

REPORT FOR  
THE SOUTH AND MESO-AMERICAN INDIAN INFORMATION CENTER

UNI-UNION OF INDIAN NATIONS  
IN THE BRAZILIAN INDIAN MOVEMENT

Maria Amalia Souza

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INTRODUCTION

I arrived in Brazil with the intention of learning how the Union of Indian Nations (UNI) was representative of the national Indian movement and how it related to the other participants of this movement: tribal councils, regional Indian councils and support groups both in Brazil and abroad. The focus of my study was to identify the types of international participation that have occurred in the past and areas for its development in the future. I discussed these issues, either in the form of interviews or informal conversations, with approximately fifty individuals, ranging from Indian leaders, anthropologists, members of Indian support groups, missionaries, researchers, development agency representatives, local health workers (Indian and non-Indians), doctors, priests, lawyers and local and international environmentalists.

Starting from the premise that the only people entitled to 'decide' the future of the Indian movement are the Indians themselves, I began to question the involvement of non-Indians in this process. That interest grew when I noticed most Indian leadership meetings were clearly closed to non-Indians. That happened, for example, at the meeting of UNI leaders in Sao Paulo (Mar. 1987), at the annual meeting of Indian Chiefs' Council of the Federal Territory of Roraima (Feb. 1987), and at the UNI assembly in Acre (Apr. 1987). "White people's interference divided our people in Roraima; one religion says 'pray on Sundays,' the other says 'pray on Wednesdays,' another, 'don't

eat pork'and so on. We should be left with our own religion. Our people now, who believe in these different things, can't agree with each other," says a Macuxi Indian leader. He continues, "and then these people saying they are researchers ask us all these questions that will help us, but they leave, and we never hear from them again." (interview 2/87)

Developing a sense for the dynamics of the Indian movement in Brazil became very important as I was forced to make choices about how I should relate to it and in what ways my participation could be helpful. I tried to observe the basic principles of development theory that emphasizes that the discriminated, the oppressed are the ones who know the solutions for their own problems. Therefore, by working directly with the national coordination of Indian leaders, I was in a better position to understand their methods of work and the answers they offered. I spent most of my time in Sao Paulo, at the headquarters of the Union of Indian Nations, where I was put in contact with Indian leaders throughout the country.

The few problems I encountered were mainly related to my concern about how to collect the information and how to present myself. My interviews were related to how international organizations have supported and could support programs for Indians, ranging from health care projects to agriculture and local organizing. Often the interviewees were skeptical about revealing any international connections they may have had and did not show much

interest in pursuing them. Although lack of information about the resources available can partially explain the lack of interest, it is clearly the present political situation in Brazil that accounts for the uneasiness in talking about that kind of support, and for my concern in dealing with this topic.

The country is facing highly turbulent political times. Because of the growing pressures from the local and international organizations on issues of human rights (largely focused on Indian issues and the landless), the Brazilian government is increasingly sensitive to financial support for grassroots organizing. International support is even more unwelcome. A recent government decree puts all Indian areas in the Amazon under the control of the National Security Council (see Appendix 1). Researchers, missionaries and support organizations were prohibited access to the areas under charge of threatening the national security. They have been accused of maintaining subversive international ties that have a scheme to internationalize control over the Amazon region. In the second semester of 1988, the Brazilian government started a legal case against an American anthropologist and two Kayapo Indians for visiting the United States and speaking to World Bank representatives against a planned hydroelectric dam that will flood the Indians' lands.

Consequently, I focused my study on collecting information about community level health, economic, agricultural and educational

programs that are being proposed by UNI regional leaders and other tribal leaders. I also tried to give an updated idea of the present situation of UNI and its regional offices to evidence the difficulty of carrying on their work and the areas where support could be appropriate. A collection of slides show some of the projects being implemented, such as the establishment of regional offices and their joint work with communities to identify economic development possibilities.

The following report is mainly a description of UNI's present work and situation, main struggles and goals. The recommendations to SAIIC derive from a consensus of interviews and conversations about the role of international organizations in the Brazilian Indian movement and their established priorities.

A general list of interviews is provided although most names are omitted in respect to their difficult struggle and already extremely vulnerable position. A brief list of the most used acronyms is also included.

157 - Acesso  
ISA

I. UNI - UNION OF INDIAN NATIONS  
An Indian Organization

Founded in 1980, the Union of Indian Nations has a history of building alliances with Indian communities throughout Brazil. Its main concern has been to secure Indian peoples' traditional and basic rights. UNI has established contacts in most of the 180 Indian Nations in Brazil (approximately 220,000 people) and is often used as mediator in negotiations with the government. It also provides the different Indian areas and communities with information about legal matters that pertain to the preservation of their territories, cultures and traditions.

UNI is the only independent, national level, Indian organization to be established in Brazil. It has emerged as a result of the Indians recognizing their necessity to deal with the non-Indian society through the latter's own methods and channels.

Although Indian communities and nations have a strong internal organization, each of them has different levels and types of relationship with the national society. For this reason, UNI acts as an ally, being used as a resource for problem solving in each specific situation as requested by the communities. UNI is constantly working toward bringing the Indian Nations in Brazil in contact with each other. It fosters communication and provides a forum for different Indian groups to share experiences and confront together the problems that are common to all ethnic minorities in Brazil.

UNI sees the demarcation of all Indian territories and the development of the communities' own self-sustaining economic projects as top priorities. Only when these priorities are met can Indian communities hope to end control by outside influences.

Although UNI's leaders seem to agree that each Indian community must eventually understand Brazil's political situation and how it affects them, UNI is dealing with an extreme diverse group. Each Indian community has a distinct set of traditions and cultures through which it understands UNI. Therefore, different Indian communities use UNI's services according to what they perceive a national Indian organization should stand for. Asking an Indian nation if it is a member of UNI may have no meaning to them whatsoever. The concept of membership does not exist among Indian nations -- only that of alliance.

Thus, UNI has been asked for guidance in many different situations. In the case of a massacre in the Tikuna area (late March, 1988) UNI's Acre and Southern Amazonas office mobilized the national coordination to accompany the Tikuna leaders to Brasilia and to orient them, along with professional assistance, as to the appropriate legal procedures to follow. A Surui Indian leader has approached UNI to consult about whether to sell part of their wood to buy medicine and a child's hearing aid or if an alternative could be found, since the government Indian agency was not supplying the area with adequate health assistance. A

Kayapo Indian leader, recently invited to speak before international environmentalists, brought back suggestions and questions about the Indian peoples' management of endangered ecosystems to be followed up by UNI.

