

indigenous rights and equate them to those of landless settlers with just claims. But these two situations should not be confused as these constitute specific examples of cultural difference.

This is what has been happening recently at the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI). It is publicly known that FUNAI has always been omissive, clientelist and authoritative. Everything indicates that they want it that way, incapable to oppose powerful interests. Recently there were improvements: over the last year, they have moved further in the matter of identifying indigenous lands than they had in the whole of the previous decade. The only thing new is that they are now trying to settle accounts. They are turning again to being inoperative, and are dismissing rare "culprits" guilty of efficiency and competence.

Antonio Callado is right; it is our major moral question, and once again we are turning away from providing a solution. We add that the knot of this moral question is land. The recognition of the Union of Indigenous Nations and the Tribal councils is the only manner to obtain autonomy for the Indians in their territories. They must get their lands demarcated before they are exterminated, or suffer some such ethnocide as the dispersion of their communities as a result of the plundering of their territories. The neglect of the Indians of Brazil is a calculated and criminal omission.

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BRAZIL: SITUATION OF THE TUKANO INDIANS.

By: Dominique Buchillet.

The Invasion of Tukano Lands

After the 1983 announcement of the presence of gold in the region of the Upper Rio Negro, in the Northwest of the State of Amazonas (Brazil), the Tukano, Baniwa and Maku Indians (about 15,000) have suffered increasingly from violent pressures on their territory from gold prospectors and mining companies. Numerous confrontations took place between Indians and gold miners throughout 1985. These conflicts seem to have reached their culminating point with the news of a massacre of 60 Tukano Indians in January 1986 (announced by the Brazilian press on the 9th of January), near one of the principal gold veins in the upper Rio Negro, the Serra do Traira.

The lands occupied by the Tukano, Baniwa, and Maku Indians have still not been legally recognized: four indigenous territories (Pari Cachoeira, Icana-Aiary, Xié, and Icana-Xié) were delimited by FUNAI in 1979 but, despite repeated demands by indigenous leaders and anthropologists conducting research in the region, the lands have still not been demarcated. Taking advantage of the lack of definition in the legal status of indigenous lands in the region, prospectors and mining companies have not ceased to invade them with ever increasing violence. The organization of these planned invasions has been preceded, in the last few years, by attempts to legalize the exploitation of indigenous lands and their resources, such as those of the Tukano. Thus, a decree was signed in 1983 (Decree no. 88.985 of 10/11-83) by the then President of the Republic, General Figueiredo, the purpose of which was to open indigenous territories to exploitation by private mining companies under the false pretext of protecting them against the disastrous effects of individual prospecting.

This decree sought to revise articles 44 and 45 of the Indian Statute which reserve the exploitation of soil, surface

MINING LTD. (one of the principal associates of which is the Governor of the State of Amazonas, Gilberto Mestrinho) have, since October 1985, obtained through the DNPM gold mining concessions at the Serra do Traira, where the massacre reported by the Brazilian press was supposed to have taken place. None of these supposed authorizations for exploration have received official support from FUNAI (according to the Report of the Upper Rio Negro Work Group, created by the President of FUNAI - Portaria no. 1892/E of 19/6-85).

The anti-Indian opinions of Gilberto Mestrinho are of public notoriety: he proclaims himself to be against the legal recognition of indigenous lands in the state where he is governor (A Critica, 1/8/85). During a meeting with businessmen of the Zona Franca (Trade Zone) in Manaus on 22 August 1985, (A Critica, 24/8/85) he declared that he wished to defend above all the lands of the "civilized" and he added: "I have already used the Military Police and I will continue using them as many times as necessary but here, in Amazonas, I will not allow FUNAI and the false defenders of the Indians, who want to defend the Indians' culture, imposing the cross but which is not the cross of Christ but that of Marx".

After the denouncement (Diario do Amazonas, 15 October 1985) made by two individual prospectors (Alcidesio Miranda de Souza and Raimundo Franciso de Souza) that security men of TABOCA had interdicted access to the gold vein at the Serra do Traira, claiming that the region belonged to the company, Gilberto Mestrinho, taking the defense of TABOCA, retorted that he had official concessions at the Serra do Traira (the interdicted part is that on which TABOCA possesses an authorization for exploration). He concluded by saying: "Would you allow invaders to enter your house with impunity?"

There is, evidently, in that a total disrespect for indigenous legislation and the Brazilian constitution which recognize the inalienability of indigenous lands and the rights

of permanent possession which indigenous inhabitants have over them and the natural resources they contain.

