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Indians and Ecology in Brazil

Brazil in figures

Name:	Federative Republic of Brazil
Capital:	Brasília
Population:	144mn (over 70% urban)
Area:	3,27mn square miles
Language:	Portuguese
Religion:	Mainly Christian (90% nominally Catholic)
Government:	President Fernando Collor de Mello elected December 1989. Elections for the Federal Congress, state governors and state assemblies due late 1990
Economy	GDP per capita \$2,059 (1989)
	Shares of main sectors (1988)
	Agriculture 9.7%
	Mining 1.3%
	Manufacturing 26.1%
	Construction 5.4%
	Commerce 13.6%
Exports:	\$34.4bn (1989)
Imports:	\$18.28bn (1989)
Total foreign debt:	\$114bn (1989)
Debt service	\$26.7bn (1989)
Internal debt (Jan 1989):	\$42bn

Health and social indicators

Life expectancy at birth:	65 years
Infant mortality (1984):	68 per 1000 (122 per thousand in the North-East)
Malnutrition in children under 5	55%
Abandoned children:	16mn
Undernourished population (1986):	90mn
Population in absolute poverty (1986):	35mn
Doctor: population ratio (1981):	1:1200 (USA 1:500)
Literacy (1980):	68.7%

Indians and Ecology in Brazil

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CIIR Justice Paper 13

Catholic Institute for International Relations

in association with

CAFOD SCIAF Trócaire

First published 1990

Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) 22 Coleman Fields, London N1 7AF,
England

Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD), 2 Romero Close, Stockwell Road,
London SW9 9TY, England

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF), 5 Oswald Street, Glasgow G1 4QR,
Scotland

Trócaire, 169 Booterstown Avenue, Co Dublin, Ireland

Translation © CIIR 1990

Original edition: *Destruir a Terra é Destruir os Filhos da Terra*, Brasília 1990.

ISBN 1 85287 075 3

Design by Jan Brown Designs

Front cover: Susan Cunningham

Back cover: Susan Cunningham

Printed in England by the Russell Press, Ltd., Bertrand Russell House, Gamble Street,
Nottingham NG7 4ET

Preface

When this address was first delivered to the assembly of the Brazilian bishops' conference in April 1990, Brazilians were still waiting for the new President of Brazil, Fernando Collor de Mello, to make a clear statement of his government's policy on indigenous peoples. For an explicit statement they are still waiting, but the actions of the Collor government provide dismal evidence that nothing has changed.

In the middle of July the government appointed an inter-ministerial working group to propose measures 'to increase the effectiveness of the Federal Government's actions to preserve and defend the rights and interests of the indigenous populations'. The working group was to report within 60 days, but by the middle of September it had still not met. When, after five months, a new President was appointed for FUNAI, the government agency for indigenous affairs, not only were the proposals of indigenous groups ignored, but the choice fell on an airforce officer, Cantídio Guerreiro Guimarães, associated with the widely criticised previous head of FUNAI, Romero Jucá Filho, and with mining and lumber companies. In a previous appointment he was the object of police investigation in connection with illegal logging in indigenous areas in Rondonia.

On the most urgent problem facing Brazil's indigenous peoples, the genocide of the Yanomami, Guerreiro indicated his attitude early. He announced that he intended to 'study' the situation of the Yanomami in order to see whether the best solution was the legal protection of their territory as a continuous area or the maintenance of the 19 'islands' illegally created by the previous Brazilian government. Guerreiro said he preferred the 19 'islands' because it made it easier to control the goldminers, a view which not only contradicts anthropological evidence, but is refuted by the events of the past two years. CIMI's secretary Antônio Brand, commented, 'There's nothing else to be studied in connection with the tragedy of the Yanomami. All that's needed is compliance with the Federal Constitution and the federal court injunction ordering the protection of the whole area.'