Yanomami people in northern Roraima/Amazonas know the effects of being invaded by 40,000 gold prospectors, but may not have any concept of what a timber company is and how it affects the Surui people's land in Rondonia. A community may not know what a hydroelectric dam is until it is completed and inundates their sacred lands. Most of all, an isolated community may not know that the problems they are facing are also threatening other Indian and non-Indian peoples' territories. This may cause many to feel powerless to struggle against outside forces. Acting in the five major Indian regions in Brazil, UNI is working to bring Indian communities together to discuss their common problems and possible solutions.

#### UNI'S HISTORY

The Union of Indian Nations was founded in 1980 by a group of Indian students in Brasilia who saw the necessity to unite Indian leaderships and discuss the problems related to the Brazilian national policies regarding Indians. It was also necessary to take the lead in promoting the demarcation of all Indian territories, which the government Indian agency has failed to do.

Most of all, there was a need to develop common strategies and create the means for Indian communities to achieve their autonomy and self-determination.

UNI has promoted and/or participated in several national and regional Indian assemblies, drawing the participation of approximately 120 of the 180 Indian nations. UNI has local contacts that link the national movement to the areas and identify issues that need to be dealt with on a national level.

Since 1986, UNI has been working toward establishing five regional offices in addition the national headquarters in Sao Paulo which directly assists the southern region of Brazil. Offices should be implemented in: Rio Branco, responsible for the state of Acre and Southern part of Amazonas state, Boa Vista covering the Federal Territory of Roraima, Manaus for Northern Amazonas, Aracaju for the Northeast region, and Goiania for the Central Western region. Depending on the level of local and regional organization, some areas have participated in this process more than others. Nonetheless, in all areas there have been important advances in organizational levels in response to the growing problems that are directly threatening not only their means of livelihood, but their very survival as culturally diverse societies.

The official Indian policy in Brazil has always been one of acculturation and forceful integration into the mainstream society, ultimately denying the Indians the maintainance of their

own identity. Therefore, the work for the protection of Indian peoples' rights and cultural preservation in Brazil has taken many forms. Intellectuals and some sectors of the church have had a recognizable role, both in bringing the knowledge about Indian ways to the non-Indian society, and carrying some information about Brazilian society's structure to the Indians. (For more indepth information see Appendix 2)

However, the different Indian Nations in Brazil have frequently resisted all types of impositions and confrontations with the Brazilian society. During the last decade, the Indians themselves have been taking a position in the forefront of this movement. Today, Brazilian Indian leaders are negotiating directly with government officials, and even with international institutions.

Considering the many barriers still to be overcome in this process for Indian self-determination, UNI expresses its hopes through promoting ideas and projects that will allow Indian communities to be more independent from, and less vulnerable to, western values, institutions and control.

## HEALTH AND EDUCATION issues

Indian health, as well as education, are a responsibility of the National Indian Foundation-FUNAI, the Brazilian government's Indian agency. However, UNI has been monitoring its performance and acting as the Indian voice in demanding that these rights be observed.

## UNI's WORK ON THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

UNI-Acre and Southern Amazonas helped to establish the state's Indian Education program. Young Indians are being trained as tutors to teach elementary, junior and senior high school levels in their own communities. The teaching is done bilingually and the students participate in the production of didactic materials and curriculum that are more appropriate to their own reality than the standard national curriculum.

UNI's coordinators have also participated in discussions and debates about the nature and future of Indian education in Brazil. Working groups are assessing the educational methods being developed in Indian areas by different agencies (missionaries, volunteer organizations and the State) in order to evaluate and coordinate these efforts.

UNI has proposed a program of scholarships for the training of Indians students in higher education similar to that offered to foreign students, provided that not only their languages are different, but also their cultures and social structures.

Because traditional Indian education is very tightly connected to community life and sacred rituals and ceremonies, a special characteristic of this program includes tribal elders selecting the youth who should attend school and providing continuous monitoring of this process. Their support will ensure that the youngsters will not lose their cultural ties and will use the western education to the benefit their own people.

#### UNI'S WORK ON THE FIELD OF HEALTH

UNI's national health coordinator has been attending most conferences and debates about Indian health care and has been helping to train Indians as health monitors to serve their own areas. A pilot project has been developed in Acre and another in Sao Paulo.

A working group formed by doctors and dentists is discussing with UNI a strategy to improve Indian health in the state of Sao Paulo.

#### UNI'S WORK ON THE FIELD OF LEGAL ISSUES

One of UNI's priorities is the monitoring of every legal case that involves Indian rights. UNI is developing a legal department in conjunction with support organizations such as Pro-Indian Commission-CPI and the Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information-CEDI and is growing more involved in legal matters.

UNI has been assisted by a number of lawyers, anthropologists and other professionals in a national campaign for the demarcation of Indian territories. This process, as a constitutional right, should have been completed by 1975. However, the growing economic interest in these territories has provoked this delay and left the Indian peoples vulnerable to confrontations with gold prospectors, mining corporations, timber companies, peasants, farmers, cattle ranchers and even military occupation and hydroelectric dam projects.

In 1987, coordinating with the Brazilian Anthropologists Association, the Brazilian Confederation of Geologists, the Indian Missionary Council and other supporters of the Indian cause, UNI launched a campaign to revoke permits to explore and exploit minerals in Indian land. This work is accompanied by a campaign for the revision of Indian rights in the new constitution.

The constitutional campaign, after more than one year of struggle and joint efforts of Indians, supporting deputies, senators, lawyers, anthropologists and supporters, can finally be considered a success. This success must be mainly credited to the hundreds of Indians who, throughout the year, lobbied in the Brazilian congress for their rights.

## UNI'S WORK OF THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

UNI has been consistently approached by international environmental organizations to speak on the Indians' strategies for the protection of threatened ecosystems such as the Amazon forest. Normally, in studies about ecosystems conservation, the Indian's management methods are cited as examples of sustainable use of natural resources.

UNI's struggle to protect Indian lands derives from the knowledge that the disruption of nature's harmony can only bring devastation. Given the fact that the major devastation of the world's ecosystems is due to economic interests in natural resources, it has become clear to them that the international economic system does not see the spiritual earth, only the profitable land. Therefore, UNI is working towards identifying sustainable economic activities that can be carried out by Indian communities. They will, therefore, be able to participate directly in the national and international economic system without destroying the forests, other ecosystems or their traditional ways of life.

