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THE  
ALLIANCE  
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THE  
PEOPLES  
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THE  
FOREST

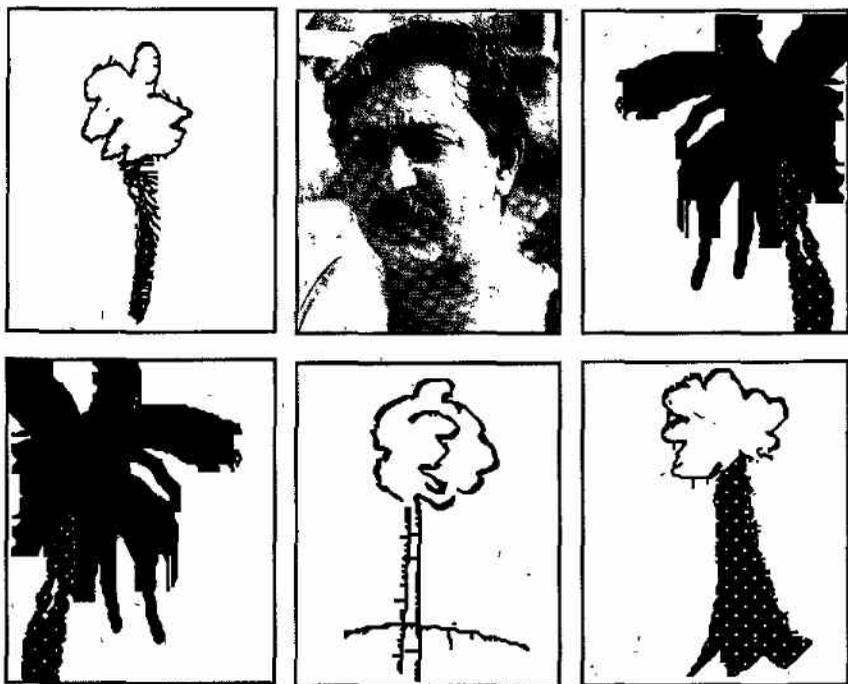
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***have lived in this place for a long time, a very long time, since the time the world did not yet have this shape. We learned with the ancients that we are a tiny part of this immense universe, fellow travellers with all the animals, the plants and the waters. We are all a part of the whole, we cannot protect or destroy our home. And now we want to talk to those who cannot yet manage to see the world in this way, to say to them that together we have to care of the boat in which we are all sailing."***

***- - Ailton Krenak  
President, Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest***

# THE SECOND MURDER OF CHICO MENDES

by Osmarino Amâncio Rodrigues



LETTERS FROM THE AMAZON # 1

## P R E F A C E

*Despite the international outpouring of indignation and mobilization in defense of the Amazon Rainforest since the murder of unionist and environmentalist leader Chico Mendes in December, 1988, the basic proposals for which Chico struggled and died - agrarian reform combined with defense of nature - continue to conflict with the interests of those who want the devastation of the Forest and the extinction of its inhabitants.*

*Those interests, represented by the right-wing organization UDR (Ruralist Democratic Union), backed by Brazil's economic and social policies, were ultimately responsible for Chico's assassination and continue claiming more victims. Osmarino Amâncio Rodrigues, Chico's successor as Secretary of the National Council of Rubber Tappers, is under death threat along with twenty-one other union leaders in Acre.*

*But the movement in defense of the Forest Peoples has not stood still. While educating Brazil to the importance of ecology, the Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest, which Chico helped create, is forging international connections to broaden its support abroad.*

*The following letter from Osmarino carries Chico's wider message to those committed to the defense of Amazonia: Deforestation in the Amazon cannot be resolved without addressing the social and economic conflicts behind the destruction of the Rainforest. It brings the world a new meaning to environmental struggle in which "the defense of nature and of social justice are inseparable."*

*New York, February 1991*

Brasília, July 1990

Friends:

Building this road has not been easy. In addition to the violence of killings and deforestation in Brazil, we have had to overcome many problems. Under the leadership of Chico Mendes we learned, little by little, to join forces, to cut down not trees but prejudices. From the union struggle, from the struggle for Agrarian Reform, we learned that the indigenous peoples are our friends. The Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest is a fact today.

But we did not stop there. We began to understand that our struggle was in the interest not only of ourselves, but of all Brazilians. And even more, of all the world. Although ecology was at first a strange word to us, it was gradually assimilated as we realized that our practice had long ago incorporated its concerns.

*Extractive Reserves are our own proposal for land reform adapted for Amazonia, and... they are inseparable from real land reform [in Brazil] as a whole.*

We knew how to move from the local union struggle to a regional level, creating the National Council of Rubber Tappers and the Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest. On the national level, we sought to consolidate our relations with the rest of the Brazilian workers through the Worker's Central Union - CUT - which was the first national organization to incorporate the proposal of Extractive Reserves on its agenda of political struggles.

Today there are still those who have not understood that the Extractive Reserves are our own proposal for land reform adapted for Amazonia, and that they are inseparable from

real land reform in Brazil as a whole. It is necessary to limit migration to Amazonia, and for this reason it is an illusion to believe that the demarcation of Extractive Reserves, without a real democratization of access to land in Brazil, can be an alternative for our region.

We say this not only from our point of view as inhabitants of Amazonia. Access to land in the rural workers own regions is justified as much from a social viewpoint as from an ecological. There they know the land, the rivers, the plants and the animals. There they develop a culture together with their relatives and neighbors. This needs to be taken into account when one discusses land reform in Brazil. And this leads us to a natural unity with the landless, with those displaced by [hydro-electric] dams. Our practice has tied us with the movements that fight for land and social justice, and these movements have also began to understand the importance of the environmental question.