Meanwhile the highly publicised plan to dynamite the goldminers' airstrips has come to nothing. It is a stop-and-start operation, starved of funds, and even when airstrips are destroyed, they are restored to working order in a matter of hours. At the end of August it was estimated that 5000 goldminers were in Yanomami territory, and others were returning. Meanwhile sick Yanomami in Boa Vista were being forced to eat rats for lack of food.

Bishop Kräutler's talk originally bore the title 'Destroying the earth means destroying the children of the earth'. Tragically, this description of Brazil's recent past stands, with undiminished force, as an indictment of its present.



BRAZIL

Indians and Ecology in Brazil

Introduction

On his journeys to Lima Andrés Nuningo, the indigenous leader of the Aguaruna and Huambisa Council and mayor of the district of Río Santiago, used to photograph the people he saw feeding on refuse in the streets of the Peruvian capital. On his return to his community he would show them his pictures and tell the people, 'Those people who are today feeding on refuse once belonged to the indigenous community . . .'¹ The Huambisa collecting garbage in Lima may be a Tucano in Manaus, in Salvador a Pataxó, in São Paulo a Guarani, in Porto Alegre a Kaingang.

There can be no doubt that the present-day reality of our cities, and even of the rural areas, does not present a desirable future or hold out any promise to indigenous peoples. The proposal, defended openly or in veiled language, to integrate them into what is called 'national society' in order to 'drag them out of their centuries-old backwardness' and free them 'from the prison of their primitiveness' cannot be the 'happy ending' of a responsible indigenous policy, still less a pastoral objective. The life of the Indians as peoples distinct from the majority society, within one Brazilian state, with full citizenship as individuals and self-determination as peoples, both remains a political challenge for the Brazilian government which took office in March 1990 and requires a commitment on the part of society as a whole. Life is at stake, and when the issue is the life or death of whole peoples, solidarity ceases to be an internal matter. Solidarity knows neither limits nor frontiers.

I wish to respond to this challenge in terms of our option of faith and missionary work. Because the various indigenous peoples are in different historical situations, we look for particular ways to be present, to dialogue and to proclaim the gospel message. In campaigning for an alternative path for

indigenous peoples we are also campaigning for a different path for non-indigenous society. Not only are the lives of Indians under threat. The threat to the lives of indigenous peoples today makes us think hard about the threats which hang over all of us and future generations. We are discovering the connection between disrespect for nature, the rape of the environment and the destruction of human, physical and cultural life. The extinction of a people is the direct consequence of the devastation and the irreversible damage inflicted on their habitat. God gave his creation to human beings as their home, but human beings have distorted the work of the creator, reducing it to a storehouse to be plundered in a headlong dash to clear the shelves to satisfy their greed and ambition without leaving anything to those who may come after except the 'abomination of desolation' (Mt 24.15).

Perhaps someone from our society should make the opposite journey to the Huambisa leader and show their children photographs of an indigenous village. They could then warn their contemporaries who so arrogantly describe themselves as 'civilised':

Look at the consequences of our progress and development! What once belonged to all — rivers of crystal water, fertile lands, luxuriant forests, the polyphony of the birds, the healthy, pure air and, above all, the open and spontaneous smiles which are such a feature of indigenous villages — all this is today becoming a privilege available to fewer and fewer people.

1. Indigenous Issues in Brazil and the Elections: Postponing the Solution

The seven months to April 1990 were a milestone in the history of Brazil. The presidential elections, after thirty years of involuntary abstention, mobilised the people, allowed for the presentation of various political programmes, and revived the sense of citizenship. Within the limits of the situation, the people debated ideas, took part in the campaign and elected the new President of Brazil.

On the other hand we witnessed the dismal retreat of the outgoing government. Secure in its freedom from punishment, on the eve of the new President's assumption of office, the government abandoned any effort to make amends for the indifference it had shown to the new Federal Constitution ever since it was solemnly promulgated in October 1988.

