

## BRAZIL

Filmmakers Monti Aguirre and Glenn Switkes have returned from a six-month research and filming trip in Brazil. Their film, *Amazonia* will analyze the occupation of the Amazon Basin, including the fight by Indian people to protect their lands.

According to Monti and Glenn, "The situation of native people in the Brazilian Amazon is critical. Indians face invasions of their land by mining and lumber companies, large landowners, and landless peasants. The demarcation of Indian lands is a hot political issue, and Brazil's new civilian government has not yet made a commitment to protect these areas."

Also they report:

### *Pataxó*

Just before dawn on November 22, 130 heavily armed military police violently attacked an encampment of 30 families of the Pataxó Hã-Hã-Hãe in the state of Bahia. At least 30 people, including children, were wounded. Two days earlier the Pataxó had reoccupied their traditional lands which had been invaded by cattle ranchers and cacao growers.

### *Xokó*

The Xokó people of the island of São Pedro in Sergipe in northeastern Brazil have been under constant harassment by ranchers who want their land. Xokó people have been ambushed and leaders have been forced to flee under the threat of death. In November, ranchers threatened to bomb their village if the Xokó did not abandon the area, forcing the Indians to flee into the forest.

### *Upper Rio Negro*

Gold seekers continue to enter the Upper Rio Negro area despite the fact that many have already been expelled by police. Their influence has been so pervasive that there are now 8,000 Indians, including Tukanos, Baniwas, Tarianos, Desanos, and other groups from the area, who are also hunting for gold. However, the principal threat to the peoples of the Upper Rio Negro may be the arrival of mineral companies in search of gold, zinc, lead, and copper. In September, Brazil's National Department of Mineral Production (DNPM) issued a list of 127 authorizations for mineral exploration, almost all on Indian lands and thus prohibited by law. Five days later the director of DNPM revoked the approvals, stating that the companies would only have a "priority right . . . should mineral activities be permitted in Indian areas."



According to Gabriel Gentil, a Tukano and a member of the Association of Indian Communities of the Tiquié River, several mineral companies have



already begun exploration in the area without waiting for official approval. The Brazilian giants Paranapanema and Brumadinho, the multinational Brascan/British Petroleum, and GoldAmazon, a company closely linked to the governor of Amazonas state, are some of the companies coveting the resources on Indian lands in the Upper Rio Negro.



### FUNAI

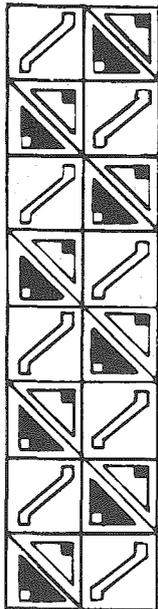
Since September there have been two changes in the presidency of FUNAI, Brazil's Indian agency, but its basic structure, which excludes participation by Indians in critical decisions which affect their survival, remains the same under the new civilian government as under military rule. Gerson Alves gave way to Alvaro Villas-Boas, who has since been replaced by Apoena Meirelles, a second-generation FUNAI functionary whose brutal style of contacting Indian groups in the early 1970s resulted in death and cultural disintegration in several communities.

One of Meirelles' first official actions was to travel to the state of Rondônia to discuss the governor's demand that the demarcated area of the Uru-cu-uau-uau Indians be reduced. The 4.5 million acre reserve of the Uru-ea-uau-uau was created under pressure from the World Bank, which earlier this year temporarily halted funding of the Polonoeste colonization program in Rondônia. (See article on Rainforest Conference on page 17.)

### UNI

One of the more positive developments in the struggle of Brazilian Indians has been the emergence of the Union of Indian Nations (UNI) as a force in Indian affairs. UNI has coordinated regional conferences of Indian leaders, spoken out at international forums, and begun working with lawyers on legal issues affecting Indian law.

*Suruí from Rondônia.*



(Photo Kim-Ir-Sen/AGIL; reproduced from *Povos Indígenas no Brasil/83*, Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação, São Paulo.)

A letter to SAIIC from Domingos Veríssimo Marcos, Terena Indian representative of the Central Western regional office of UNI, says:

"Within the current national debate concerning the reform of government institutions in Brazil, the Indian question has been raised by the Indian nations within Brazil and their leaders, as well as non-Indians who are aware that their own freedom and prosperity cannot be based on the oppression of other people.

"Discussion among Indian people is based on how Indian nations want to be seen and treated by Brazilian society and the state. This debate involves three principal elements: citizenship, land, and Indian representation.

"The current constitution does not deal with the citizenship of Indians. It only says that those who were born in Brazilian territory are Brazilian. Thus all Indians are subject to Brazilian laws. In our opinion, a new constitution must resolve the right of Indians to hold Brazilian citizenship without ceasing to be citizens of one of the more than 150 Indian nations that continue to survive in Brazil.

"The question of citizenship . . . brings up another point that is just as important as nationality itself, the recognition of Indian land as a legally defined entity. Today Indian land is recognized in Brazil as public land, that is, land that is property of the state with uses designated for the public good. This has caused many problems."

On the question of Indian representation, UNI has called for replacing FUNAI with a council on which Indians would have direct representation, according to Ailton Krenak, director of publications for UNI. UNI is also trying to negotiate Indian representation on the assembly which will draw up a new constitution for Brazil in 1987. UNI will press for Indians' rights as citizens of sovereign Indian nations, clearer definition of the "special status" of Indian reserves, and the right to representation in governmental affairs, possibly via UNI, which now includes more than 80 Brazilian Indian groups.

Monti and Glenn have recorded interviews with Indian leaders in Brazil and will be reporting on the Brazilian Indian situation on "South and Central American Indian Update" the first Friday of each month at 8:00 p.m. on KPFA FM94.1 in northern California. More information regarding the film *Amazonia* may be obtained by contacting SAIIC.

*Domingos Veríssimo*



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