*Today many people say they are environmentalists and speak of Chico Mendes without having Chico's wider vision, which did not separate the social struggle from the ecological struggle. It is as if they committed a second assassination of Chico.*

We realized that, despite advances obtained by social movements in Brazil, the authorities' disregard for our needs and demands has remained great. We began to look outside for allies, principally among the European and North American ecologists. Through them we got as far as the World Bank, where we denounced what had been done in Brazil with loans obtained in the name of environmental preservation and demarcation of indigenous lands, as was the case of BR364 highway, from Cuiabá to Porto Velho. We were able to

unmask the authorities for the world to see.

The costs of this struggle have been high. Ten years ago we lost our *companheiro* Wilson Pinheiro, the creator of the "empates" in 1976. Since then many others have fallen: Ivair Higino; Jesus Matias, Fontelles, Josimo, Chico Mendes, and recently our *companheiro* Canuto, in Pará. The name of Chico Mendes has been raised so high that it seems he did not belong to this world, where we continue to live in the same manner as he lived, suffered, struggled and died.

Today I see that ecology occupies a large space in our press but in a way that is very distant to us. I still remember Chico telling of a reporter from the *O Estado de São Paulo* newspaper who walked out of a conference because Chico spoke of land problems and of threats against his life. This was not ecology but union struggle. Since they say so often that Chico was an ecologist, why was he the first ecologist killed in Brazil?

Today many people say they are environmentalists and speak of Chico Mendes without having Chico's wider vision, which did not separate social struggle from ecological struggle. It is as if they committed a second assassination on Chico. Not long ago some environmental organizations rejected the participation of CUT in forums of debate about the environmental question. They didn't know, or didn't want to know, that CUT was the first national political organization to raise the banner of Extractive Reserves, and one in which Chico was a leader.

*We don't want to break the alliance between those who fight for social justice and those who fight for ecology. We, Rubber Tappers, have become environmentalists without ceasing to be unionists and to fight... for Agrarian reform [in Brazil].*

Chico had the great quality of being able to join things together, to overcome prejudices. We honor the commitment that Chico left us. We don't want an empty environmentalism that speaks of nature while forgetting man; that speaks of the defense of the Forest while forgetting the Peoples of the Forest. This is our contribution to the world environmental movement: defense of nature and social justice are inseparable.

We, Rubber Tappers, have become environmentalists without ceasing to be unionists, to fight for land and Agrarian Reform together with Indians and other Brazilians. We should seek international alliances while never ceasing to strengthen our local alliances here in Brazil against this unjust and devastating mode of development.

Sometimes we have neglected our internal bonds, attracted by offers of material help. But without political clarity, the dollars and the foreign help will be of no use. For example, we need to prove the viability of Extractive Reserves as a development alternative for Amazonia. But can the Extractive Reserves be an island of progress surrounded by misery and injustice on all sides?

We want to strengthen our alliance with environmentalists without losing our own characteristics as workers who want a society based on ecology, where we can live with dignity, social justice, and enjoyment of all the good that knowledge, science and technology can bring us.



## NOTES

**Extractive Reserves:** Developed by the Rubber Tapper movement as a proposal for alternative economic development and land reform in the Amazon region. The Reserves consist of Forest areas traditionally occupied by tappers and other extractivists in which the government grants "concessions of use" to workers' cooperatives or associations. The reserves would remain property of the Union avoiding the land reform pitfalls of re-sale and re-accumulation. Productivity would be enhanced by developing adequate technologies of sustainable development.

**National Council of Rubber Tappers:** A civil association of Rubber Tappers and other extractivists, formed to fight for the creation of Extractive Reserves, establish alliances with indigenous populations, and defend the legal, economic and cultural interests of extractive workers, as well as the Amazon Rainforest itself. The "Conselho" was founded in 1985 at the First National Conference of Rubber Tappers in Brasilia, with representatives from all of the Amazonian states.

**Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest:** An alliance of the Rubber Tappers and the Union of Indigenous Nations, with the objectives of forest protection, land reform, and demarcation of indigenous lands. It seeks to overcome historical enmities between the two populations, carries out collaborative projects of health care, education and cooperatives, "empates" and protests against violations of indigenous lands, and promotes alternative, sustainable development projects for the Amazon region.

**Empates:** Empates, or "stand-offs", are a strategy of non-violent resistance to deforestation developed by the Tappers' movement. Groups of 100 to 200 people, including women and children, place themselves physically in front of chain saws and bulldozers and try to convince the workers to abandon the tree-cutting.



**OSMARINO AMÂNCIO RODRIGUES**

President, Rural Workers' Union, Brasiléia, Acre  
Secretary, National Council of Rubber Tappers, Brazil

*We honor the commitment that Chico left us. We don't want an empty environmentalism that speaks of nature while forgetting man; that speaks of defense of the Forest while forgetting the Peoples of the Forest. This is our contribution to the world environmental movement: defense of nature and social justice are inseparable.*

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# TO THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH

by Davi Yanomami



LETTERS FROM THE AMAZON # 2

# P R E F A C E

*Since 1987, the Yanomami Indians, the largest, most recently contacted indigenous group in the Americas, have been dying at an average rate of two per day. As a result of a massive presence of gold prospectors in their territory, the Yanomami continue to be exposed to violence, malnutrition, mercury poisoning, malaria and AIDS, among other epidemics. The*