UNI is supporting the Xavante people in the development of the Jaburu Project. The project intends to recuperate the local wildlife threatened with extinction by breeding them in captivity and reintroducing them into the wild. This will also provide them with a main protein source. This project, that includes technical assistance by the University of Goias and Embrapa -

Brazilian Agriculture Research Incorporation, will also identify local perennial plants and fruits that can be cultivated and commercialized.

Another project modeled after the Jaburu Project is being considered for Rondonia's Surui people and the Tikuna tribe near Solimoes River and has raised the interests of Kayapo leaders as well.

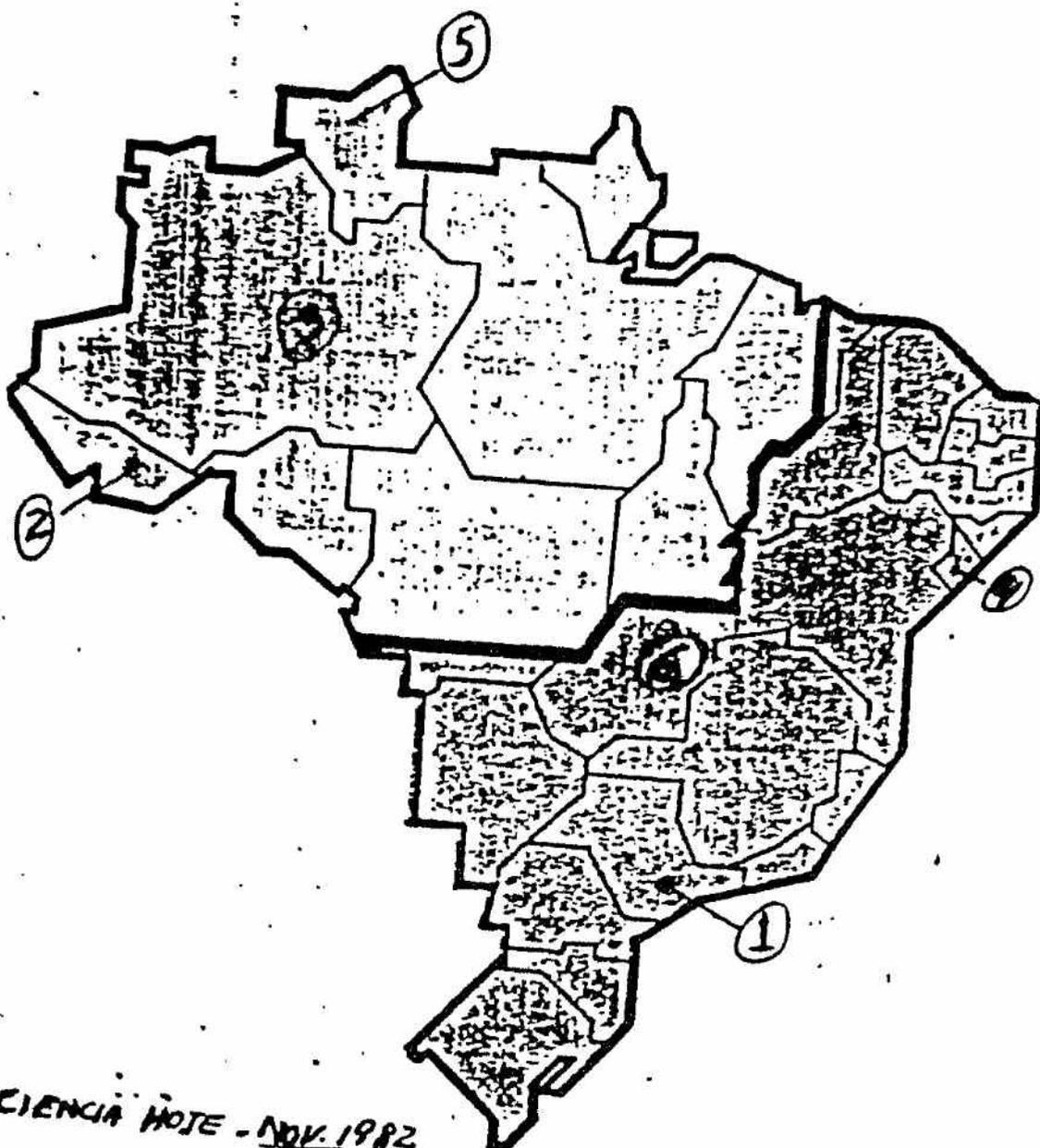
The most recent development of UNI in the area of sustainable management of Indian lands' natural resources is the creation of the Indian Research Center for Resource Management. It has been done in affiliation with the Catholic University of Goias and will use professional assistance to train Indians to develop sustainable economic options for their own areas. For example, identifying local animals in danger of extinction that can be raised in captivity and local fruits that can become marketable crops.

UNI-Amazonas has plans to visit the state's Indian communities to identify interest in similar projects as well as on commercialization of perennial crops and crafts produced with local resources.

A GUARANI communities are interested in forming herbal gardens. UNI-Acre and Southern Amazonas is working with the National Council of Rubber Tappers in the creation of extractive reserves

for rubber, nuts and fruits that will protect the means of livelihood of most of the state's population while assuring the preservation of the forest. (see Appendix 3)

Besides these activities, UNI supports all efforts that identify alternatives for the destruction of the natural environment, while determining sustainable methods for the use of natural resources.



CIENCIA HOJE - NOV. 1982

1. UNI - National Headquarters - Sao Paulo, São Paulo
2. UNI - Acre and Southern Amazonas - Rio Branco, Acre
3. UNI - Amazonas - Manaus, Amazonas
4. UNI - Northeast - Aracaju, Sergipe
5. Boa Vista, Territorio Federal de Roraima
6. Goiania, Goias

## II. UNI / OFFICES

### A. UNI - National Headquarters

Location - Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo

National Coordinator - Ailton Alves Lacerda, Krenak Indian from Espirito Santo.

UNI's national headquarter functions in two small rooms made available by the Institute Sedes Sapientiae in Sao Paulo since 1983. It operates with minimum necessary office equipment borrowed from the institution and has no secure and permanent financial support at the moment. UNI's office now operates with temporary funds provided for their radio program.