In this atmosphere, with a lame-duck government, in the midst of the insensitivity which was the hallmark of José Sarney's administration, and with the whole of society involved in the elections, the indigenous peoples and their problems were ignored, and solutions were left for the incoming government.

The total population of Brazil's indigenous peoples does not constitute a significant electorate, and as a result only those candidates who considered the moral dimension of the indigenous issue included any reference to it in their programmes. According to an assessment made by the newspaper *Jornal de*

Opinião of Belo Horizonte,² the majority of candidates with a chance of reaching the second round of the elections made only general references to the issue. In the candidates' free TV slots the Indians were not even mentioned.

At its eighth general assembly CIMI approved a document entitled 'Towards a New Policy for Indigenous Peoples — a Minimum Programme for Presidential Candidates',³ which was sent to all the candidates. Unfortunately, however, there was no discussion on the situation of the indigenous peoples, even though it had notably worsened during the 'New Republic' of 1985-90.

The case of the Yanomami and the Urueu-Wau-Wau are dramatic examples of the government's action in the last months before the new President took office. With regard to the Yanomami, after declaring on networked radio and television that he would obey the court order to remove the prospectors who had invaded the indigenous area — and whose presence has caused the deaths of approximately 15% of the Yanomami population since 1987 — President Sarney went back on his word and signed decrees which left the prospectors within the area prohibited by the court. In the case of the Urueu-Wau-Wau, whose lands were given legal protection as a result of pressure from the multinational banks which are financing the Polonoeste highway, President Sarney, on the eve of leaving office, issued a decree which annulled this protected status, leaving the Indians' land simply earmarked for further study. All this was to serve the interests of a state deputy who claimed to be the owner of rubber plantations in the region.⁴

But this violence was not limited to the last few months of Sarney's presidency. It was a feature of his entire term of office. CIMI's analysis of the Sarney government's indigenous policy concluded that it involved 'premeditated strategies to hasten the disintegration of the socio-cultural structures of the indigenous peoples'.⁵

The truth is that there was a reduction in the resources available for assistential services provided by FUNAI, the state's National Indian Bureau, creating a situation of need which made the Indians an easy prey for logging companies, prospecting contractors, mining companies and others. FUNAI's corruption became public with the revelations of illegal contracts for logging in indigenous areas — signed by none other than the president of FUNAI. Such dubious activities led members of the federal Public Accounts Commission to call for the abolition of FUNAI.⁶ The press also published reports of the involvement of police and military officers in illegal mineral extraction in Yanomami territory.⁷

A telling illustration of the situation is the net balance of the legal situation of indigenous land based on FUNAI's own documents. In relation to FUNAI's proposals for legal protection (demarcation) of indigenous land, the Sarney government boundary proposals for the 59 areas delimited up to the end of 1988 reduced indigenous lands by 42.5%. On the upper Rio Negro the reduction was 59.5%, and 76.4% of Yanomami land was removed. Both the latter cases fall within the priority area of the Calha Norte military security

project'. The ethnocide inherent in this policy followed not only economic and electoral considerations, but above all the guidelines of the general secretariat of the National Security Council, subsequently renamed National Defence Advisory Secretariat (SADEN). To SADEN the Indians were a permanent threat to national sovereignty, and it was felt that the most appropriate way to neutralise this threat was to deprive the Indians of their ability to maintain themselves as distinct peoples.

This is the legacy inherited by President Fernando Collor de Mello at his inauguration. There is an urgent need for vigorous measures to correct the distortions of the past. Nonetheless so far there have been next to no statements or actions on indigenous policy. FUNAI was switched from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Justice — a correct decision in principle but one empty of any more substantial content. We are also worried by the fact that the Minister of Justice, Bernardo Cabral, was the docile servant of the interests of the private mining companies and of the former National Security Council when he was *rapporteur* of the Constituent Assembly.⁸

President Collor also replaced the governor of Roraima, the state which was the scene of the Yanomami tragedy. The dismissed governor, Romero Jucá Filho, had been known as a declared enemy of the Indians since his term as president of FUNAI, but the governor-designate, Rubens Villar, has made statements in favour of modifying the boundaries of Yanomami territory in order to allow the prospectors to remain.⁹

Finally, the proposed liberalisation of the economy creates well-founded fears that the stampede for Indian land and riches will be intensified, which would mean a continuation of conflicts and violence.