*Commission for the Creation of the Yanomami Park (CCPY), an independent organization founded in 1978, estimates that approximately 1,500 out of a total of 10,000 (over 15%) have died over the last three years in the Brazilian state of Roraima alone.*

*The Brazilian constitution recognizes Indian rights to the land they have traditionally occupied. However, the government has not been fulfilling its constitutional responsibilities for delimiting and protecting their areas.*

*The constitution permits mineral extraction on Indian territory in the national interest, only when determined by Congress. Although such a determination has never been made, and a judicial order requires intruders to be evacuated from the Yanomami land, more than 25,000 miners remain active and strong in the region.*

*The creation of a Yanomami park is seen as the only way to prevent the destruction of this Indian nation. Davi Yanomami feels that preserving cultural diversity is the best way to preserve the also-threatened biological diversity. He hopes that the Amazon Rainforest and the Yanomami people will not be preserved only in museums.*

*The following letter by Davi Yanomami, is addressed to all the Peoples of the Earth. Although written in 1989, it remains a strong, timely statement.*

*Davi wants to halt the genocide of his kin and work together with other peoples to create a better world for all of us.*

*New York, March 1991*

Aldeia do Demini, August, 1989

Dear Friends:

The government is not respecting us. It thinks of us as animals. We have the right to speak out. Foreign people help us, but if we ourselves don't do anything, they cannot help. If we send a letter there, they will put pressure on our government to change something.

I am thinking many things. I am Yanomami. We Yanomami used to think that the Whites were good to us. Now I am seeing that it is the last invasion of indigenous land, all land. They are taking it. Foreigners are teaching Brazilians to destroy our place.

The same thing happened over there, with our Indian brothers, in America. Now it is happening here in our land. The government shouldn't be doing this. It knows that we are the oldest Brazilians, that we are born here, that we are called Yanomami. Our name is known to the world. We know nothing about money, shoes, clothes; few Yanomami understand what is happening. The government got us by surprise. I am beginning to understand.

The government does not know our customs, our thoughts. We too do not understand the customs and thoughts of the government. All it understands is money. Our thought is the Earth. Our interest is to preserve the Earth, so as not to create sickness for all the people of Brazil, not only the Indians. The miner and the landless don't have land, that is why they occupy Indian lands. If they had their land, they wouldn't invade our area.

I also see the whites suffering in the city: hunger, everything expensive, no home, no food; everyone is suffering. They are worried, but they don't have the courage to put pressure on our chief, the president ...

The rivers, the fishes and the forest are asking for help, but the government doesn't know how to listen. It says that we will die of hunger if mining is closed off. But, if they stop mining we will plant *macacheira* (manioc), banana, *cará*, *taioba*, papaya, sugar cane, *pupunha*, and no one will die of hunger anymore. We Yanomami want our land. We do not want our customs to die. Until today, we have not lost our tongue and the Earth. That is why we fight. This government is our chief, but it is doing no good for the Brazilian people to live in peace.

We are united, all the Indians of Brazil; we don't want to fight with our kin. They are beginning to trick us, like what happened to the Macuxi and other Indians. They begin saying that priests are not good, that they don't give presents, that Davi is not good. They put brother against brother to weaken us. The other Yanomami chiefs, who have never been here, who have never had contact with whites, don't understand what is happening here. I know that they want to use me because I am better known, but I do not let them.

So they are first using the weakest - other *tuxauas* (chiefs) who don't speak Portuguese. These *tuxauas* think that miners are our friends and will always be our friends, because the miners give food, clothes; but time passes and the whites begin to say that the Indians are good for nothing, that they don't work and they then call us *urubuteri* (vultures) - those who no longer hunt, no longer fish, live off scraps, off scraps left in the white peoples' plates. They say that we no longer know how to work, to fish, only to beg... That we forgot to collect fruit in the forest, we forgot our customs, we forgot our language.

We do not want to lose this; in my community, I do not want to let miners enter, I want life to continue as before. I get very worried about our children. They will suffer much more than now. I always think about our grandchildren; they will suffer more than us, if we do not fight to save the life of the people.

The government says that the land is not ours. We cannot fish, plant *roças* (garden plots), use the lakes, rivers. It says that

we are using government land; but that land is ours. The government is not good ... We fight and fight, but it doesn't give in. That is why demarcation is so difficult, why the government doesn't want to demarcate Yanomami lands. Inside Yanomami lands, there are many things they want to exploit: there are minerals, gold, cassiterite; there is wood, and one can't plant there.

Plus, the government talks to us only in hiding, in their office; it doesn't call on us to decide, to know if Indians agree. But I'm not in this fight for nothing. No, I'm in it to defend my people, the Yanomami. And not only my people but the Wapixana, Ingariko, Makuxi, and other kin as well. We are trying to help, we can give support to those who don't know how to defend themselves, explain what is happening to those who don't understand.

We Yanomami are dying of sickness, malaria, cold, dysentery, venereal disease, measles, chicken pox, and other diseases that Indians don't know, brought from miners from the outside. Pajés (shamans, medicine men) can cure Indian illnesses, but white people's sicknesses we cannot cure.

I always ask at FUNAI (the National Foundation of the Indian), but FUNAI doesn't do anything... I received lots of news from kin who live at the start of the Catrimani River, from the Mucajaí River, and from the Parimú River, on the border of Venezuela. My kin told me that there are four empty *malocas* (huts): All are dead, children, adults and young men. In the Xideatheri, Ahuahipiktheri and Pahaiatheri everyone has died, and others continue to die for lack of care. FUNAI knows that many Yanomami are dying, but it is doing nothing. A few FUNAI people want to work, but they have no support. In other communities on the Mucajaí River, my kin are hurt by the miners; they got them used to drinking cachaça alcohol with *caxiri* (fruit), now they are sick and don't know what to do. There is also a lot of venereal disease and malaria.