Its staff consists of a coordinator (with no salary), a communications coordinator/producer of the radio program, and a part time secretary. A studio technician for the radio comes once or twice a week. UNI relies, every so often, on the help of volunteers, however, not on a continuous basis.

The role of the national office in maintaining the cohesion of the National Indian Movement has been unquestionable and crucial. With a minimal amount of resources it has managed to insure that the Indian movement and Indian representatives are included in every discussion concerning Indians, locally or nationally.

The office is constantly being contacted by regional leaders (calling collect) for consultation of all types of matters. It also receives ongoing visits of leaders that come to Sao Paulo. Although most the coordination for the work of UNI described in Part I is directly monitored by the national headquarters, the following projects are based at this office.

#### UNI/ NUCLEO DE CULTURA INDIGENA

The Union of Indian Nations is registered officially as the Nucleus of Indian Culture (Nucleo de Cultura Indigena) as the Brazilian government refused to accept the name "nations" in the official title because it does not recognize the existance of other "nations" within Brazil. Nonetheless UNI is still best known by its unofficial name and makes use of the Nucleus to coordinate cultural affairs. This Cultural Nucleus of UNI is responsible for communications and educational projects as:

**Program de India** - a half hour radio program aired twice a week by the University of Sao Paulo radio station and a growing number of stations throughout the country such as Radio Universidade de Santa Maria, Radio Caiuas (Dourados, MS), Radio Universidade EFEI (Itajuba, MG), etc. Copies of the programs are also sent to numerous Indian communities (presently about 600) to provide an update of the national Indian movement as well as information about specific issues and areas. The program consists of updates, interviews and messages sent directly from the areas to the national movement.

The Main production studio is located in the headquarters' building. However, much of the material --i.e. interviews, songs, reports, etc.-- is gathered in the villages. Access to equipment such as portable recorders, batteries, and technical maintenance is a major problem. Presently UNI is developing training programs for village leaders to gain skills in local operation of radio equipment, carrying on interviews, special reports and so on.

Another proposal is to train technicians to produce local programs in the region's own languages. The first two groups being considered are the Ticuna in the Solimoes river, with a population of 20,000 and the Guarani people of Mato Grosso.

Jornal Indigena is a publication from Indians to Indians intended to be published bimonthly. It has been momentarily discontinued (except for sporadic editions) due to lack of funds.

## B. UNI - REGIONAL OFFICES

In 1985, UNI started efforts to establish five regional offices with coordinators who were natives from the specific areas. In 1986, with partial support from Oxfam UK, three offices were initiated: UNI-Acre and Southern Amazonas, UNI-Amazonas, and UNI-Northeast. Regional offices were also planned for the Federal Territory of Roraima and the state of Goias although they were never fully established due to local difficulties. Nonetheless, these areas have local leaders in permanent contact with the national headquarters many times acting as UNI's representatives.

Today, the situation of these regional representations is still fragile. Since the implementation funds were used up by early 1987, the national coordination has been able to assist the regional offices in raising only sporadic funds to pay rents, one telephone line (Regional Northeast), and a minimum salary (not always available) to the coordinators. Despite lack of funding these leaders have continued to dedicate full time to maintaining communication with local leaders, assisting in solving local problems with FUNAI, farmers, miners, gold prospectors, and health and legal related issues, while being the main connection of the national movement in those regions.

Each region has its particular problems and strategies. The following is an attempt to describe their current work, accomplishments and some future plans.

UNI - Amazonas

Location: Manaus, Amazonas

Coordinator: Manuel Fernandes Moura - Tukano Indian from the Tikié River

Current Situation

The office of the UNI-Regional Amazonas was established in 1986 under the coordination of Alvaro Sampaio, a Tukano Indian from Upper Rio Negro, who resigned from this position in April of 1987.

Since then, Moura has taken over the office so that UNI would still be represented in the area. The local chapter of CIMI-Indigenist Missionary Council, however, has questioned the new coordinator's legitimacy to be UNI's representative. CIMI's office in Amazonas has taken the position that if Moura was not chosen in an Indian assembly by other leaders, he cannot be UNI's representative. Although CIMI provides some support for other Indian leaders to organize on behalf of their areas, their support for Moura's work is limited as some of CIMI's staff agree that their organization should not "legitimize such an official position for him with its support."

This vision, however, conflicts with that of the other representatives of UNI. Moura has been the main contact of UNI in this area along with Orlando Melgueiros, the president of the FOIRN-Federation of Indian Organizations of the Rio Negro. He

keeps himself informed and updated on the Indian issues that take place throughout the state, despite his working environment being precarious. Moura and his family have been living in the apartment/office that was set up by the previous regional representative. According to him, they often host community leaders that come to Manaus to do business for their tribes, to seek health treatment, or seek solutions for local problems.

Moura has collected a sizeable amount of documents and copies of articles denouncing all types of abuses against Indian rights and well being that he made public through the local media. They have been stacked on four three-foot tall piles by his bedside (a mattress on the floor of an empty room). He has no filing cabinets, no desk, no typewriter, no telephone, no refrigerator or any other furniture except for a kitchen table, four chairs, a stove and a TV. He also has no transportation, living in a distant area of a low income neighborhood of Manaus.

After a few hours of interviewing him it is clear that Moura has a political mind. He has been involved in Indian organizing for many years, having worked directly with other tribes such as the Waimiri-Atroari. He also participated in the formation of local organizations as the Association of Indian Communities from the Waupes and Tikié Rivers. Since 1985 he has participated actively in the national movement by attending local, regional and national assemblies such as the national Leadership Training course in Itacoatiara (7/86) sponsored by CIMI; Indian Leaders'

Assembly of Rio Negro (3 & 9/86); National Indian Assembly sponsored by CIMI (7/87); and several planning meetings of UNI's national coordination.

Main Focus of Political Work

The State of Amazonas, with a territory of approximately 1,600,000 square kilometers, includes 144 Indian areas. Only seven have been demarcated. With the implementation of the Calha Norte Project (Appendix 1) by the National Security Council, these territories will become 'Indian colonies.' These colonies will immensely decrease Indian territories original size, encouraging more open contact with the national society, and therefore exposing the Indian population to higher threat of extinction.

The struggle to contact Indian leaders in the more remote areas before these measures are fully implemented, has become the priority of UNI. However, their lack of technical and financial resources makes it almost impossible for them to act fast enough.

