Brazil Accepts Foreign Aid For Amazon Conservation

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Recently, Brazilian officials told British and West German representatives that Brasilia would work with them to curb damage to the Amazon rain forest provoked by fires. In August, Brazil accepted Italian and Canadian donations of planes to police the jungle. Next, the government agreed to a project supported by the UN and private US companies to establish a 1.1 million-acre protected forest area to produce rubber and nuts. According to AP, these actions represent a reversal in President Jose Sarney's Amazon policy. Early this year the Brazilian government rejected a proposal by the United Nations to swap foreign debt for investments in Amazon environmental protection programs. In March, after France, the Netherlands and two US congressional delegations suggested debt swaps for Amazon conservation, Sarney said, "We cannot accept this form of colonialism which they want to create here." One factor that may be influencing Sarney's policy shift is that hostility over the Amazon problem has had negative effects on Brazil's stature as foreign investment target. In an interview with AP, Sen. Leopoldo Peres, member of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) and head of a Senate committee on Amazon deforestation, said: "It started to become taboo to do business in the Amazon. American and European banks and lending organizations started hesitating on financing industrial projects in the jungle." (Basic data from AP, 09/03/89)

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