On the Catrimani River and in the Rio Lobo de Almada

range, the miners are making their homes. They built airstrips, made roças and now they want to build a town. This will be very dangerous to the Yanomami. I know that if they make a village there the Yanomami will begin to fall ill.

The Opiktheri kin are being tricked by Zeca Diabo (Zeca "the Devil"), a businessman from the mines. They are trying to instigate conflict between the Indians. "Zeca Diabo will help, give clothes, teach how to work, make a roçado, plant and harvest rice, so that the Yanomami can get used to working for themselves!"

But I don't think it's good that whites teach Indians how to work. We Yanomami have known how to work for many moons, we know how to plant. A Yanomami doesn't die of hunger, only from illness; we have everything we need to survive where there are no miners. My kin are asking for food from the whites, but they only ask when the mining comes and ruins everything.

We raise animals: *anta*, *caititu*, *mutum*, *queixada*; we plant bananas, we have everything in our forest.

We don't need to be taught how to work, to adapt to the habits of whites. The white way is very complicated for us Yanomami. Our custom is better because we preserve the rivers, igarapés, lakes, mountains, the hunt, the fish, the fruits: *açaí*, *bacabá*, *castanha* (Brazil nuts), *cacao* (cocoa), *ingá*, *buriti*; what is already there, whatever Omam created. I, Davi Kopenawa Yanomami, want to preserve all this. White people have no respect for nature, they don't know what is good, they have to learn from us.

The government cut up our land, divided it into small plots. The National Forest is our land as well, and the islands (created by dividing Yanomami land) aren't good for anything, only for tricking Indians, leaving them imprisoned like pigs in a pen. We Yanomami want one continuous area for our people to live in peace, without fights with the government, the military, the miners, or with anyone; we don't want to invade other people's land. The Yanomami respect white people's land.

In the *Surucucu* mountain range they killed more Yanomami this August. FUNAI didn't take any action. The police never imprisons these criminals. We Yanomami don't like this, we are revolting against FUNAI and the government because the government doesn't want to solve our problem, the problem of the Yanomami lands.

In our land, there are many mountain ranges: Koima is the "Pico da Neblina", Hakomak is the "Peito da Moça", Watorik is the "Pico Rondon", Kuumak is the "Taraqua" range, Yapihukak is the "Serra do Lobo de Almada", Arahaiky is the "Catrimani" range, and there are many other mountain ranges. In the mountains live Xapori and Hekura, the spirits of nature. Between the mountains are the Xapori's paths, but no one sees them, only the pajé knows about these connections. The mountain ranges are sacred places, places where the first Yanomami were born, where their ashes were buried. Our elders left their spirits in these places. We Yanomami want the mountain ranges to be respected; we do not want them to be destroyed. We want these places to be preserved in order not to finish with our history and our spirits. We call on Hekura to cure our ill. We've been using them for years, they never end. Omam left these spirits to defend the Yanomami people. Omam is very important for the Yanomami Makuxi and Wapixana Indians, to all Whites and all Blacks: he gave origin to everyone, to the whole world. This is why it's very important to preserve the mountains where his spirit lives. I'd like white people to understand this ancient story, that they respect it.

We Yanomami want the Whites on the side of the Indians, so as not to let our land be invaded. We want the Whites to defend us, so as not to endanger our lives. I, Davi Kopenawa Yanomami, want to help the white people to learn with us to make a better world.

Leader of the Aldeia of Demini, in the Brazilian state of Roraima, Davi is in the Global 500 Hall of Fame of the United Nations Environmental Programme. Davi threatens to give back his Global 500, received in 1988, if the Brazilian government does not stop the invasion of gold miners, which is causing the genocide of his people.

*We Yanomami want the Whites on the side of the Indians, so as not to let our land be invaded. We want the Whites to defend us, so as not to endanger our lives. I, Davi Kopenawa Yanomami, want to help the white people to learn with us to make a better world.*