The influences on Indian leaders are many. Often they see the need to compromise in order not to lose everything. There has been great controversy over the creation of a colony area (see "Colonias Indigenas" in Appendix 4) in Pari-Cachoeira. Several individuals have referred to the idea that seven Indian leaders may have been co-opted by the Paranapanema Mining Corporation to support the creation of the colony. They were flown to the

country's capital, Brasilia, to show their support so that FUNAI and the company could claim that their offer is being beneficial to all the Indians.

Many local leaders speak against this plan and are accepting the challenge of raising consciousness about this issue. Their main worry, besides the limitation of original territories, is the effect that these colonies may have on the more remote tribes such as the Maku and the Yanomami. Signs of disruption such as epidemics among the Yanomamicans can already be seen.

#### Accomplishments

During the second Indian Leadership Assembly for Upper Rio Negro, UNI-Regional Amazonas supported the creation of FOIRN - Federacao das Organizacoes Indigenas do Rio Negro (Federation of the Indian Organizations of Rio Negro). Through the collaboration of the coordinators of both organizations this federation was officially registered on Dec. 30, 1987 as a public service organization. FOIRN and UNI work closely to maintain contact with local organizations and community leaders. The larger communities along the rivers Tikie, Waupes, Icana and Negro have already been contacted. Some organizations working with FOIRN are: Associacao de Professores de Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira (Teachers Association of Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira), Sociedade das Comunidades Indigenas dos Rios Tikie/Waupes (Association of the Indian Communities of the Tikie/Waupes Rivers), LIDI-Liderancas Indigenas do Iauarete (Indian Leaderships of the Iauarete River), SIRI-Sociedade

Indigena do Rio Icana (Indian Association of the Icana River), and Sociedade das Mulheres do Alto Rio Negro (Women's Association of Upper Rio Negro).

Representing UNI-Amazonas, Manuel Moura has participated in the campaign "Indios na Constituinte," (Indians in the Constituent Assembly), VIII National Conference of Indian Health (11/86) and debates on Indian education sponsored by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture (7/87).

The main focus of UNI-Regional Amazonas has been to assist Indian delegations that visit Manaus and to increase their access to the local media. These delegations come to the city in many cases to denounce abuses and violence against their communities.

#### Future Plans

Due to the great distances that separate the Indian communities in the state of Amazonas, this regional office is working to improve access to the areas of large concentration, beginning with the communities in areas more accessible to FOIRN and of greatest urgency: Yanomami area in the border of Roraima, Amazonas state and Venezuela, the towns of Barcelos, Santa Isabel and Pari-Cachoeira -- all within the Calha Norte Project. Other areas included in the planning for improving communications are those communities of the lower Amazonas and Solimoes rivers, where the General Council of the Tikuna has already expressed

interest in working more closely with UNI.

Projects

Weaving and production of other artifacts seem to be well developed skills in the Rio Negro area. Several communities have shown interest in commercializing them. FOIRN already stores some of these products in Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira. FOIRN and UNI-Amazonas, are studying new markets and attempting to obtain independent transportation to bring these products to the state capital, Manaus, and handle the sales themselves, avoiding the middleman.

Several trips to the Indian areas are planned. These will serve not only to inform the leaders about the national movement and to learn about local problems, but to identify local products and marketing strategies.

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UNI - Acre and Southern Amazonas

Location: Rio Branco, Acre

Coordinator: Jose Urias, Manchineri Indian Chief

Current situation

In the early months of 1988, the work around Indian issues in Acre was going through a period of re-evaluation as it entered a new phase. According to interviews with local leaders that have been involved in this process, the leaderships in the state were more organized and united when UNI-Acre was founded in 1986.

Recently, profound changes took place in the structures of organizations connected to the Indian cause, including the local UNI coordination, creating confusion and a certain disunity among Indian leaders.

According to one source, the local Indian students that began to organize in connection with the national movement were very effective. With the support and cooperation of the local chapter of CPI-Acre (Pro-Indian Commission-Acre, office) and CIMI, they were able to mobilize the leadership to such an extent that even the local FUNAI office was responding to their demands. The then director of CPI-Acre, an anthropologist, became the head of the local FUNAI office, supported by the local Indian communities. Soon after, he invited the young UNI representative to join him. According to several interviewees, that was a strategic move to gain more influence within the governmental agency and increase official support for the regions' communities.

The split in Acre's Indian movement became evident when the anthropologist was fired from his leadership position at FUNAI and the Indian leader stayed. There is still confusion about his position in FUNAI, mainly since he declared his official resignation from UNI and the local Indian movement during the last Regional Assembly in April of 1988. There is now a feeling of distrust and the regional organization has suffered.

Soon after UNI-Acre's first coordinator went to FUNAI, their local office did not have consistent coordination until April of 88. The first leader to take charge of the office was considered very effective in still maintaining the cohesion of the movement. However, he was also the main chief in his community and was not able to attend to their needs while residing in the state's capital, Rio Branco. His community members and family began to migrate to the city to follow him. Consequently, he was forced to resign and return to his area.

For a brief period, UNI-Acre had no one directly responsible for the office. A few students maintained it until the present leader volunteered to be an interim coordinator. He was officially elected for that position in April 21, 1988 during the UNI's Annual Assembly of Acre and Southern Amazonas Indian Leaders.

#### Main Focus of Political Work

The state of Acre and the southern part of Amazonas state are included in the Calha Norte Project mentioned above. As it has been discussed previously, the plans for the Indian population is to become colonies, losing large parts of their original territories. The attempt to raise consciousness and organize around this issue is priority.

There are also problems with timber cutting in most areas (e.g. Kampa and Iauanaua territories) as well as manipulation of local

rubber tapper families by the "seringalistas" or middlemen (relationship that resembles that of the feudalism). Discussions are also going on about the paving of a highway (continuation of the BR-364) linking Porto Velho, Rondonia to Rio Branco, Acre with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank. The local population opposes the paving on the grounds that it will invite migration and further deforestation, repeating the health and environmental disasters brought to Rondonia when that section of the highway was paved (Cuiaba, Mato Grosso to Porto Velho, Rondonia) --The Polonoroest Project (see Appendix 5).

In May of 1988, for the first time, the Bank demanded to consult the Indians and other local population before deciding on the lending procedure. UNI-Acre was consulted and expressed its opposition to the project as well as to the creation of Indian Colonies.

