause, although he will be too busy with other priorities to be as actively-engaged as his predecessor.

In Roraima, the state which includes the most densely-populated and vulnerable areas of Yanomami territory, the candidates who had collaborated most closely with the garimpeiro invasion faced electoral defeat. Garimpeiro spokesman Jose Altino Machado failed in his attempt to win election to the Senate, and Romero Juca, who as president of FUNAI was responsible for opening the Yanomami lands to invasion in 1987, was defeated in the second round of the elections for State Governor. However, the candidate who beat Juca was Ottomar Pinto, a local politician with a history of support for mining activities in Roraima.

Pinto was reported to have announced soon after his election that he would seek to reopen to mining areas of Yanomami territory from which the garimpeiros had been removed. The reports drew warnings from Federal authorities such as Health Minister Alcení Guerra that such a position was contrary to Brazilian government policy, and Pinto aides began to deny that he had made such an announcement. Despite Pinto's connections with mining interests, Roraima's financial dependence on Federal Government funds means that he is unlikely to take a strong stand in favour of the garimpeiros if President Collor shows himself genuinely determined to guarantee the Yanomami their rights.

ALL CHANGE FOR FEDERAL INDIAN POLICIES?

The conclusions of the Interministerial Working Group (GTI) responsible for the Collor government's much-trumpeted reform of official policy towards Brazil's indigenous peoples were finally announced in November. Human rights movement Ação pela Cidadania (to which CCPY belongs) denounced its proposals as "the old policies, with no new initiatives", and criticised its lack of reference to the need for substantial change on the question of individual, social and land rights, as well as the maintenance of FUNAI control and the policy of fragmenting Indian lands. The one area of innovation in the GTI's report was on the question of the state's legal "guardianship" of indigenous peoples; it proposed that Indians could opt for emancipation and full citizenship or to continue as "wards of the state", but suggested that all Indians who failed to specify their choice would be considered automatically emancipated. In effect, this meant removing the state's legal responsibility to safeguard the welfare of isolated groups such as the Yanomami who, lacking the command of Portuguese and access to the judicial system necessary to register their option, would be subjected to automatic emancipation.

To respond to the GTI's conclusions, Ação pela Cidadania organised a seminar, held in Brasilia between December 4 and 6. This brought together the indigenous organizations and pro-Indian NGOs whose opinions had been almost entirely disregarded by the GTI after it had gone half-heartedly through the motions of consultation. The seminar's concluding document declared that the GTI report "contained proposals which revealed the intention to keep in the government's hands the monopoly of working with Indians, to make it easier for invaders of Indian lands to interfere in the demarcation process, and to hasten the elimination of the Indian's identity through the malicious device of automatic emancipation." Ação pela Cidadania's conclusions, which stressed the principles of respect for cultural diversity, environmental protection of Indian areas (including firm action against garimpeiro invaders) and involvement of indigenous communities in all decisions affecting their future, were handed to Justice Minister Jarbas Passarinho,

The state of confusion and indecision on indigenous policy within the government was symbolised by the gap between the rhetoric that accompanied the creation of the GTI and the timidity and backwardness of its conclusions. Further evidence of this situation was offered by the government's failure to define the fate of its

discredited Indian agency FUNAI. Justice Minister Passarinho has tried to push it on to Environment Secretary Lutzenberger, who in turn favours abolishing it and creating a Special Secretariat for Indigenous Affairs linked directly to the President. Meanwhile, most of FUNAI's responsibilities in the area of medical work with indigenous communities are being absorbed by the Health Ministry. FUNAI's resistance to this loss of influence has led it to "boycott" all health work not being carried out by its own doctors, including an attempt to exclude non-FUNAI personnel from the renewed emergency health programme proposed by the Ministry to cover the period between Christmas and March. This power-struggle brings the threat of serious consequences for the Yanomami, as the government's efforts become still more disorganised.