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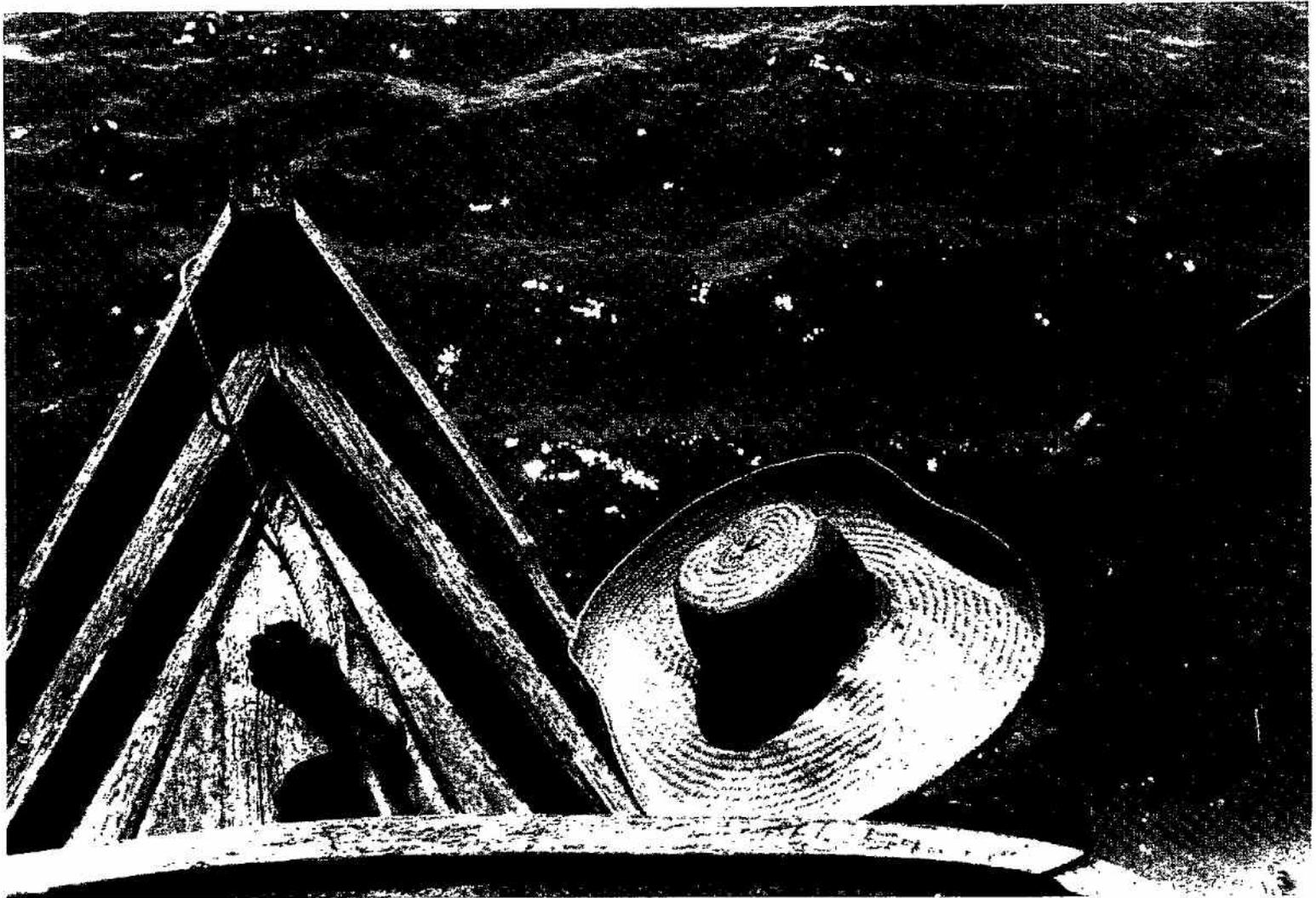
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*Cris Miranda*

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*"In the distant past men left the city to conquer the Forest. They ... destroyed the Forest and changed the face of the planet. Today the Peoples of the Forest are coming to the city to plant the Forest in the hearts of the people there. We believe that in this way we can pacify and humanize the spirit of the city, harmonize it with the spirit of the planet and of the universe."*

-- Ailton Krenak



João Roberto Ripper

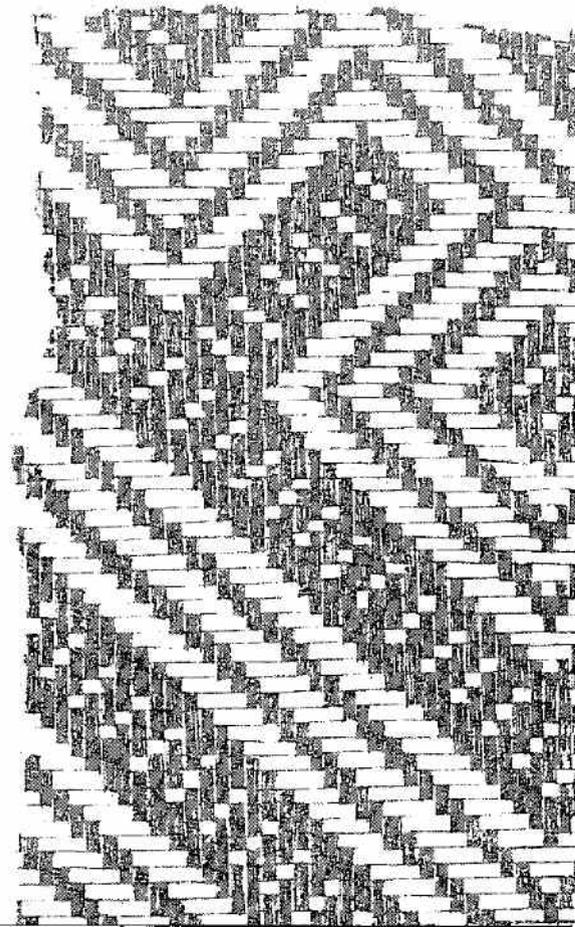
# THE ALLIANCE OF THE PEOPLES OF THE FOREST

For more than a century, Indians, rubber tappers, small farmers and river dwellers were at odds with one another in the Amazon. But in 1986, the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS) and the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI), renouncing old animosities, merged their struggles and visions for the first time, by forming an Alliance to protect the rights of the Peoples of the Forest. As Chico Mendes recalled, "People became amazed at the time, saying, 'Indians and rubber tappers together? Weren't you enemies?' And we responded, 'We understand today that our struggle is the same. We should be together today to fight to defend our Amazonia.'"

The Alliance, formally inaugurated in March, 1989, issued the Declaration of the Peoples of the Forest which states:

"The traditional populations that today mark in the sky of Amazonia the Rainbow of the Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest proclaim their intention to preserve and to remain in their region. The Alliance also extends its arms to protect and preserve this immense but fragile life system that includes our forests, lakes, rivers, and streams - source of our riches and basis of our cultures and traditions."