The popular organizations in the state of Acre, including UNI, have developed close working relationship with Brazilian and international environmental organizations such as the Environmental Defense Fund. This joint work is proving successful in gaining attention for their needs and proposals. Two extractive reserves have been officially approved by the state government and studies are being done for their replication in other Amazonian states. (see Appendix 3). This will allow Indian and non-Indian rubbertappers to continue their traditional form of occupation, which is both economically and

environmentally feasible, while their lands and cultures are also protected.

### Accomplishments

UNI-Acre has been able to accomplish several important projects. Working many times in conjunction with the local support groups as they have developed the following work:

\* With CPI-Acre's health coordinator, Indian teenagers are being trained as health monitors to teach and attend to basic health needs and practices in their own villages. CPI's health practitioner stated that by 1983, when this project started, FUNAI had never hired a doctor for the area. No vaccinations had ever taken place and the infant mortality rate was higher than the birth rate. For example, visiting 23 communities with a total population of 5,019 Indians, the number of births for that year was 91 to 167 deaths, sixty percent of which were children under eight years of age. (interview - CPI 3/25/88). After beginning with an immunization and vaccination campaign, now repeated annually, the training and hiring of health monitors became the most successful health care practice in the region.

\* With support from the local FUNAI (while under the direction of supportive staff), education monitors have been trained to teach up to high school levels, encouraging the participation of the students in writing their own curriculum, more applicable to their cultural reality. They have produced several textbooks

used throughout the state's Indian communities.

UNI-Acre has also been able to develop a continuous radio program. Since its creation, it has been one of their most efficient methods of communication with distant villages. The program is used by Indians visiting or staying in Rio Branco that need to send messages home, to announce that a visitor or a UNI representative will be arriving in a certain area, or even to organize events and meetings. Most messages are sent in the communities' own languages. However, recently, the FUNAI regional office shortened the program time from one hour to only thirty minutes, threatening to discontinue it if the messages were not translated into Portuguese.

\* Another project done in cooperation with CPI-Acre, is the selling of Kaxinaua Indians' weavings in Rio Branco. The Kaxinaua women weave hammocks, cloths, bags, hats and so on, with cotton harvested by their communities. The threading and colour dying is also done by them. Once the products are finished, they are brought into the city by one of the village's men to be sold in a cooperative store.

\* Note: All these programs that have been started by, or have the participation of, support organizations are at risk of being discontinued unless the Indians' own organizations are prepared to take full control. The National Security Council has established measures to avoid the 'interference' of non-Indian

supporters in Indian issues and programs in the whole Amazon area. Therefore, programs that train Indians in more professional skills are priority so they can replace the technical assistance provided up until now by the support groups.

### Future Plans

To deal with the increasing threats to the regions' Indian peoples, UNI's priority is to improve the channels and consistency of communication with all the communities within this region. Their proposal is to strengthen the existing contacts as well as to reach the more isolated areas. The local leaders have been discussing strategies to improve efficiency of the communication methods already in use and identify new ones.

### Projects

#### 1. Communication

The plan is for the regional coordinators to visit the areas in order to inform of the legal situation of their territories according to the governmental projects underway at the time. Furthermore, the visits would identify methods for maintaining permanent communication.

\* The original and most feasible plan is to establish a chain where the health and education monitors who must travel back and forth from the communities to the city can also serve as their villages' communication link with the national movement. They would be kept informed of the national political situation and

improve marketing strategies for local products. The decision to further develop local communities economic potential was made during the regional assembly.

### 3. Extractive Reserves

Another important project is the joint development with the National Council of Rubber Tappers for the creation of extractive reserves which entails rubber tappers, nut gatherers and extractors of other perenial crops to continue their activities, improving their economic situation within protected areas. The plan for these reserves also includes the improvement of health care and education.

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#### UNI - Northeast

Location - Aracaju, Sergipe

Coordination - Jose Apolonio dos Santos - Xoco Indian leader

#### Current Situation

The Indians of the Northeast coast belong to about 22 different ethnic groups or tribes. Despite having been the first Indians to be contacted by the Portuguese colonists almost 500 years ago, they still keep their Indian identities. During this time, much of their ethnic and cultural characteristics have been lost. Physically, they could easily be confused with the local population of peasants and African descendants. However, the retention of their Indian identity proves their unwillingness to acculturate.

UNI - Northeast does not differ from the others in its needs, also operating on a very small budget. It consists mainly of a desk and a typewriter. Despite this, the coordinator's active work can be recognized by the amount of press coverage of local problems and the growing consciousness among the regional leaders to communicate with each other.

Main Focus of Political Work

The main problems Indians confront in the area is maintaining their territories while enduring violent confrontations with local ranchers. According to a recent Amnesty International report (Amnesty Action, Sept/Oct. 1988), more than 1,000 people have been killed by hired guns in land disputes in Brazil since 1980, the majority being Indians and peasants. This is undoubtedly the most serious problem UNI-Northeast confronts today. (see Appendix 6)

Accomplishments

The local coordinator, working mostly alone, has been successful in establishing good usage of the local media and has a sharp political mind. He has worked to regularize the legal situation of the Xoco Indians' land in San Pedro Island in the San Francisco river. Finally, after ten years of struggle, the land is in process of being demarcated.

Arquivo  
ISA

### Future Plans

UNI-Northeast's plans are to improve communication among the groups and with the national movement, creating a forum to discuss their common problems.

### Projects

Besides preparing a strategy to improve communications, part of the plan is to develop ways that local communities can become economically independent. Efforts to identify technical assistance and to increase legal support are being made.

Because most of these communities have had much longer contact with the national society than most of the other areas, it is more feasible to develop strategies for community run projects and communication methods, mainly because access to the areas as well as access to technical assistance is easier.

For example, the Xoco community, consisting of 50 families, has planned to start a community garden to improve the local diet as well as to generate income. There is a need for a water pump to irrigate the garden. Identifying means for that pump or other technical assistance to be obtained is one of UNI's goals. Moreover, the area also needs better health assistance. According to members of the community interviewed about the health situation, no doctors or dentists had been in the island for about two years (1985-87). There is a school building in the village provided by FUNAI. FUNAI also used to pay for a an elementary school teacher. However, the school building was

closed and the teacher's salary suspended, leaving more than fifty children without elementary education.

The situation of the Xoco people is repeated throughout the northeast region. Therefore, encouragement for the development of community run projects is the focus of UNI's work.