TABOCA and GOLD AMAZON are equipped with their own paramilitary militias (comprised of old officials of the Brazilian army reserve; A Critica, 9/1/86, and Jornal de Brasilia, 14/1/86) to enforce their supposed rights in the region and to clean it of individual prospectors. Thus, GOLD AMAZON has at its disposal a veritable military barracks on a boat (called the CANUTAMÁ). This boat belongs to the government of the state of Amazonas. The militias of GOLD AMAZON have interdicted access to the gold mining sites on the upper Xié and the upper Icana (the MATAPI site) rivers, both within indigenous territory. TABOCA and GOLD AMAZON are in conflict between themselves and it seems that TABOCA recently took control over the Serra do Traira.

The situation in the upper Rio Negro is, moreover, explosive because of the fact that the mining companies, competing among themselves and with the prospectors, are creating a veritable war, all in opposition to the Indians whose lands they have invaded.

The prospectors, who numbered about a dozen in the beginning of 1985, are now about 200 at the Serra do Traira. Their invasions have become more and more planned and are assuming an equally paramilitary aspect (with military uniforms and firearms of gross calibre). Until now, FUNAI has been unable to deter the process of massive penetration by prospectors on Tukano lands despite the urgent and repeated appeals of Tukano leaders.

In view of the tension and violence in the region of the Serra do Traira throughout 1985, the Indians of the region (Tiquié and Vaupés Rivers) have organized several meetings to define a common stand against the invasion of their territory. The Salesian missionaries of Pari Cachoeira have reported a climate of despair and revolt among the Tukano Indians,

"saturated with being scorned, mistreated, taken advantage of, robbed, and threatened with death, by white prospectors" and who feel themselves abandoned because of the "lack of measures taken by the proper authorities". (Letter to the President of FUNAI, from Father Guerino Sartoris, December, 1985.) Various conflicts occurred in October and December 1985 between the Tukano and prospectors, which caused deaths on both sides.

Massacre at the Serra do Traira?

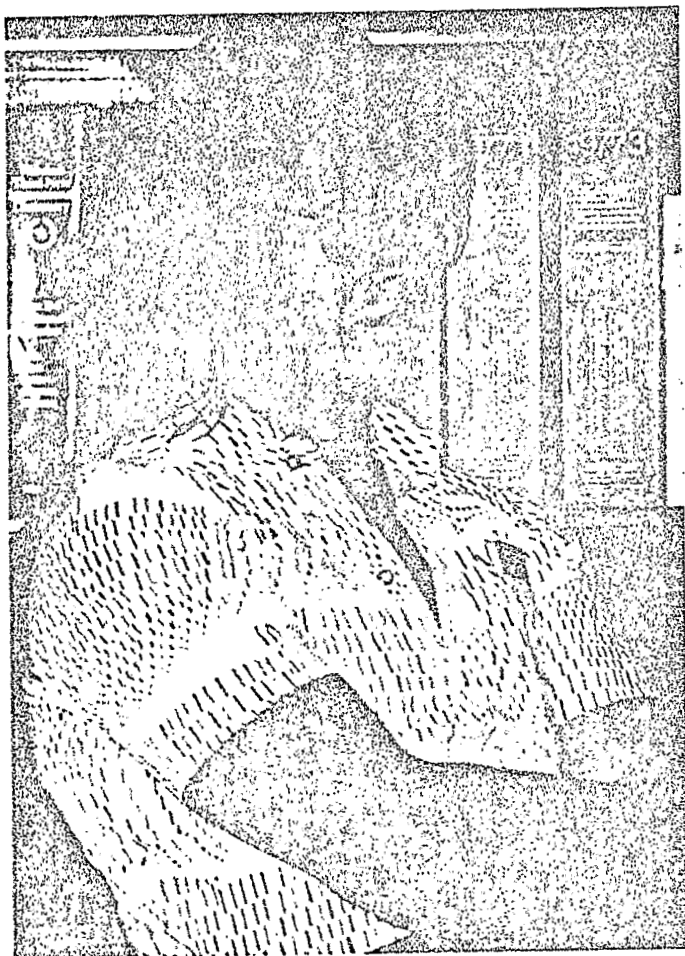
The massacre of 60 Indians was supposed to have taken place at the Serra do Traira in the beginning of January, 1986. Because of the difficulties of communication (the nearest radiophone, excluding those of the companies which could not be counted on, were at the Salesian mission of Pari Cachoeira, 8 days' journey from the conflict zone), the news only reached the press on the 9th of January. The difficulties of communication with the zones in conflict also explain that it is very difficult to know exactly what happened.