The Alliance seeks to demarcate and protect Indian lands, create and maintain extractive reserves, and help forest communities to participate directly in their regions' policymaking process. It runs an "Embassy of the Peoples of the Forest" in São Paulo, with a library, an art gallery, a music collection and video and photographic documentation of the Amazon's social movements and cultures.



*"I realized that I was not able to protect my home by staying in my village, in my valley, behind my mountains. I had a duty that went beyond my mountains."*

- - Ailton Krenak

Created by the Alliance, the Embassy of the Peoples of the Forest is a step towards the creation of understanding and friendship between peoples of different cultures and traditions, linking forest communities from many regions of Brazil - savannah, mountains and rivers - with the peoples of the cities. It is the Cultural Embassy of the

indigenous and extractive peoples, where the prejudices that separate people are broken down, and cultural diversity is recognized as a positive attribute. The Embassy opens possibilities of effective cooperation and exchange of ideas for those who want to fight to protect the Amazon Rainforest and its Peoples.

João Roberto Ripper



# THE EMBASSY OF THE PEOPLES OF THE FOREST

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# THE INDIAN RESEARCH CENTER



João Roberto Ripper

*"We want to show that the Peoples of the Forest have wisdom. We have a good spirit with universal knowledge of how to leave in peace, balance, and harmony."*

- - Ailton Krenak

The Union of Indigenous Nations has recently established a Center for Indian Research and Training on Resource Management, devoted to the preservation of Indian knowledge and its application to preserve the remaining forests in Brazil through the use of sustainable practices. The Center is incorporating some western technology and methods that have been denied to the Indians, but in a selective way as not to compromise traditional systems.

Located in Goiânia, Goiás, the Center includes:

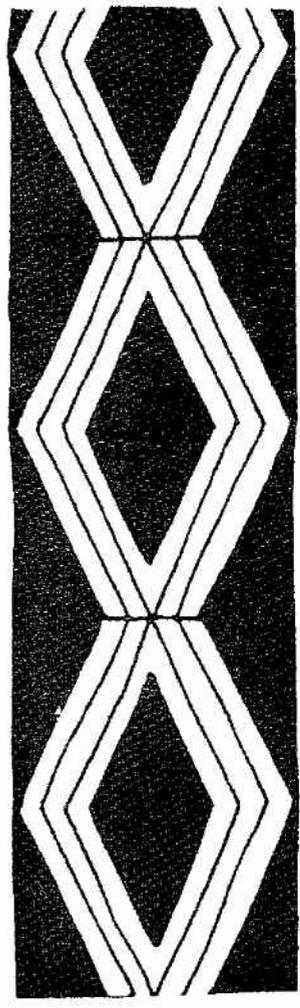
Δ An integrated project on forest management and sustainable agriculture to grow native fruits and perennial crops and sell them to domestic and international markets; to replenish endangered species populations; and to raise and market traditional livestock.

Δ An inventory of natural resources in Indian reserves to determine the products available for sustainable use and to identify denuded areas in need of regeneration.

Δ Centers for food processing and distribution of native oils and fruits for local, national and international markets.

Δ Pilot development projects established in Indian communities and based on the Center's model, but adapted to and controlled by, each community. Pilot projects are now underway in the Xavante and Suruí areas.

Δ Training Indians to run the Center and its projects. Students from eight Indian tribes, based at the Center for limited periods, are now attending especially designed biology and law programs established by the Center's consultants in cooperation with the Catholic University of Goiás.



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"We respect nature. We know that our Forest protects the river, the moon, the stars, and is the home of the wind and singing birds. Nature provides for the Indians and the white people, too, so that we can all live well. Nature will provide for the next generations. White people do not understand this and are taking away the life of the future".

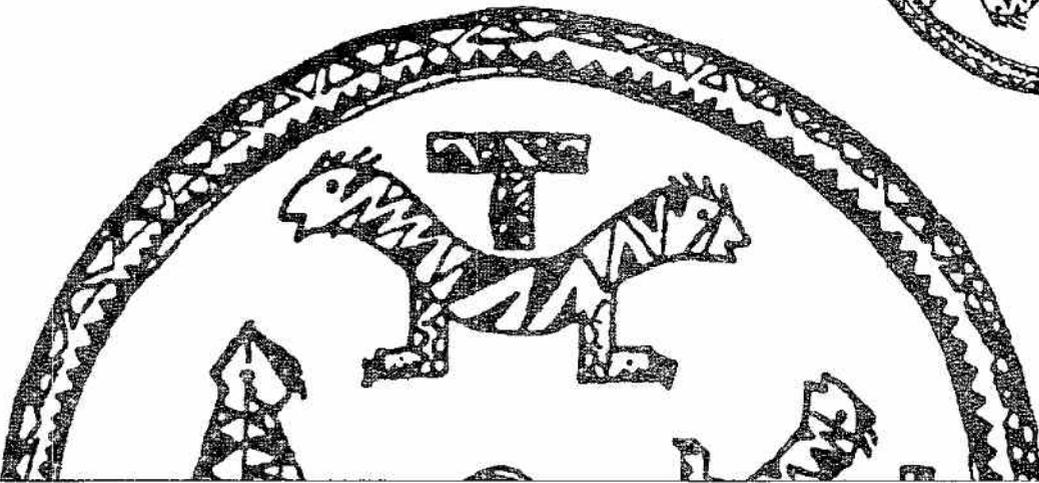
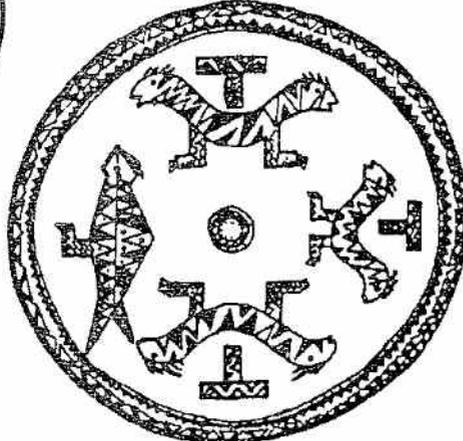
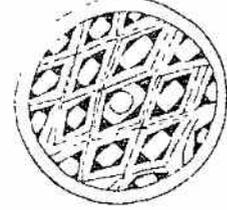
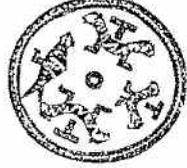
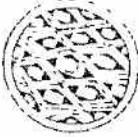
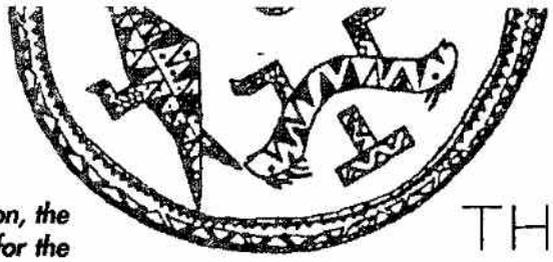
-- Davi Yanomami  
Leader of the Yanomami Aldeia of Demini