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### Roraima and Goias

These two locations were included in the plans to have UNI's representative offices. Although, local circumstances did not allow the establishment of offices, a close working relationship has been maintained with the national movement.

### Federal Territory of Roraima

The predominant Indian population in the region is the Macuxi and the Yanomami. Roraima has had a Macuxi Indian leadership council (CINTER - Conselho Indigena do Territorio de Roraima) since 1985. In early 1987 they established their own office. 180 chiefs, mostly Macuxi, participate in this council. As all members are leaders in their communities and the council work demands that some stay in the capital city, Boa Vista, full time, they have established a rotary system where two leaders at a time stay in the city for a continuous period of two months.

The main contact of UNI is Gilberto Pedrosa, Macuxí Indian. He lives in Boa Vista and communicates with the national office regularly. Although he is not the official representative of UNI, he participates in UNI's regional coordinators' meetings while members of the Council are invited to regional assemblies such as the one in Acre.

Gilberto has recently participated in the creation of another regional organization, the Indian Association of Roraima (Associação Indígena de Roraima) with two other leaders. This fact has created some uneasiness in the cohesion of the Indian leaderships in the region, mainly with the Council members. Their work is not necessarily competitive, but it overlaps in some points. The Association proposes the development of economic projects in local communities such as Indian managed food posts and agricultural projects. The Council has been accompanying the legal affairs and assisting in their resolution. The Association was founded recently with the assistance of an anthropologist from the Indian Museum of Rio de Janeiro, and her involvement adds to the controversy among the Indian leaders in Roraima.

Despite the differences in terms of regional organizing, this region is considered one of the better prepared. Both organizations are working toward increasing communications and creating forums for their demands to be met.

Goiás

In this area, UNI's contacts are members from the different tribes. The closer relationship in terms of organizing has been with the Xavante Association of Pimentel Barbosa. This association was mainly found to carry on a program initiated the the community elders to recuperate the local fauna and flora-- Project Jaburu. To avoid further degradation of the soils through graising land for cattle, the Xavante plan to raise local animals such as wild pigs, in captivity, and to eventually reintroduce them into the wild. This activity will also become a generator of income as well as food stock. The region's plants and fruits will also be used for the same purpose. The Association has been formed with the assistance of the University of Goiás, where the administration made available an office space for their temporary headquarters (to be transfered to the village as soon as the project is in operation). They have also negotiated technical assistance with the Brazilian Agrigultural Corporation (EMBRAPA).

This project has been recognized by UNI's national office and discussions are being carried out with other Indian tribes to reproduce this idea of income generating sustainable management of natural resources.

This project is not only an example to other Indian communities, but to non-Indians that farm in the "cerrado" ecosystem. The

predominant economic activities in the state of Goias and Mato Grosso is cattle raising, and the production of rice and coffee. None of these products are native to the area. Over the years, there has been severe degradation of the soils. The Xavante project can be a breakthrough in providing a profitable alternative for the use of that ecosystem.

Project Jaburu also includes plans to improve health assistance and education, the primary necessities of the Xavante people.

### III. THE SOUTH AND MESO-AMERICAN INDIAN INFORMATION CENTER:

#### Strategies to Communicate with Brazilian Indian Movement

Improving communication with the Brazilian Indian organizations is one of the most important services an organization in the United States can perform at this time. Most of the complaints heard by Indian groups in Brazil is that they are not informed of the work going on abroad that concerns indigenous peoples and their lands. That includes the work done by international fora on protection of Indian rights as well as actions taken by international organizations toward protection of endangered ecosystems (tropical rainforests in the case of Brazil) -- most of them inhabited by native peoples.

Other complaints relate to the fact that there is a diversity of groups in this country which are working separately. This forces Brazilian organizations working on emergency issues to spend extra time and resources communicating with each one rather than being able to count on one channel that will effectively disseminate the information among the all groups.

Presently, urgent action pleas are mostly sent by CEDI-Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information to the Survival International office in London through a European computer network, Geonet. SI then transfers the information to another network, Peacenet, sending to their American office in Washington DC. All other communication is done by mail, with a two week

delay. (see Appendix 7)

Therefore, the role of SAIIC must be to foster communication not only with the Brazilian organizations, but improve working ties with the other Indigenist organizations in this country and throughout the Northern Hemisphere. SAIIC should not attempt to represent the Indian organizations from Brazil or any other area. Its only role should be that of facilitator in negotiations between North American and Brazilian groups. It is in a position to provide valuable assistance to both hemispheres, mainly by producing or translating specific information. By helping to open up a communication channel, it can create the foundation for more joint projects and cooperation to take place.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

Following are suggestions for specific assistance that SAIIC can offer to Brazilian and other South American Indian organizations:

1. Compile information on North American groups, organizations, institutions etc. that are in the position of providing specific services. These can range from community level projects to organizing around a certain issue such as environmental conservation, health, education, etc. This information should be available in Portuguese and Spanish and delivered to all Indian organizations of Latin America.

2. Provide a list of contacts of American Indian Organizations interested in coming into contact with Latin American Indian groups and organizations to discuss specific subjects, share experiences, etc.
3. Provide technical services, such as translating, every time a communication problem arises, including adapting proposals to be considered by institutions of North America.
4. The translating of relevant English texts into Spanish and Portuguese should also be provided.

\*\* SAIIC can provide assistance to North American organizations interested in supporting the work of Brazilian and other Indian organizations in Latin America in the following ways:

1. Provide information on projects being developed or proposed in South America.
2. Provide information on appropriate means to transfer different types of support.
3. Develop a list of South American Indian and Indigenist organizations and their work.
4. Provide specialized information on situations of health, education, preservation projects, etc. related to Indigenous peoples.
5. Serve as consultant and translator for institutions interested in increasing involvement with Indian issues in South America.
6. Work toward improving relations and communication between North and South American Indians, through the ongoing Indians of Americas Interchange Program.

7. Compile documentation material such as photos, slides, documentary films to educate the American public and interested sectors about the Latin American Indian situation.

8. Promote special cultural events for public education and solidarity. SAIIC should be in contact with all North American Indigenist organizations involved in Latin American Indian issues and support to coordinate its work with them, therefore assuring there will be no duplication of efforts and resources.

