

## Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

### Ethnic offensive reactivated

*Brazil's military fears that ethnic conflicts may prove the new pretext for international intervention.*

High-level representatives of the Brazilian Armed Forces and allied political leaders are warning that a new weapon of Anglo-American geopolitics aimed at limiting Brazilian sovereignty over the rich Amazon region is being readied. A new "ethnic offensive," they say, will be a fundamental aspect of the ecological assault first mounted five years ago.

It was recently learned that the United States will again be holding military maneuvers in Guyana, the first of which already occurred in May of this year. Diplomatic circles in Brazil suggest that the real U.S. interest is to have a permanent military base in that country, located along the Brazilian border. Guyanese President Cheddi Jagan is not expected to be able to resist U.S. pressures. This has awakened great concern in Brazil, given that this could mean having a foreign army plundering the Amazon region.

It is in this context that former Brazilian President José Sarney, today a senator, issued a cry of alarm in a June 20 article in *O Globo* newspaper regarding the interventionist potential hidden behind the reactivation of "indigenist" forces. Sarney, who is known to reflect the concerns of the Armed Forces on occasion, was referring to the Yanomami reserve—a territory about the size of Portugal, but containing no more than 10,000 nomadic Indians—created by President Ferdinand Collor de Mello before he was impeached.

Sarney charged the Clinton ad-

ministration with involvement in this destabilization scenario, which employs phony "ethnic" pretexts for intervention. In particular, he named U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Defense Secretary Les Aspin, and their mouthpieces at the *New York Times*. He also mentioned U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali being league with the U.S. officials.

Today, in the aftermath of the Cold War, said Sarney, the great problems regarding survival are environmental and demographic matters, drug trafficking, migrations, etc. But, he says, "the Big Word is ethnic conflicts. The U.S. secretary of state, now in Vienna at the Conference on Human Rights, renewed his argument for the need to create an international tribunal to accept and judge denunciations of ethnic complaints. In his testimony before the U.S. Senate, [Christopher] spoke of 'new techniques of conflict-solving,' and heard from Democratic Senator Moynihan that the next decade will be one of ethnic conflicts. Nearly 50 nations will emerge, 'many of them through a bloodbath,' " Sarney reported.

The former Brazilian President continued: "Secretary Boutros-Ghali defends a separate and permanent military force to put an end to conflicts among states. U.S. Defense Secretary Les Aspin says that his country is studying three hypotheses: 1) a permanent force; 2) a multinational force; and 3) volunteer forces, a kind of foreign legion. There is also some thought being given to reactivating

the concept of trusteeships. All of these considerations affect three fundamental institutions of international law: sovereignty, self-determination, and the inviolability of borders."

Sarney added that *New York Times* journalist David Binder, "citing Defense Department sources, mentions those countries of the world that will demand action, among them Brazil, for problems that will emerge among the Yanomami."

As if to corroborate Sarney's charges, American Vice President Al Gore, known for his strong defense of the green lobby, has launched a new offensive. In a *Jornal do Brasil* article of June 20, Gore was quoted saying that the Clinton administration is committed to fulfilling all of the recommendations and the philosophy discussed at the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development (Eco-92), held last year in Rio de Janeiro. Gore focused on the malthusian aspects discussed at that conference: "Of the vast range of problems about which it is possible to be pessimistic, I would like to give priority to population growth. . . . Lowering population growth is in the profound interest of every government."

In view of this collection of pressures, the Brazilian Armed Forces have responded with a desperate appeal for more resources, to revive the Calha Norte project which would protect Brazil's northern border.

The comments of the newsletter *Relatorio Reservado* are suggestive in this regard:

"The concern over strengthening the Amazon borders is growing, because Armed Forces strategists are convinced that the United States Department of Defense is only awaiting a good pretext—and this could be an ethnic conflict among the Indians—to justify their international intervention in the region."