According to the press, Benedito Machado, a Tukano leader, on returning from Brasilia where he had gone to reiterate the appeals of the Tukano for an urgent solution to put an end to the conflict with prospectors, learned the news in Manaus, through a telephone communication from his sister, Cecilia Machado, resident in Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira (Rio Negro). According to this source, between 150 and 200 prospectors left Sao Gabriel on the 26th of December. They used the trails opened by the Indians in the forest and, along the way, stole three boats, one of which belonged to a priest of the Salesian mission at Sao Gabriel. They were clothed in military gear and carried machine guns. This pattern of penetration bears a certain resemblance to that perpetrated in February 1985 at the Serra de Surucucus, territory of the Yanomami Indians, by José Altino Machado (owner of a small air taxi firm specializing in the transport of prospectors.) The Rio Negro invaders violently opposed by the Tukano who sought to contain their

advance. On the days following the announcement of the massacre, Álvaro Sampaio, Coordinator of the Union of Indian Nations (UNI), spread an alarm in the Brazilian press (A Critica 9/1/86) asserting that 4,000 Indians were "on the war path" and forewarned authorities that new and bloody conflicts could occur if an immediate solution --that is, the removal of the prospectors -- wasn't found, because the Indians felt themselves surrounded on their own lands. At the same time, he announced that thousands of Indians from other parts of the region of the Upper Rio Negro were advancing to the Serra do Traira to lend more force to the Indians threatened in this region.

The Jornal de Brasilia of 14/1/86 presented a slightly different version of the conflict. An unsigned article mentions, in effect, not 200 prospectors but 600 and, based on information gathered from Álvaro Sampaio, affirmed that these 600 men, armed with machine guns, were, in fact, security men of the companies that are exploiting the mineral riches of the Upper Rio Negro.

Although the news of the massacre of 60 Tukano Indians was not confirmed, the seriousness of the situation of the Indians of the Upper Rio Negro once again demonstrates the necessity and urgency of the measures that have to be taken to guarantee and protect the inviolability of their territory. The legal recognition and demarcation of a continuous territorial reserve and the establishment of a control plan to ensure the effective integrity of the territory are the only means to put an end to these illegal invasions. These measures would thereby guarantee for the Indians the permanent possession of the lands they occupy and the usufruct of the natural resources existing on them, according to the terms of indigenist legislation and the Federal Constitution. These are also the two principal conclusions of the Upper Rio Negro Work Group, created by the President of FUNAI himself in July of 1985.



Alvaro Sampaio - Tukano Indian spokesman (Photo: Teresa Aparicio)

The sending to the region of a mixed commission (technicians of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform and Development, the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, officials of FUNAI, and indigenous representatives), whose objective is to officially delimit the lands claimed by the Indians, was announced for the end of January (A Critica, 9/1/86). It is to be hoped that this will be immediately followed with measures for demarcation and installation of control at the most vulnerable points of invasion in the indigenous territorial reserve. This will serve to deter the process of spoliation of Tukano lands which, if it did not provoke a "massacre" at least brought about deaths on both sides and risks producing conflicts of greater intensity which will be more difficult to control.

After 13 January, FUNAI officials and the Federal Police began to expel prospectors from Tukano lands and met with resistance on the part of the companies (not cited) who financed this invasion (A Critica, 14/1/86).

Without denying the extreme tension that prevails between Indians and prospectors in the region of Pari Cachoeira and the Serra do Traira (the number of prospectors is confirmed to be between 150 and 200), FUNAI denies the story of a massacre and the existence of a conflict between the Tukano and the whites. The agency attributes the publication of the news to a rumour that had its origins in the extremely tense climate in which the Tukano Indians find themselves, alarmed by a large-scale invasion of their lands (O Liberal, 15/1/86). Nevertheless, on the 8th of January, (one day before the announcement of the massacre) Sebastiao Amancio da Costa, Regional Delegate of FUNAI for the State of Amazonas in Manaus, recalled the imminence of a conflict between whites and Indians and directly accused the PARANAPANEMA mining company of being an instigator of it (A Critica, 8/1/86).

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"Baker" atomic test at Bikini Atoll, July 1946. US Navy photo.

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