AT LAST, A LONG-TERM HEALTH PLAN

November saw the first sign of a genuine government commitment to put an end to the genocide of the Yanomami people, with the Health Ministry's creation of a specific Yanomami Health Project. Health Minister Alcení Guerra, who announced the project during a visit to Roraima on November 29, seems to have taken over responsibility for rescuing the government's image. The Project was drawn up after consultation of CCPY and other NGOs with experience of working in the Yanomami area, and carries the explicit assumption that the health work will be accompanied by the removal of all invaders, the recuperation of areas which have suffered environmental devastation and the creation of the Yanomami Park.

The Project specifies that "all organizations involved in Health actions in the Yanomami area must fully and objectively participate", and requires the establishment of "a framework of harmonious and synergetic cooperation between public institutions and non-governmental organizations". Its "Interinstitutional Relations and Functions Matrix" enumerates CCPY's responsibilities as participation in the Community Commission which will control the project execution, supplying advisory services and general information on the Yanomami area, support for processing of health data and training of personnel and medical work in the area covered by the Demini Project. For the purposes of the long-term project, the 9.4 million hectares of Yanomami territory will be divided into 18 sub-regions, of which Demini is no 15. The criteria used in the sub-division were those recommended by CCPY, by FUNAI's Doctor Oneron Pithan and by anthropologists: social and cultural factors and relations between Yanomami groups were taken into account as well as geographical considerations. This means that CCPY's Demini Project has not only secured government approval, but also been transformed into one of the key elements of a comprehensive health programme for the Yanomami. CCPY hopes that the government will follow its promising declaration of intent with practical action that includes both genuine cooperation with CCPY and other NGOs and respect for their autonomy.

The main obstacle facing the execution of the comprehensive Health Project is lack of money. The project proposal recognises that "there are no resources available at this time for health activities in the Yanomami territory, nor are there any resources committed to such actions in the 1991 budget Bill". It estimates that the Cr\$500 million (US\$3 million) required to set up the project's physical infrastructure and carry out some initial actions can be obtained by reallocating resources from the reserve funds of other government bodies; the rest of the project, for which no total budget has yet been worked out, will have to be financed by a revision of the Health Ministry's 1991 budget and by overseas contributions. International agencies are also expected to help by assigning expert personnel to assist with technical and scientific support work for the Project.

Given adequate funding -and if the problems of recruiting personnel properly qualified for so challenging a task are overcome -the Yanomami Health Project could come to represent the comprehensive and consistent response to the disastrous health situation in the area for which CCPY has long been calling. It should be stressed, however, that any medical efforts will ultimately prove ineffectual without the complete removal of all garimpeiro invaders. Above all, the government should not be allowed to use their new-found commitment to the physical preservation of the Yanomami as a pretext for ignoring demands for the recognition of their territorial rights; this must necessarily accompany any consistent programme aimed at guaranteeing their survival.

ON THE GROUND

Inside the Yanomami area, government efforts continued to centre around the operation to dynamite the illegal airstrips used as supply-bases by the garimpeiros. After most of the funds promised months before finally arrived in October, the

operation's performance improved: between October 10 and December 8, 47 airstrips were blown up and three which had been rebuilt by the invaders were once more put out of action. This number, however, represents less than half of the total number of illegal landing-strips known to be operating inside Yanomami territory, and according to FUNAI's own estimates the operation will not be complete before March 1991. In addition, there is still no coherent plan for patrolling the area and guaranteeing that the garimpeiros do not simply recover the airstrips as they did those dynamited in the operation's first phase. FUNAI admits that there are still over 1,000 invaders inside Yanomami territory: a more realistic estimate puts the number at at least 4-5,000. December saw a renewed influx of garimpeiros after rumours spread that the newly-elected governor had secured the reopening of the "garimpeiro reserves" and that the FUNAI/Federal Police operation would be called off before Christmas. With most Federal personnel scheduled to leave the area in time for the Christmas holidays, the operation is likely to remain scaled-down until mid-January. This relaxation of official vigilance is almost certain to lead to fresh attempts at re-invasion.