2. The Destruction of the Environment

It is not only the Indians and their lands which are affected by all sorts of violence. The whole environment, especially in Amazonia, continues to be violently attacked. Our rivers are polluted with mercury from the activities of prospectors. It is calculated that more than 140,000 kilos of mercury are thrown into the rivers of Amazonia every year. This threatens the river flora and fauna with immediate annihilation, and in a very short time creates a terrible risk to human health. Each year thousands of square kilometres of rainforest

* Calha Norte is a military project for the control and development of an area of Brazil's northern Amazonian region covering almost a quarter of Legal Amazonia and 14% of Brazil as a whole. It stretches along 6,500km of Brazil's frontier with Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana. The motives of the project include defence against 'marxist subversion' and economic development; this involves a reduction in the constitutional guarantees for indigenous land. Airstrips built by the military under this project have facilitated the entry of goldminers into Yanomami territory. See Elizabeth Allen, *Calha Norte: Military Development in Brazilian Amazônia*, Occasional Paper No 52-1990, Amazonian Paper No 2, Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Glasgow, Scotland.

A similar project, PROF-AO, exists for Brazil's western frontier, but is at a less advanced stage.



Herbert Girardet/Environmental Picture Library

are burnt. At some periods of the year the fires transform this region into a huge bonfire.¹⁰ In the state of Rondonia it is estimated that an area of forest the size of a football pitch has been burnt every minute.¹¹ The picture of destruction in Amazonia, whether by clearing of forest and logging or by burning, is the product of a mixture of irresponsibility and ignorance which is setting countless time bombs.

Protests have not been slow in coming, both inside and outside Brazil. World public opinion has begun to become aware of the scale of the tragedy played out in Brazilian Amazonia in the last few years. The previous Brazilian government, however, preferred to accuse all critics indiscriminately of conspiring against Brazilian sovereignty, and placed environmental policy under the direct control of the military secretariat SADEN through the 'Our Nature' programme. Nonetheless hardly any effective action was taken.¹²

The appointment of José Lutzenberger as Special Secretary for the Environment was received with sympathy both nationally and internationally. Nonetheless, there is ground for concern in the removal of the powers of the National Council for the Environment (CONAMA), which was the supreme body responsible for environmental policy,¹³ and included representation from civil society. In addition the new Secretariat for Strategic Studies has been given a leading role in the conduct of environmental policy, which means that 'national security' remains the dominant consideration in dealing with environmental problems.

We can be certain of one thing: if adequate measures are not taken to reverse the present situation, we will all have to be prepared to be judged severely by future generations. However, no future condemnation will be able to undo the effects of the irresponsibility and ignorance of our rapacious and destructive generation.

We know today that by defending the indigenous peoples and their habitat we are defending the future of the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of this generation. In defending, for example, the land, life and knowledge of the Yanomami, in protecting their rivers from the goldminers' mercury, their forests from the motor-saws of the logging companies, their lands from flooding by hydro-electric projects, their happy lives from 'sharing in the profits' generated by their destruction, we are fighting for the future of Brazil. The new evangelisation which bears witness to the indigenous peoples that their way of life has a future defends the possibility of a decent life for the whole Brazilian nation. But this 'indigenous way of life' can only be lived on indigenous land, which must be sufficient and guaranteed by others.

