

## SURINAM



## INDIGENOUS PEOPLE SPEAK

(The following is from a statement by George Pierre, representing Caraïben and Lokono people of the Indigenous organization TUNA-SARAPA at the meeting of the Coordinadora of the Amazon Basin, June 1988.)

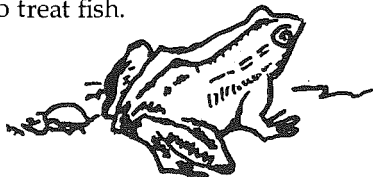
## Civil War Brings Turmoil

"Brothers and sisters, we come from the region of Guyana, north of the Amazon River and bordered by the Chinoco River, the Amazon, and Atlantic Ocean. In Indian communities, we are 8,000 Caraïben, 4,000 Lokonos, 2,000 Trios, 1,000 Aloekoejanas, 600 Wajarekoeles, and 300 Wamas. People in these regions are united by language, culture, religion, ways of life, and the struggle for land rights.

We live by practicing agriculture, fishing, hunting, and making crafts. The women cultivate *cassave* (manioc), *annanas* (pineapples), *pindas* (peanuts), *camotes* (sweet potatoes), our well known corn, and a variety of greens. Women do the ceramic work, weaving the hammocks and preparing various foods, such as manioc.

We men are responsible for the preparation of the land for cultivation. Hunting is also men's work. We take our sons with us, so that they can also learn. Handicrafts are the work of both men and women. The men weave baskets and bags, grind manioc, prepare arrows, and sew fishing nets. Fishing takes place in rivers as well as in the sea. We use floating nets one to two kilometers in length with boats we build, but which use out-board motors.

Women do the ceramic work, weaving the hammocks and preparing various foods, such as manioc. Many of our brothers and sisters also work in industry and administration, but we are really a minority. Some of us, with difficulty, opened small shops to sell food and various things, small transportation companies, and companies to treat fish.

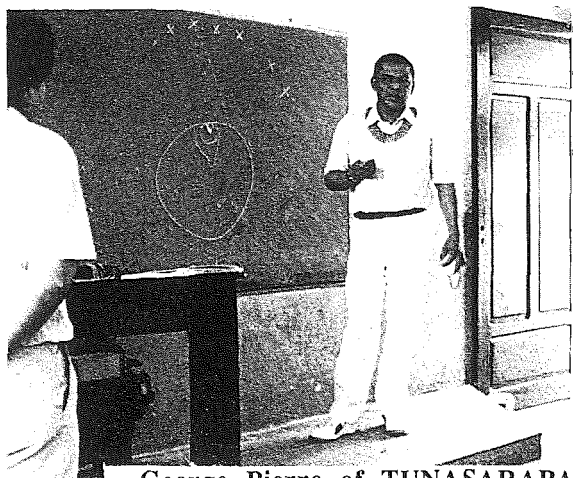


"Our brothers and sisters lived spread out throughout the Surinam territory in 39 villages, of between 75 and 2,000 people. Between October 1986 and January 1987, 26 of these villages were totally sacked and burned, due to the civil war between the army led by ex-soldier Roni Brunswijk, and the army of Commander Colonel Desi Bouterse, leader of Surinam's military junta. During this civil war, we had opted for a neutral position, which created suspicion in both the rebel army and the junta.

8,000 Indians had to flee to French Guyana, Brazil, and to Surinam's capital, Paramaribo. Many other brothers and sisters fell into the hands of Brunswijk's army and were then tortured, raped, and killed. This civil war has been catastrophic for us. Since November 25, 1987, Surinam has had a democratic government.

Brothers and Sisters: In the hope that our health and true religion and medicinal force holds our work together. Jallalla!"

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Tuna Sarapa Suriname, Postbus 10497, 100IEL, Amsterdam Holland.



George Pierre of TUNASARAPA