The Union of the Indigenous Nations (UNI) was formed in 1980 by leaders of Brazil's imperiled Indian cultures. As the only independent, national Indian organization in Brazil, UNI's goals are to guarantee the Indian rights to their traditional territories, to protect these lands against destruction, and to research and promote sustainable uses of natural resources.

When Europeans first landed in what is now Brazil, five centuries ago, the land was home to hundreds of Indian nations, each with a distinct culture, thousands of years old. From a peak of some five million, the Indian population has plummeted to 200,000 under the continuous assault of imported diseases and violence. Most of the remaining nations live in the Amazon Rainforest

Throughout the 1980's, UNI worked to create the means for achieving autonomy by building alliances and common strategies with most of Brazil's 180 Indian cultures. It has become an influential voice in the capital, Brasília, where it helped draft the Indian Rights section of Brazil's new constitution. UNI's weekly radio program, *Programa de Índio*, broadcasts information about Indian communities to the rest of Brazil, which is then carried on audio cassettes to isolated Indian Nations. UNI publishes an occasional newsletter, *Jornal Indígena*.

THE  
UNION  
OF  
INDIGENOUS  
NATIONS

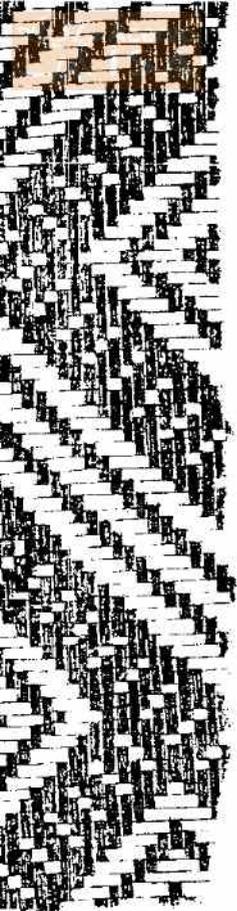


UNI  
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DAS NAÇÕES  
INDÍGENAS

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Andrew Revkin

# THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RUBBER TAPPERS

*"At first, the people talking about ecology were only defending the fishes, the animals, the Forest, and the river. They didn't realize that human beings were in the forest - and that these humans were the real ecologists, because they couldn't live without the Forest and the Forest couldn't be saved without them."*

*-- Osmarino Amâncio Rodrigues  
Secretary - General, National Council of Rubber Tappers*

Created in 1985, at the First National Conference of Rubber Tappers, the Council is dedicated to improving the economic and social conditions for the tens of thousands of tappers who still live and work deep in the Amazon Rainforest. A key goal is to shift government policies away from its support for cattle ranching and other destructive development schemes - toward support for sustainable uses of the living Rainforest.

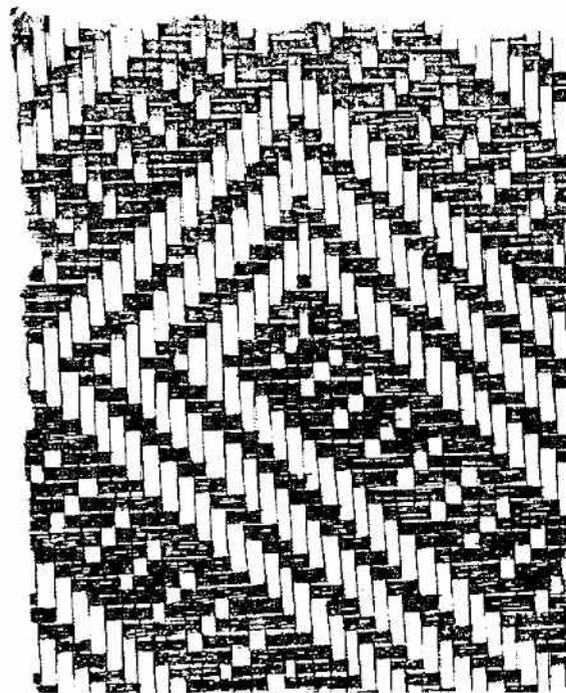
The Council is fighting to end the kind of violence against humans and nature that has devastated large portions of the Rainforest and resulted in the deaths of Chico Mendes and hundreds of other rural leaders in Brazil.