The connection between the destruction of human life, the destruction of the cultural inventions of peoples and the destruction of their environment can be seen very clearly in the original conquest of the Americas. The conquest of Mexico, for example, not only destroyed peoples and cultures, but also destroyed the environment of the main indigenous population centres. The draining of Lake Tenochtitlan, in the Mexico of the conquistadores, and the

replacement of Aztec agriculture by cattle-raising and the extensive planting of cereals transformed the Valley of Mexico into a semi-desert even before industrialisation. The destruction of worked nature, of an environment which was cared for as part of a culture, ate into the foundations of indigenous society, its forms of organisation for production, and the agricultural basis of its culture. Environmental and cultural destruction went hand in hand with the genocide in the strict sense caused by diseases, military activity and the forced labour which reduced human beings to 'raw material' and disposable 'parts'. Five million indigenous people inhabited the valley of Mexico before the conquest. In the middle of the 17th century they had already been reduced to one million. Bartolomé de Las Casas, the most radical critic of the Conquest, tells us:

This island of Hispaniola, once so populous (having a population that I estimated to be more than three millions), now has a population of barely two hundred persons. The island of Cuba is nearly as long as the distance between Valladolid and Rome; it is now almost completely depopulated.¹⁴

Since the conquest of the Americas we have witnessed the sinister connection between the destruction of human life, the destruction of the cultures of the different peoples and the destruction of their environment. In this long history of the 500 years of evangelisation we have learned that it is not possible to defend the physical survival of the indigenous peoples in isolation, ignoring the need to defend their culture and their environment. We are aware of the close link of culture, environment and life, not only with the gospel as a message of life, but also with the rationality of human existence. The conquistadores' destruction of life, culture and the environment was not only anti-gospel, but also irrational. In acting against rationality, they acted against their own interests. The majority of the conquistadores immediately lost all their wealth, and by the 18th century the countries which had undertaken the Conquest, Spain and Portugal, were already among the poorest countries of Europe.

Any Brazilian who today genuinely loves their country and its inhabitants must ask these questions:

- On a cost-benefit analysis, what is the benefit of a hydro-electric scheme such as Balbina or Tucuruí?*

* An important element of Brazil's economic policy over the last 30 years has been based on opening up Amazonia, firstly to settle small farmers, then for cattle ranching and later for mining. A network of highways opened up the region, and a programme of hydro-electric schemes flooded large areas of traditional agricultural land or indigenous areas. This list includes some of the more notorious projects. The Balbina dam displaced the Parakanã peoples, who had already been moved on two previous occasions. The Balbina dam is notoriously inefficient because of its shallowness and because uncleared trees have rotted and produced acid which is corroding the turbines. The Carajás project is based on huge iron ore deposits, and consists of a mine, and an 890-km railway leading to a new deep-water port at São Luís do Maranhão. This development has attracted blast furnaces and factories along the length of the railway. The furnaces are fired by charcoal from the surrounding forests, and it has been estimated that this development could lead to the eradication of the native forests within 20 years. The iron project is financed by the World Bank, the European Community and Japan.

- Who really benefits from the extraction of gold by prospectors from the lands of the Kaiapó and the Yanomami?
- What improvements have we gained from the projects in the Carajás area, with the production of pig-iron and the irresponsible destruction of the Amazon forest?
- Did the landowners who benefited from the construction of the BR364 highway across the former territory of the Nambiquara, who were thus left in desperate poverty, contribute anything to the well-being of the people?
- What is the destination of the millions and millions of cubic metres of mahogany and other noble woods which are torn out of the Amazon rainforest to the point of the extinction of whole species? What benefit does the population of Amazonia receive? What was the final destination of the wealth embodied at the beginning of the century in the wood of the indigenous areas in the south of Brazil?
- And what of the tragic fires which have transformed the thousand-year old forest into pasture for cattle? What did our people gain from this assault? Have they got greater access to meat and milk? Has their diet improved?