#### IMPROVING SAIIC'S OWN POTENTIAL

There are ongoing discussions about how to improve communications at local, national, regional and international levels. The discussion of specific strategies and suggestions given by South American organizations enables SAIIC to identify more efficient steps it should take. For example:

1. Hook up into international computer networks, e.g. Geonet and Peacenet. This is important in order to pursue contacts with already established professional documentation and information centers in the different South American countries. Most of these, if not yet connected to a computer network, may have relatively easy access to it, through academic groups for example. Because Indian groups have demonstrated their interest to inform the international community about certain emergency situations and are prepared to provide reliable data, SAIIC should have direct, easy and rapid access to the information they provide.

2. Acquire a telex machine. Most Indian organizations in the national and regional levels have access to a telex.

3. Increase the telephone operation budget as it is still the most direct communication channel.

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**Brief List of Acronyms  
(Indian, Indigenist, and Support Organizations in Brazil)**

- ABA - Associação Brasileira de Antropologia (Brazilian Association of Anthropology)**
- CCPY - Comissão para a Criação do Parque Yanomami (Commission for the Creation of the Yanomami Park)**
- CEDI - Centro Eclesiástico de Documentação e Informação (Ecumenical Centre of Documentation and Information)**
- CIMI - Conselho Indigenista Missionário (Indigenist Missionary Council)**
- CINTER - Conselho Indígena do Território de Roraima (Indian Council of the Territory of Roraima)**
- CONAGE - Confederação Nacional de Geólogos (National Confederation of Geologists)**
- CPI - Comissão Pro-Índio (Pro-Indian Commission)**
- FOIRN - Federação das Organizações Indígenas do Rio Negro (Federation of the Indian Organizations of Rio Negro)**
- FUNAI - Fundação Nacional de Índio (National Indian Foundation)**

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER\* - From Dec. 1987/June 1988

1. Regional officer for Oxfam-UK, Belem, Para. \*01.88\*
2. Regional coordinator of CIMI-Norte, Belem, Para. \*01.88\*
3. Anthropologist of CIMI-Norte I, Belem, Para. Editor of O Mensageiro bulletin. \*01.88\*
4. Regional coordinator of UNI-Amazonas. Manaus, Amazonas. \*01.88\*
5. Staff of CIMI-Norte II, Manaus, Amazonas. \*01.88\*
6. Coordinators of Indian Council of the Territory of Roraima. Boa Vista, Roraima. \*02.88\*
7. Staff of the Campaign for the Creation of the Yanomami Park office. Boa Vista, Roraima. \*02.88\*
8. President of the Brazilian Association of Anthropology. Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo. \*03.88\*
9. Two representatives from Gaia Foundation-UK. \*03.88\*
10. Education Coordinator for FUNAI-Acre. São Paulo, Sao Paulo. \*03.88\*
11. Regional Coordinators for UNI-Acre. Sao Paulo, SP \*03.88\* and \*04.88\* in Rio Branco, Acre
12. Bororo Indian Leader and co-founder of UNI. Sao Paulo, SP. \*03.88\*
13. Lawyer for CIMI-national headquarters. Brasilia, D.F. \*04.88\*
14. Interim national coordinator of CIMI headquarters. Brasilia, D.F. \*04.88\*
15. Anthropologist at National University of Brasilia. Brasilia, D.F. \*04.88\*
16. Anthropologist at National University of Brasilia. Brasilia, D.F. \*04.88\*
17. Indian leader in Acre and FUNAI staff. Rio Branco, Acre. \*04.88\*
18. FUNAI staff and Indian leader in ACRE. Rio Branco, Acre. \*04.88\*
19. Regional Coordinator of UNI-Acre. Rio Branco, Acre. \*04.88\*
20. Coordinator of Acre's Indian Women Crafts Project for CPI-Acre. \*04.88\*
21. First Coordinator of UNI-Acre. Rio Branco, Acre. \*04.88\*
22. Kaxinaua Indian leader and student in Acre. Rio Branco, Acre. \*04.88\*
23. Regional coordinator of CPI-Acre. Rio Branco, Acre. \*04.88\*
24. Two Kaxinaua chiefs from the Jurua River. Rio Branco, Acre. \*04.88\*
25. CPI-Acre's Health Project coordinator. Rio Branco, Acre. \*04.88\*
26. Lawyer for CIMI- Acre. Rio Branco, Acre. \*04.88\*
27. Coordinator for the Center of Ecological Films of the Catholic University of Goiania. Goiania, Goias. \*05.88\*
28. Xavante Indian leader and president of the Xavante Association of Pimentel Barbosa. Goiania, Goias. \*05.88\*
29. Karaja Indian, secretary of the State of Goias Superintendency of Indian Affairs. Goiania, Goias. \*05.88\*
30. Consultant for the Canadian International Development Agency. Goiania, Goias. \*05.88\*
31. Regional coordinator for UNI-Northeast, Xoco Indian leader. Aracaju, Sergipe. \*05.88\*
32. Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sergipe and volunteer staff for CPI-Sergipe. Aracaju, Sergipe. \*05.88\*
33. Xoco Indian leader and spokes person. Ilha de Sao Pedro, Sergipe. \*05.88\*

34. Pottery makers at Ilha de Sao Pedro, Xoco territory, Sergipe  
\*05.88\*
35. Health monitor for the Xoco people. Ilha de Sao Pedro, Sergipe  
\*05.88\*
36. Staff at the national office of Oxfam-UK in Brazil. Sao Paulo,  
Sao Paulo. \*05.88\*
37. Coordinator of the International division of the Ecumenical  
Center for Documentation and Information - Sao Paulo. Sao Paulo,  
S.P. \*several times during the period of Dec. 87-June 88\*
38. National Health coordinator for UNI-national headquarters.  
\*several times from Dec. 87-June 88.\*
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40. Secretary for the Association of Enterprenuers in Amazonia. \*05.8
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42. National coordinator of the Unio of Indian Nations. Sao Paulo,  
Sao Paulo. \*several times during Dec.87-June 88\*
43. Communications coordinator for UNI's Nucleus of Indian Culture.  
Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo. \*several times during Dec.87-June-88\*

\* NOTE: In this list are not included the non-formal interviews  
and discussions with a number of other participants of the  
Indian Movement in Brazil. These also helped me tremendously  
to understand the diverse and complex variables that influence  
the direction of this movement. For example, conversations  
with the national coordinator of the National Council of  
Rubber Tappers, the coordinator of the Institute for Amazonian  
Studies, doctors who worked directly with the Yanomami people  
in Roraima and Amazonia and described their situation and so o