The tappers' first strategy to prevent deforestation was the *empate* or "stand-off", a form of non-violent resistance, in which hundreds of men, women and children place themselves physically in front of chain-saws and bulldozers to

convince hired workers to abandon the tree-cutting.

The Council developed the concept of Extractive Reserves, a non-destructive alternative for economic development and land reform in the Amazon, consisting of forest areas traditionally occupied by tappers and extractivists, in which the government grants "concessions of use" to worker organizations. The land remains property of the state, thus avoiding the land reform pitfalls of re-sale and re-accumulation. The harvest of products such as latex, Brazil nuts and medicinal plants is to be enhanced through the development of sustainable technologies.

The Council is also pressing the government for long-overdue help with health care and education in the Forest, as well as seeking funding for economic research on extractive reserves and the marketing of forest products, and scientific research to increase the forest harvest without harming its ecosystems.



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**"At first I thought I was fighting to save the rubber trees, then I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon Rainforest. Now I realize I am fighting for humanity."**

**-- Chico Mendes**

At the age of nine, Chico Mendes first followed his father into the Rainforest to learn the rubber tappers' art. He learned how to scar the bark of each rubber tree and collect the milky latex. He harvested Brazil nuts, fruits, and medicinal plants. But Chico learned to take from the Forest only what he needed - - never so much that the harvest would imperil even a single tree.

When the Forest around him began to fall before the chain-saws of cattlemen and land speculators, Chico organized resistance. He and other tappers refined the empate, a tactic in which tappers ordered the cutting crews to leave the Forest. He helped create the first rural unions and forest schools in the western Amazon. He pressed for the establishment of extractive reserves - - tracts of forest set aside only for sustainable use. He helped create the first alliance of rubber tappers and Indians. Finally he became a national, and then an international, spokesman for the Peoples of the Rainforest. He met with American senators and powerful bankers, urging them to cut off loans that were paying for the paving of roads leading into the Forest.

He got results. The empates forced several wealthy ranchers to leave the Amazon. In 1988, the development banks suspended loans and Brazil agreed to change policies that, in just 10 years, had destroyed an area of Rainforest twice the size of California. That year, the first extractive reserves were created.

Perhaps Chico was too successful. There was a string of death threats and assassination attempts. He finally ran out of luck at 6:30 pm on December 22, 1988, when he was hit in the chest by a

shotgun blast.

Because of alliances he'd made, Chico Mendes did not fall down silently, as had the victims of hundreds of similar murders. He became front-page news around the world and drew all our attention to the plight of the Amazon and its Peoples.

In the two and a half years since the killing, much has changed in the Amazon. The Brazilian government has cancelled incentives for deforestation. New extractive reserves have been created. Road projects now include plans for preserving the environment. And a little bit of justice has come to the frontier. Chico's killers, a rancher and his son, were convicted and sentenced to 19 years in prison.

Unfortunately, much in the Amazon remains the same. Evidence links other ranchers and officials to the Mendes murder, but the case is considered closed. More than 1,000 other killings of union leaders, Indians, lawyers, priests, and other activists are yet to be investigated.

And the violence continues. On February 2, 1991, just two months after the trial of Chico's killers, Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, a union leader in the state of Pará, was shot dead. In March, his successor, Carlos Cabral, was shot in the thigh. On March 8 and 9, two more union leaders were attacked. José Alves de Souza was shot three times but survived. Sebastião Ribeiro da Silva died where he fell, on the floor of his home.

**By Andrew Revkin, author of *The Burning Season: The Murder of Chico Mendes and the Fight for the Amazon Rain Forest***

A  
TRIBUTE  
TO  
CHICO  
MENDES



Miranda Smith Productions

*I heard the echo of my voice in the forest. It doesn't just repeat itself; the sound follows the river. Before, I was afraid people didn't believe what I had to tell. Now I'm no longer afraid. When you lean against the riverbank, watching canoes go upstream - you discover Brazil, discover yourself... everything. Txai is half of me living within you; half of you existing within myself. Txai is more than brotherhood, more than friendship. Now it is the time to tell others.*

*Milton Nascimento  
Brazilian Composer and Singer*

TXAI



MILTON  
NASCIMENTO

"Txai" marks the meeting of Milton Nascimento with the Peoples of the Forest. This encounter came slowly.

Milton spoke to Indians and rubber tappers who were travelling through São Paulo, Brasília and Rio.

Nights spent on the beaches, in the homes of river people, learning the latest news in an everyday life marked by the abundance of the cultivated wetlands and plentiful rivers and the happiness of the Kampa families enjoying the sun in their tapiris along the riverbanks, drinking caissuma, weaving their cotton cusmas and singing their songs. The pink dolphins playing in the morning mist of the tepid waters.

Milton spoke little but observed everything with great attention. He discovered the meaning of the word "txai". He received fish and fruit as presents from the river people, fitting gifts for a "famous singer" announced over Radio Floresta but not always recognized by name. He took advantage of this semi-anonymity to sing songs by other songwriters, always accompanied by improvised groups with the participation of local musicians.

This record is the result of Milton's first encounter with the Indians, rubber tappers and river people at the moment of the first meetings of the Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest.

***This Press Kit is being offered by Amazon Week II to the Peoples of the Amazon Rainforest,  
on the occasion of the visit of their leaders to the United States in April, 1991.***

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