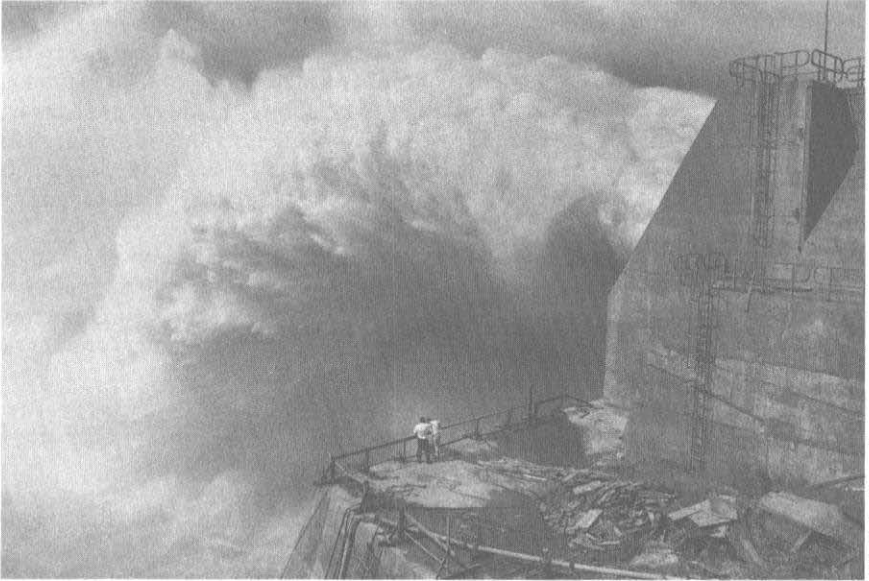
The issue of the environment is today synonymous with the defence of reason and of the lives of future generations. For us the issue of ecology is at once a social, political and theological issue. For example, we defend the Amazon forest because we thereby defend the habitat and well-being of the peoples of Amazonia. The issue of ecology, in this sense, is a sign of the times, a sign from God in time, with the power to harness our faith to a solidarity which goes far beyond the borders of any people or nation.

Human solidarity, according to the Second Vatican Council, has its theological source in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.¹³ Jesus is the link between the first creation and the 'new creation' (2 Cor 5.17). The first creation became a history of salvation in God's covenant with Israel. The creation — the creation of human beings, nature and the cosmos — is the premise of the history of salvation. The environment is the premise of liberation. Indigenous peoples can be saved only with nature. Without land, without rivers and without forests there is no 'good news' for indigenous peoples.

3. Solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples in Latin America

The last General Assembly of CIMI approved as one of the priorities of our work the need 'to reinforce the continental dimension of the indigenous cause'. In accordance with this resolution, I would like to mention the situation of indigenous peoples in other countries of Latin America who are most affected by violence of all sorts.

Of particular concern is the tragic situation of the Indians in Guatemala. Although they are 65% of the population, they are treated as foreigners in their own country. State terrorism has made about 200,000 Guatemalans,



Julio Elchar/Impact



Susan Cunningham

Top: The Itaipu dam on the border between Brazil and Paraguay.
Bottom: The Carajás mine and railway.

most of them Indians, take refuge in neighbouring countries, with no prospect of immediate return. 'Search for justice. Discipline the violent, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow!' cried the prophet Isaiah (1.17), and his call takes on special urgency for a church preparing to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the evangelisation of Latin America. We have to identify the true oppressors at the international level and expose their mechanisms of death. In Guatemala today there are more than 300,000 widows and hundreds of thousands of orphan children.

In the name of the battle against drug-trafficking, Indians and peasants in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia are constant victims of police and military violence, as well as attacks from the drug-traffickers themselves. The church cannot shut its eyes to so much suffering. Its solidarity must assume continental dimensions.

