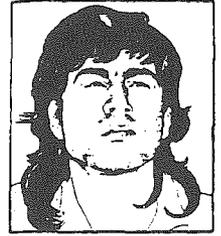


Ailton Krenak Describes Indian Strategy To Resist Harmful Projects In Amazon



Ailton Krenak, Coordinator of Brazil's Union of Indian Nations (UNI), attended the Citizens' Conference of Tropical Rainforests, Indigenous People, and the World Bank. Ailton said he came to serve as "a witness to the disasters that development projects have caused for our people. I thought that it was very important to have a meeting with the taxpayers [of the United States] who give money to those projects." He also spoke about UNI's "project of life"—a plan to assure the survival of Indian people. The following are excerpts from Ailton's statements to the conference and from an interview with SAIIC.

On UNI's Plan of Action: "The Amazon Alliance, the Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Populations of the Amazon Basin, the Indian participation in the Constitutional Assembly, and my participation at this conference today have to be understood as a plan of action by Indian people, directed towards setting up broad policies which address the demarcation and the effective guarantee of Indian land. We have a project of life, but we are not going to be able to realize it if it is not articulated among the Brazilian people."

On the Amazon Alliance: "A significant proportion of the people of Amazonia oppose the unbridled and disorderly occupation of Amazonia being promoted by the government with financing from external sources. The people of the forest, Indians, river populations, and those such as rubber gatherers who live on extractive resources are ready to carry out an effective defense of the place where they live. The Amazon Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest is put forth as a social proposal. Each time it was posed as an environmental issue it

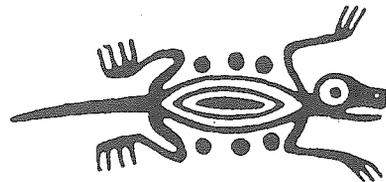
Rainforest preservation is essential to Indian survival.



did not succeed in changing the awareness of the Brazilian government. The people who are defending Amazonia are people who historically have used the land sustainably. This alliance is questioning the development programs being implemented by the government. We are seeking the solidarity of those outside the region who are concerned about what's happening in Amazonia and of those who are following what's going on there."

On the Coordinating Committee of the Indigenous Populations of the Amazon Basin: "This Coordinating Committee includes all the Indian populations of the Amazon region, including eight neighboring countries. We had a meeting in Itacoatiara [Brazil] in June and

another in Brasilia to which we invited Evaristo [Nahuag, from Peru], who is now the Secretary General of the Coordinating Committee. On October 20 we'll have another meeting to set up the committee. Once this is done, we can carry out a program at an international level. We want to raise issues concerning government projects on Indians lands to an international forum, where people can have an opportunity to debate, examine, and analyze some of these projects. At a national level, we want to identify development projects, discover the origin of the capital invested in those projects, look into the possibility of interceding with those agencies, demand the re-evaluation of the viability of those projects, halt the operations of the timber companies, and demarcate Indian lands in the area, which include 70 percent of all Indian lands in Brazil."



On Indian Participation in the Constitutional Assembly: "Perhaps the greatest tragedy of our Indian people has been that we have lived under the boot of the government. Before, it was under the Service for the Protection of Indians; now it is under the National Indian Foundation [FUNAI]. Today, we want to keep our identity as Indians, but we don't want to remain apart from the formation of national policies where all Brazilians are participating. We are not going to win our struggle if we don't get the respect and solidarity of the Brazilian people. We are 0.17 percent of the Brazilian population—we are very few, and we can only keep our identity as Indians as part of a common national program.

That is why we are choosing representatives to the Constitutional Assembly, representatives who can legislate in Congress. Together with the support of other popular movements, we can draw up a constitution that at least assures the interests and principles of land and that acknowledges our cultural institutions. This is not a country of only one language. It's a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. The elections will be held on November 15, and 530 representatives will be elected. We have four candidates from the Amazon and four from the Central Western region. If we can implant in the Brazilian constitution the principles of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, we will no longer have a samba of only one note."

Radioactive Wastes To Join Pollutants In Amazon?

The newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* has reported that the Brazilian military may be constructing underground installations in the Cachimbo Mountains for use as a nuclear test site and for storage of nuclear wastes from atomic powerplants.

The construction site in the Amazonian state of Pará was discovered by air. Many Indian peoples live within 300 kilometers of the site, including those in the Xingu Park and the Menkranoti, Kayapó, Apiaká, Rikbatsa, Kayabi, and Munduruku. There are also uncontacted groups in the area, including the Bararari and Parauari.

Nuclear physicists and geologists say the sedimentary soils of the region cannot guarantee a reliable resting place for dangerous radioactive materials. They express concern for the potential negative consequences if contaminants reach a major river system, such as the Xingu.