According to anthropologist Alcida Ramos, a CCPY member and authority on the Yanomami who obtained official permission to visit the area with a research team from the University of Brasilia, air traffic between Roraima's capital Boa Vista and the illegal jungle airstrips remains intense. Alcida counted at least 200 balsas (rafts used to dredge up gold-bearing mud from the river bottoms) operating on the River Uraricoera, and saw evidence that garimpeiros were using the Auaris region as a base for prospecting expeditions and mining activity inside Venezuelan territory.

Alcida, the French anthropologist and member of Survival International Bruce Albert and two other colleagues were the objects of a tug-of-war between FUNAI and other Federal authorities which culminated in FUNAI losing still more of its diminishing credibility. Accepting the argument of regional coordinator Sebastiao Amancio that the presence of garimpeiros in the region made it too dangerous to visit, FUNAI's president ordered that the anthropologists' authorisations to enter the area be cancelled; whereupon the Federal Police denied that there was any real danger and the Attorney General's Office, responsible for granting the authorisations, insisted that they be respected. Having reached the point of preparing to leave Roraima, the anthropologists then found themselves enabled to continue their work under the auspices of the Attorney General's Office, which has taken an ever more active role in seeking solutions to the crisis affecting the Yanomami -though FUNAI continued to refuse to cooperate.

The continuation of medical care provided by FUNAI doctors and personnel from CCPY and other NGOs made possible a reduction in the incidence of malaria and other killer diseases in areas from which the garimpeiros have been removed. As the pressure to remove them from Yanomami territory increased, however, some invaders began to move into neighbouring areas inhabited by other ethnic groups such as the doctors were soon concerned that their presence was leading to an increase in the incidence of diseases such as malaria among hitherto unaffected communities. A delegation of Macuxi who tried to explain the tribe's predicament to FUNAI president Cantídio Guerreiro Guimarães were harshly rebuffed.

THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Though President Bush (who had earlier been rumoured to be planning to visit the Yanomami area) avoided specific references to the situation of Brazil's indigenous peoples during his flying visit to Brasilia on December 3, he did have a brief meeting with Environment Secretary José Lutzenberger, a strong exponent of the creation of the Yanomami Park.

One important international visitor who had direct contact with the reality of the Yanomami's situation was Dr. Erica Daes, president of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples. Dr. Daes visited Brazil in the first week of December at the invitation of the Brazilian government, who invited her in an informal capacity in an attempt to defuse criticisms raised by NGOs such as Survival International, the Indian Law Resource Center and IWGIA, which have consultative status at the Sub-commission. Fortunately, her visit to Roraima was not confined to being shown the "official version" of the Yanomami's situation in areas, such as Surucucus, which have been largely cleared of garimpeiros; she and Dr. Eisa Stamatopoulous, from the Human Rights office of the UN in New York, another member of the Commission, who accompanied her on the visit, were also taken by doctors to some of the villages most seriously affected by the malaria epidemic, and saw for themselves the precarious conditions under which Boa Vista's "Casa do Indio" hospital is operating.

Before her field visit, Dr. Daes was supplied with detailed background material by various NGOs, including CCPY, and both before and after her trip to Roraima she was able to discuss the Yanomami's situation with CCPY coordinator Claudia Andujar, in the company of legal expert Ana Valeria Araujo from the Nucleus for Indigenous Rights and Ailton Krenak, coordinator of the Union of Indian Nations. Dr. Daes left promising to seek UN support for medical work in the area, though it is not clear whether she intends to stress the vital importance of the demarcation of the Yanomami Park in her report to UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar.

Recent months have undoubtedly seen progress, but any optimism in relation to the future of the Yanomami should be tempered by the following observation, made by Davi Kopenawa Yanomami during a recent visit to São Paulo:

"The government hasn't put an end to the diseases. The Collor government must remove the equipment which the garimpeiros have hidden in the forest -in two or three months they will be back. The government doesn't care about the Indians. They want the riches of the forest -they want money. I am afraid that the government will remove the garimpeiros and then let in the big mining companies."



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