4. CIMI's initiatives

In August 1989 CIMI held its eighth General Assembly with the theme 'Missionary Activity with Indigenous Peoples in the Present Historical Context'. The assembly brought together more than 100 missionaries from all over Brazil and was attended by a number of bishops. It reaffirmed that the challenges of the present situation, and those presented by the forthcoming celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Europeans on this continent, call for a special and continuing effort to devise, formulate and implement a strategy to alert, mobilise and engage the church as a whole. The assembly approved the following broad priorities:

- Support for indigenous peoples' organisation at all levels;
- Enabling indigenous peoples to secure possession of their lands and legal guarantees for their occupation;
- Alliances between the indigenous peoples and Brazilian society;
- The strengthening of the continental dimension of the indigenous cause;
- An evangelisation which is self-critical, inculturated and liberating;
- The training of missionaries.

In its attempt to provide a better preparation for missionaries in the difficult task of working with indigenous peoples, in January 1990 CIMI organised a three-week basic training course for about 30 missionaries, and similar courses are planned for future years too. Special attention has been given to the problems of evangelisation and inculturation. Theologians, pastoral specialists and missionaries have been meeting in various parts of Brazil for study weeks to examine in greater depth an issue which is vital to pastoral work with indigenous peoples today.

In a joint initiative by CIMI, the indigenous pastoral agencies of other bishops' conferences, and CLAI (the Latin American Council of Churches),

five ecumenical courses were held in various parts of Latin America in an effort to contribute to reflection on the problems raised by the celebrations for the Fifth Centenary.

CIMI continues to give direct and constant support to the organisational initiatives of different indigenous peoples and bodies. Among these I should like to single out two events which took on great importance. In September 1989 350 indigenous leaders, representing 76 indigenous peoples and organisations from all over Brazil, went to Brasília to take part in the biggest demonstration in history to defend the life of a people — the Yanomami. In the middle of April 1990 the indigenous organisations of Amazonia held their Second General Assembly in Manaus, with the participation of 174 indigenous leaders, representing 30 indigenous peoples and 20 indigenous organisations. These and other regional meetings are a sign of the progress being made in collaboration and in the search for alliances between indigenous communities.

These initiatives are and were important, but they do not reflect the whole commitment and involvement of the missionary church. Our pastoral workers are in the indigenous areas, and their daily toil and selfless and generous dedication is known to God. There are missionaries, lay and religious, who for many years have expended their best energies in pastoral work with indigenous peoples and, in a dimension of gospel solidarity, devote their lives to this noble cause, finding in the faces of the Indians the living features of Christ, the Lord, who always questions and challenges us (see Puebla Document, 31).

Conclusion

All that God created and blessed at the beginning of time is taken up in history by Jesus Christ. He represents the 'fulness of time' (see Gal 4.4), not in the victory of power, but in the disfigurement of the 'suffering servant'. Easter is the passage through the valley of death to resurrection. The new creation, redemption, liberation and solidarity are inseparable from kenosis, total self-emptying and self-giving.

In Second Isaiah (Is 40-55) we find an interpretation of creation in terms of salvation history. It is the time of the exile. Confronted with the crushing superiority of a world power, Israel turns for help to Yahweh. Where history denies the signs of the presence of God, the people confirm their faith in the redeeming power of Yahweh because of his primordial creative action: 'Your creator is your husband, . . . the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer, he is called God of the whole world' (54.5). Evangelisation of indigenous peoples involves the proclamation of this 'God of the whole world' against the idols who never cease their attempt to usurp his position. We understand our mission with the indigenous peoples as the mission of the 'servant of Yahweh' who brings 'true religion' to the nations.¹⁶

He does not cry out or raise his voice,
his voice is not heard in the street;
He does not break the crushed reed
or snuff the faltering wick.
Openly he proclaims true religion;
he will not grow faint, he will not be crushed
until he has established true religion on earth,
and the coasts and islands are waiting for his
instruction. (Is 42.1-4).

