

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

Indigenous activism on the rise

International efforts by the "indigenous" movement are focused on carving Brazil up into 510 protected enclaves.

To celebrate the International Year of the Indigenous decreed by the United Nations, the leaders of Brazil's indigenous movement represented in the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are in a mobilization to force constitutional recognition of so-called Indian lands, which are in fact nothing more than enclaves within the national territory.

Although they suffered a severe blow in late May with the firing of anthropologist Sidney Possuelo from the presidency of the National Indian Foundation, the shock troops of indigenous causes have redoubled their efforts to preserve Possuelo's deranged ideas. Possuelo was placed at the head of the foundation by former President Fernando Collor de Mello, as a symbol of the NGOs' supranational apparatus.

A radical defender of the Yanomami reservation along the border with Venezuela, Possuelo also planned, before he was fired, to hand over to the few thousand forest-dwellers more than 50% of the Amazon territory of Roraima state. That proposal was shelved by the Itamar Franco government.

With Possuelo now out of the picture, prominent members of the ecologist movement such as Congressman Fabio Feldman, who has always favored the efforts of the international banks to impose a "debt-for-nature" scheme on Brazil, have begun to regroup their forces. In a "Special Information Bulletin," Feldman states that "the indigenous Brazilian community has good reason to be concerned. The government's initiatives with regard to demarcation of their lands, taxa-

tion, and other measures, are slow or clearly not taking effect at all." Feldman appealed to the NGOs to reactivate their campaign in favor of Brazil's indigenous tribes.

National and international efforts by the ecologist-indigenist activists are currently focused on pressuring for the demarcation of some 510 protected indigenous areas—a total of 89 million hectares of land!—by Oct. 5 of this year, as specified by the Constitution.

In obedience to the neo-colonial precepts of the "new world order," the Collor government had already delimited the vast Yanomami reserve along a strategically critical border area. That action has been the target of innumerable challenges by nationalist forces, especially by the Brazilian Armed Forces, for the purpose of modifying that decree.

In response, numerous indigenous leaders manipulated by the anthropologists have begun to direct international pressure against the Franco government. For example, representatives of the Amazon indigenous communities have submitted a petition in Paris asking the European nations for help in winning "respect" for their rights and that "the Brazilian government [should] delimit the territories." Paris is a coordinating center for indigenous causes, through the sponsorship of First Lady Danièle Mitterrand.

At the same time, Indian leader Paiakan has again begun to draw attention in the English-language press, the result of a criminal case against him, in which he is charged with raping a non-Indian girl. The courts have

been unable to impose the usual sentence for such a crime, because he has been protected by a special indigenous "statute."

Among other planned actions are a meeting of all Amazon Indian leaders in the Xingu Park in the first week of June. The site served as the stage for a similar event in 1988, when European ecologists such as Anita Roddick, the British owner of a chain of stores which sells products from the Amazon, issued their war cry against technological progress, and especially against the construction of hydroelectric plants in the region, under the pretext that they are "harmful to the environment."

The meeting is being coordinated by, among others, the Intertribal Committee, one of the authors of the "Karioca Declaration" issued at last year's Eco-92 summit. That declaration calls for limiting national sovereignty through the creation of indigenous "enclaves."

Another meeting, this one continental, will be held in July in the city of Bahía, sponsored by a series of entities represented by the "Continental Indigenous, Black and Popular Movement." That umbrella organization is responsible for having organized last year's "500 Years of Indigenous Resistance" movement, which carried out numerous sabotage operations against continental efforts to celebrate the quincentenary of the discovery and evangelization of America, denouncing such celebrations as merely genocide against the Indians.

Disgracefully, participating in all these anti-sovereignty and anti-Christian actions is nearly the entirety of the Brazilian Catholic Church and the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), which have fallen into the hands of the Marxist Theology of Liberation crowd and have abandoned their evangelizing mission.