I should like to mention at this point two people who represent for us in a very special way the 'suffering servant' in connection with the indigenous cause. On the night of 22 February last the executive of CIMI had a meeting with Archbishop Luciano Mendes de Almeida, the President of the Brazilian Bishops' Conference. It was Dom Luciano's last appointment before he left Brasília. On the following day there took place the accident which left Dom Luciano hovering for weeks between life and death. All Brazil prayed for him, and God saved his life. When I had the pleasure of visiting him in hospital on 15 March and was able to shake him by the hand, a moving experience, he said to me: 'I am going through a profound experience of suffering, but I am offering it all for the church in Brazil and for the indigenous peoples whom I love so dearly.' At that moment I saw in the face of Dom Luciano the features of the 'suffering servant', the 'man of sorrows, acquainted with infirmity' (Is 53.3). and I believed in the redemptive power of all this suffering.

On 11 March 1990 Viviane Guimarães Resende died. She was a lay missionary in the prelate of Tefé. A sociologist and teacher, in 1986 she abandoned her teaching post in her native state of Paraná to devote herself to the Katukina and Kanamari Indians in the region of the River Jutai in the state of Amazonas. The Katukina has already suffered from many diseases. Many died in the past as a result of epidemics, which sometimes killed all the children. Even today many of them are dying of malaria.²⁵ Viviane set up a vaccination programme to which she devoted herself with such selflessness that even when she contracted a serious bout of malaria she paid more attention to the the vaccination programme than to her own extremely serious state of health. She died at the age of 28, a victim of the disease which has taken the lives of so many Indians, but even more a victim of her own commitment to the Indians. Who can fail to remember in such a context the words of Jesus: 'No-one can have greater love than to lay down their life for their friends' (Jn 15.13).

The profound experience of suffering undergone by Dom Luciano and the death of Viviane are passages through Calvary to the resurrection. The violence and death inflicted on so many Indians, the epidemics which cut short their lives, the rivers polluted and the lands degraded or flooded which threaten the survival of entire peoples, are the indigenous passion of Christ in our time. At Easter we celebrate the victory of life over death and believe that the stone

of suffering, anguish and despair will one day be rolled away once and for all, so that the light of hope may shine on the indigenous peoples and all the peoples of the earth.

Altamira, 15 April 1990
Easter Sunday

Notes

1. AIDSESEP bulletin 19-20 (April 1988).
2. *Jornal de Opinião*, 2nd fortnight of November 1989.
3. See the CIMI journal PORANTIM 122 (October 1989).
4. Cf PORANTIM 125 (Jan-Feb 1990).
5. 'A política indigenista do governo Sarney', cf PORANTIM 125; summary English version available from CIIR.
6. Processo TCU 014.821/87/7, DOU 15 January 1990.
7. Cf *Jornal do Brasil*, 14 Jan 1990.
8. CNBB-CIMI, *A verdadeira conspiração contra os povos indígenas, a Igreja e o Brasil*, Brasília, October 1987; cf Francis McDonagh, 'A Question of Survival', *The Tablet* 12 Sept 1987.
9. Cf PORANTIM 126 (March 1990).
10. See, for example, Philip M. Fearnside, of INPA, in *Tempo e Presença* 244/245 (Aug-Sept 1989).
11. See *Veja*, 5 July 1989.
12. See the circular of the União Protetora do Ambiente Natural, April 1990.
13. See Presidential Provisional Measure 150 and Decree 99.180, both of 15 March 1990.
14. Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*, Seabury Press, New York 1974, p.39.
15. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), 31, 32.
16. In Is. 42:1-4 the original word is *mispat*, which some scholars translate as 'true religion', others as 'judgement', others again as 'justice' or 'peace'. *Mispat* means all of this: it is 'religion' in its original and whole sense.
17. See the circular from Dom Mário Clemente Neto, bishop of Tefe, and Doris Kieslich, of the Tefe Indigenous Pastoral Programme, 15 March 1990.